

## APPENDIX C

### A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO ALISON

The Alabama Legislative Information Service On-Line at  
<http://alisdb.legislature.state.al.us/acas/ACASLogin.asp>

#### About ALISON and the Purpose of this Guide

The Alabama Legislative Information Service On-Line, or ALISON, is a web site that gives anyone with Internet access the ability to research legislative instruments proposed in the current Alabama legislative session, Alabama statutory code, and the Alabama Constitution. ALISON includes information about bills including full text and summaries, sponsors, history, fiscal notes, amendments & substitutions, and current status. ALISON also posts committee calendars and agendas and session calendars for each chamber of the legislature. This appendix provides a step-by-step guide for using ALISON to identify bills of interest under consideration in the Alabama legislature and following their progress through the legislative process. (Statutory code and the constitution are not explored here.)

**NOTE:** To use ALISON, Microsoft Internet Explorer is the required web browser and Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to read document texts. These may be downloaded for free at [www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/default.msp](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/default.msp) and [www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html)

#### To Trace Activity in the Current Session

To begin, point your browser to this web address:  
<http://alisdb.legislature.state.al.us/acas/ACASLogin.asp>

On the page that appears, every arrow in the left panel produces a drop-down menu.

##### *To find bills and check their progress*

Click on **Bills** beside the Session tab. Then click Status, By Sponsor, or Search.

**Status.** To find a bill by its number, enter the number (e.g. HB88 or SB20) in the box and click Get Status. The page will give bill number, sponsor, general subject (e.g. Elections), S or H, the committee to which it was assigned, and the last action taken with the date of it.

Refer to *Legislative Basics* for explanation of the three readings and such terms as engrossed and enrolled. For abbreviations of committee names, see the list of committees under House or Senate sites at [www.legislature.state.al.us](http://www.legislature.state.al.us).

**Note: For bill status by telephone:** Senate 1-800-499-3051  
House 1-800-499-3052

**By Sponsor** can be used to find bill number, if sponsor, but not number, is known.

**Search** produces two options.

- **Content** is the more useful if bill number is known. Putting the bill number in the box and clicking Get Bills will produce only one bill.
- **Keyword** depends on the subject classifications listed at the end of the bill, for example, Campaign Contributions or Elections. The list to be examined can be long. If bill number and sponsor are not known, this search may be useful. It also offers a means to survey bills all a particular topic.

*To trace the bill's legislative history*

**After locating a bill by Status or By Sponsor as described above, click on the bill number so that the panel across the top lights up**

**History** will give dates of each action in relation to the bill.

- First reading: Date bill was introduced and committee to which it was assigned.
- Second reading: Date(s) the committee considered the bill. Any amendments or substitute bills. The committee decision (usually favorable or unfavorable; sometimes with a vote count from the committee).
- The third reading, consideration in a floor session of one house, is discussed below.

**Sponsors.** Primary and co-sponsors

**Fiscal Note.** Fiscal effects of the bill from the Legislative Fiscal Office

**Amendments and Substitutes.** Clicking on this option opens a list of amendments and substitute bills (if any exist). Click on an amendment or substitute number to open a copy.

*To read or download the text of the bill*

a) After locating a bill by Status or By Sponsor as described above, click on the bill number to light up the top panel and click **View**. Adobe Reader will provide a copy of the bill. To save the document to your computer, click **File** in your computer's menu bar. In that drop down menu, click **Save As** to save to the desired location on your computer.

or

b) When a bill has been found with Search by either Keyword or Content, click on the bill number (e.g. HB93.htm) or the long underlined web address of the bill listed after the abstract in the following form:

<http://alisdb.legislature.state.al.us/acas/searchableinstruments/sessiondaters/bills/billnumber.htm>

**Following Bills in Committee**

*For a list of bills in each committee awaiting committee action*

On the dropdown menu under **Bills**, click **In Committee** and then the committee name.

*To find out if a bill is on a committee agenda for a meeting*, click **Committee Meetings** in the left menu panel (located below Bills, Resolutions, and Confirmations). Click **House** or **Senate** and then **Get Bills**. House committee meetings and agendas are usually listed by Friday for the week to follow. Senate meetings are usually listed and times are usually provided. Agendas often read To Be Announced.

**A public hearing, if scheduled, will be listed beside the bill.** The rules of both houses prohibit a vote on a bill in the same meeting as a public hearing.

*To learn the results of the committee action*, using the bill number and status is the most convenient means. To get specifics, click on the bill number and consult **History** and/or other buttons in the top panel.

This information can be reached in two other places, but the lists of bills will be longer.

a) On the dropdown menu under **Bills**, click **Today's Readings**, then **Second Reading**.

or

b) On the dropdown menu under **Reports**, click **Instrument by Committee Action**.

## **Following Floor Action on a Bill**

### *To learn when a bill will come up for floor action*

A bill passed by a committee is placed on the calendar of the house. It will not take the next step until the Rules Committee places it on a Special Order Calendar.

A bill may appear on a Special Order Calendar at any time, whenever the leadership of the house chooses. Repeated checking may be necessary (unless information can be secured from one's legislator, the sponsor of the bill, or the committee chair.)

Call Bill Status at Senate 1-800-499-3051 or House 1-800-499-3052. Or use ALISON.

**Special Order Calendar** is the fifth item in the left menu panel. Each house posts its Special Order Calendar for the day in the form of a resolution from the rules committee.

### *To trace changes in the bill during floor debate and learn final outcome in each house*

As the bill is debated in the general session, amendments or substitutes may be proposed. These are presented under **Floor Amendments and Substitutes**, the next to the last item in the left menu panel and also along the top panel after a click on a bill number.

The easiest means of checking on bill status during or after floor debate is to return to **Status** with the bill number, then click on the bill number to light up the top toolbar and click on **History**. **Roll Call Votes in floor session** are assigned numbers. Clicking on the numbers brings up a list of how each member voted: Y, Yea; N, Nay; P, Present, or, if Absent, A.

**End of the Day Reports**, the eighth item of the left menu panel, will bring up long lists by bill numbers. Current Status Report, 1<sup>st</sup> Readings, 2<sup>nd</sup> Readings, and Day's Activity. **Day's Activity** lists all of the action on the previous legislative day.

## Further Information and Troubleshooting

Be sure to refer to the Frequently Asked Question section of the ALISON web site if you have any problems accessing any areas of ALISON. It is the second option on the **Welcome to ALISON** page located at <http://alisdb.legislature.state.al.us/acas/alisonstart.asp>

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Some computers may also require that a Microsoft ActiveX component be downloaded. To download any of this software, click ALISON Software Downloads on the **Welcome to ALISON** page.

Difficulties in turning on the top tool bar (History, Sponsors, Amendments/Substitutes/ and View) may require turning off privacy software that blocks pop-ups.

For lengthy and detailed explanations, click **Help** on the right of the top menu panel of ALISON.

For further information about the Alabama Legislature, go to the legislature's official web site at: **[www.legislature.state.al.us](http://www.legislature.state.al.us)**

At that site, there are web pages for each member of the House of Representatives and Senate, a list of standing committees for each house with their chairs and members, Rules of the two houses, Joint Rules, a detailed explanation of the legislative process in Alabama and more.