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— In Memoriam —
Louise Pittman
(1914—2005)

Louise Pittman was one of our heroes. For 54 years she worked “inside the system” at the Department of Human Resources, retiring in 1988 as Director of Family and Children’s Services. In so-called “retirement” she worked tirelessly another 16 years to improve the lives of Alabama’s children. She was a formidable volunteer lobbyist, both in person and by phoning friends – usually social workers – in many counties to urge them to call lawmakers. She helped shape NASW, VOICES, various Methodist ministries, Arise, and other worthy causes. She taught us so much. We are honored that her family designated Arise as a recipient of memorial contributions. We’ll list the donors in the next ACPP newsletter.

Calendar notes

Auburn Cluster meeting
12 noon – 1:00 pm Th April 21,
Auburn U-U Fellowship

Mobile 12 noon – 1:30 pm
Th April 7 Trinity Gardens
Dortch Community Center, Men
& Women of Valor Awards.

Walking to D.C.! Arise member
Lisa Thomas of Brewton is
“walking for justice” this spring.
To offer encouragement (or a
place to stay along the way) call
her at (251) 752-8433 (cell).



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March 31, 2005

SB 247 moves to full Senate
Landlord-tenant bill clears hurdle

By Melissa Oliver, Arise legislative coordinator

In a voice vote with no dissension, the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 30th gave the Alabama Uniform Residential Landlord and Tenant Act a favorable report for consideration by the full Senate. Floor debate could begin as early as Tuesday, April 5. Arise endorsed the bill, drafted by legal experts under the guidance of the Alabama Law Institute (ALI), after negotiations with the Realtors’ Association failed to produce a compromise. Arise is asking members to contact their state senators and urge support for Senate Bill 247.

Also at the March 30th meeting, the committee carried over the Realtors’ bill (SB 172) at the sponsor’s request. The bill can be considered by the committee at a later date. Although Arise state coordinator Kimble Forrister was prepared to testify, Judiciary Chair Rodger Smitherman announced that no public hearing would take place.

For more than a decade, Arise members have hammered the point that Alabama needs a landlord-tenant law. This year, the quality of proposed legislation is an urgent concern. Both the ALI bill and the Realtors’ bill address the glaring need for regulation, but Arise’s analysis shows that the two proposals

differ sharply in their consequences for low-income renters.

The ALI bill (SB 247) offers Alabama model legislation that has been implemented in varying versions by 20 other states. It is balanced in considering the interests of both landlords and tenants

and will bring fairness to all major aspects of the landlord-tenant relationship. SB 247 would grant to Alabama tenants basic protections, such as the right to initiate modest repairs and deduct the cost from their rent if the land-

lord has failed to make the requested repairs in a timely manner.

By contrast, the Realtors’ bill would merely codify existing inequities in rental transactions. For example, while SB 172 contains extensive habitability criteria, it effectively removes those protections if a tenant is in default under even minor terms of the lease. This “escape clause” suggests that the bill’s main purpose is to expedite the eviction process.

Alabama is one of only two states that provide no meaningful protections for tenants. Arise recognizes that most Alabama landlords provide habitable dwellings as a matter of fair dealing and sound business. A minority of landlords, however, will continue to prey on tenants until state law prohibits unfair and unsafe practices.

Action: Call your state senator and urge him or her to support SB 247, the Alabama Uniform Residential Landlord and Tenant Act. You’ll find contact information at the “Legislation” link on www.alarise.org.

A few words from Kimble –

Your calls made a difference!

Arise was concerned that deregulation of residential telephone service would be detrimental to low-income people, especially in rural areas. An outpouring of calls to the State Senate forced BellSouth to make several concessions in the telephone deregulation bill. They agreed to three amendments that addressed Arise's concerns. All three amendments were added to the bill before it passed the Senate.

As a result of these amendments, Alabama Arise is dropping its opposition to the bill.

This does not mean we support the bill! It means that our concerns about low-income customers have been addressed. You are free to make up your own mind about the controversial issue of deregulation. Deregulation has been good in some industries and bad in others.

If the bill passes in its current form, basic home telephone service by "land lines" will continue to be regulated. This was "the deal" between us and BellSouth: Low-income people continue to get the assurance that basic service is regulated; BellSouth will have the flexibility to meet competitors' bargain prices for "bundled" service (multiple features offered as a single-price package). And to top it all off, we have this provision: BellSouth can't charge more for the deregulated bundle than customers pay for the same set of services under regulation.

With peace,

We appreciate our contributors!

Our member groups provide most of the funding for Alabama Arise. Individuals also send checks that are not tax-deductible. Here are the donors who gave between March 13, 2004, and March 23, 2005:

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AAUW, Shoals Chapter
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Ala. Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Alabama Coalition Against Hunger
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Alabama Rivers Alliance, Birmingham
Alabama Rural Ministry, Auburn
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All Saints Interfaith Center of Concern, Anniston
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Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Huntsville
Holy Trinity Community Ministry, Auburn
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Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty
The Quest for Social Justice, Mobile
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Revelation Baptist Community Involvement, Mobile
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