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## A few words from Kimble –

**Do both Democrats and Republicans want tax reform?** Alabama Arise has been careful to maintain a bipartisan approach. We agree with both business leaders and nonprofits that Alabama needs a fair, adequate, simple and transparent tax system. Until 2006, the mainstream view was that tax cuts made no sense in a state with the lowest taxes in the country. Our income tax plan back then was designed to add revenue. After some Republicans told us they could support it if we would make it revenue-neutral, we redesigned it.

**This year we were able to maintain bipartisan support of the Tax Fairness Amendment in the House.** The House Republican Caucus did not take a position, and the bill got votes for and against from people in each party. By the time the plan reached the Senate, the Republican opposition hardened. Reversing their previous positions, Gov. Bob Riley and several senators now oppose revenue-neutral restructuring of the tax system, insisting that only tax cuts are acceptable. Remember the Christian Coalition's position in 2003? "I can support the tax cuts for the poor, but not the increases for the rich." That year, the Alabama/West Florida United Methodist Conference took a different position, saying, "Tax fairness requires not only cuts for those who have paid too much, but also increases for those who have paid too little."

**When low-income people pay 11.2 percent of their incomes** in state and local taxes – nearly three times the share paid by those at the top – we think it's good to adjust the seesaw at both ends.

With peace,



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## One legislative day remains

# Grocery tax bill hangs in the balance

**Senate supporters of House Bill 274, the state grocery tax repeal, fell one vote short** of the 21 needed to bring the measure up for floor debate on May 8, the next-to-last legislative day. The senators voted as follows:

**YES** – Barron, Bedford, Benefield, Coleman, Denton, Figures, Griffith, Lindsey, Ted Little, Zeb Little, McClain, Means, Mitchell, Mitchem, Penn, Poole, Ross, Sanders, Singleton, Smitherman.

**NO** – Beason, Brooks, Dixon, Erwin, French, Glover, Holley, Marsh, Pittman, Smith, Waggoner.

**ABSTAIN** – Butler, Orr, Preuitt.

**NOT VOTING** – Bishop.

**The procedural setback does not alter the status of the bill itself.** The constitution requires a three-fifths vote of members present to consider any bill before passing the budgets. If this Budget Isolation Resolution (BIR) fails, the bill simply remains on the calendar. HB 274

can come up again – even multiple times – on the last day of the session, May 19. Because the bill is a constitutional amendment, it is not subject to the governor's veto.

**The procedural vote was a measure of both how far the bill has come** and how difficult the last steps of major legislative

efforts can be. House passage of HB 274 on April 15 marked a major gain over last year's similar proposal, which failed to receive House debate. As frustrating as Thursday's close Senate vote was, Arise state coordinator Kimble Forrister found encouragement in the abstentions.

**"There were a lot of hard feelings in the Senate again this year,"** Forrister said, "and we're pleased that several senators are reserving judgment on this bill rather than helping to kill it outright. We see that hesitation as a window of opportunity."

**Over the final break, Arise staff and members hope to convince abstaining senators** that withholding support for the grocery tax repeal stands to harm the vast majority of Alabamians. A few Senate secretaries have been arguing back. If you call your senator's office about the grocery tax, you may be asked if you "agree with how they plan to pay for it." That is, do you realize you will lose your state deduction for federal income tax?

### **ACTION ITEM:** **Help with the final push!**

- Thank senators who voted Yes on the Tax Fairness Amendment.
- Ask senators who did not vote Yes to change their vote to Yes.
- Go to [www.governor.alabama.gov](http://www.governor.alabama.gov) and e-mail Gov. Bob Riley to stop opposing the grocery tax bill, return to his historic concern for "the least of these" and **support the bill!**

### **We hope they get two kinds of replies:**

- "Yes, my taxes will go up a little, but it's worth it if the grocery tax is lowered for everybody," or "if taxes go down for the least of these."
- "Yes, and I'm like most of the voters in my district. I'll come out ahead."

# **We value our faithful contributors!**

*Alabama Arise held two fundraising events last month. At the Tax Day Eve luncheon in Montgomery on April 14, Princeton University sociology professor Katherine Newman spoke about the plight of the “missing class” – working families whose income is above the poverty line but whose financial security can be compromised by a single crisis. On April 25, a benefit showing by Auburn Arisers of Michael Moore’s Sicko prompted a spirited discussion of health care options led by Auburn University political science professor Rene McEldowney. Arise thanks the following organizations and individuals who participated in these events and others who made contributions between March 17 and May 5, 2008:*

**AARP Alabama**  
**AAUW Decatur Branch**  
**AAUW Shoals Branch**  
**All Nations Church of God, Montgomery**  
**Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship**  
**Beasley, Allen, Crow, Methvin, Portis & Miles, PC, Montgomery**  
**Church Women United of the Shoals, Florence**  
**Consolata Missionary Sisters, Eutaw**  
**Covenant Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa**  
**Empower Alabama**  
**Episcopal Diocese of Alabama**  
**Family Promise of Montgomery**  
**First United Methodist Church, Fort Payne**  
**First United Methodist Church, Trussville**  
**Leadership Alabama, Montgomery**  
**Opportunities Industrialization Center, Montgomery**  
**Partners in Progress, Pine Apple**

**Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, Pine Apple**  
**St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church, Pelham**  
**St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, Birmingham**  
**The McWhorter Group, Montgomery**  
**United Methodist Inner City Mission, Mobile**  
**United Way of Central Alabama, Birmingham**  
**Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church**  
**VOICES for Alabama’s Children**

**Brenda & Jerry Boman, Notasulga**  
**Jon Broadway, Montgomery**  
**Bobby Cardwell & Roger McCullough, Columbiana**  
**Hill Carmichael, Birmingham**  
**Jim Carnes & Erin Kellen, Montgomery**  
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**Ruth & Will Liddell, Camden**  
**Rene McEldowney, Auburn**  
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**Melissa Oliver, Dadeville**  
**Cary Page, Huntsville**  
**Alice Paris, Tuskegee Institute**  
**Tommy & Alice Patterson, Decatur, Ga.**  
**John Pickens, Montgomery**  
**Mary Lynn & Walter Porter, Dadeville**  
**Helen Rivas, Birmingham**  
**Shirley Scarbrough, Montgomery**  
**Frances Sutton, Wetumpka**  
**Rep. Patricia Todd, Birmingham**  
**Jeanne Weaver, Birmingham**  
**Mary Weidler, Montgomery**  
**Randall Williams, Montgomery**  
**Carole B. Zugazaga, Auburn**

## **Arise receives “Beyond Rivers” award**

**Alabama Rivers Alliance (ARA) has named Arise as its first-ever “Beyond Rivers” Partner of the Year.** The award was presented at the 2008 Watershed Leadership Conference, held March 14-17 at Camp Beckwith in Fairhope. ARA selected Arise in recognition of the two-year partnership the organizations have forged in an effort to add environmental justice protections to Alabama’s existing environmental policies. The award also commends Arise’s broader work for social justice. Arise Citizens’ Policy Project policy analyst Simone Washington, a conference presenter, was on hand at the closing banquet to accept the award and convey the gratitude of Alabama Arise. *We appreciate our strategic partnerships!*

**Alabama Arise**  
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