



League of Women Voters of Alabama

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July 27, 2015

The Honorable Mike Hubbard
11 South Union Street
Suite 519-A
Montgomery, AL 36130-2950

Dear Speaker Hubbard:

The League of Women Voters of Alabama (LWVAL) urges all members of the Alabama Legislature to maintain a long term focus as they seek solutions to the state's fiscal problems.

Past reliance on short term fixes has merely increased the problems with which state officials must deal.

Reliance on the Indian casino bailout proposal, introduction of gambling, or immediate spending of BP settlement funds represent a focus on short term solutions. While they might seem to "solve" Alabama's fiscal shortfall, they each have consequences that have not been fully laid out and discussed. Their social, economic, and political consequences are both positive and negative.

Elimination of legislative earmarking of funds and of deductions of some federal taxes on Alabama income tax filings are moves in the appropriate direction. However, true long term reform requires more, including public support for constitutional changes.

Educating the public to the positive and negative consequences of the actions being discussed should be done as discussions occur, not after the fact, if change is truly sought. Public trust in government institutions and government officials is at an all-time low in

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this country. Quick fixes and decisions made behind closed doors will not help to build trust and confidence, a necessary step to creating support for change.

Although the recent passage of reforms in the criminal justice system was admirable, these reforms must be funded adequately or they will only make our state's problems worse. Taking money from the Education Trust Fund to pay for Medicaid, the court system, prisons, and other essential state services without also changing the tax base needed to adequately pay for these services will do the same.

True long term reform of the tax system, supported by an educational campaign on the long term benefits and costs, led by legislative leaders and the governor working together, is needed. The League and many other nonprofit organizations in this state are willing to help in that effort.

Sincerely,

Anne Permaloff
President

Cc: Local League Presidents