

P.O. Box 612
Montgomery, AL 36101
207 Montgomery St. #900
Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone: (334) 832-9060 or
(800) 832-9060
Fax: (334) 832-9061

Sign up for our listserv by clicking
"Join the Arise discussion list" at
www.alarise.org.

A few words from Kimble –

We appreciate the calls and e-mails our members sent their legislators on the Tax Fairness Plan. Now that the grocers are on board, it's fun to watch how the support adds up from our base and theirs. Their voice is different. It's compelling when a business leader expresses compassion for people who can't afford food. It's one thing for us to say this plan is good for business; it's convincing when a business owner says the plan will help the retail economy.

As you write to your legislators, be sure to put the message in your own words. We now have a Legislative Action Alert page under the "Legislative" tab at www.alarise.org. There, you can send an e-mail on the tax reform plan to your senator and representative with a click of a button. *But please don't click until you've made the message your own.* Tell them why you care about the issue.

Remember: Emotion, not statistics, sells tax reform. Rep. John Knight talked movingly on Wednesday about the pressures on families' pocketbooks. His bottom line was: "Why does one of the poorest states still tax groceries?"

When you contact your legislators, be sure to let us know what they say. E-mail Melissa Oliver at mvo@olivertreadwell.com or call the office to give us an update. Melissa thrives on such insights – and she follows up in person.

With peace,



This newsletter made possible by the generous contributions of Arise members and friends
Vol. 21, No. 1

April 2, 2008

Bills move to full chambers

Committees OK grocery tax repeal

By Chris Sanders, policy analyst

Alabama took a step toward lower grocery taxes and a higher threshold for income tax Wednesday when legislative committees approved HB 274 and SB 431, the Tax Fairness Amendment of 2008. The House Education Appropriations Committee gave the plan a favorable report by voice vote. Meanwhile, the vote in the Senate Finance and Taxation – Education Committee was 15-1. The bills, sponsored by Rep. John Knight, D-Montgomery, and Sen. Hank Sanders, D-Selma, respectively, now move to the full chambers for consideration. If both the House and Senate approve the amendment by a three-fifths vote, Alabamians will vote on the measure in November.

At the heart of the Tax Fairness Amendment is the repeal of the 4 percent state sales tax on groceries. Alabama is one of only two states – the other is Mississippi – to tax groceries fully with no discount or rebate. For a family of four with a \$200 weekly food bill, the tax cut would represent a savings of more than \$400 a year at the grocery store.

The Alabama Grocers Association

has endorsed the proposal. "As grocers, we see day to day the struggles families have paying for necessities such as groceries and want to do something to help our customers," said Greg Gregerson, chairman of the association's legislative committee.

Grocery stores across the state will post signs in the coming weeks to educate shoppers about the plan and urge them to ask their legislators to support it.

The amendment also would raise the state's income tax threshold for a family of four from \$12,600 to \$20,000 a year by increasing standard deductions and personal exemptions. And it would end the state's full deduction for federal income taxes, which is worth thousands of dollars for the highest earners but less than \$100 for most people who make under \$100,000. Ending this deduction would allow the measure to be revenue-neutral, meaning the bill would neither increase nor decrease revenues for the state's education budget.

The committees' actions are promising, Alabama Arise state coordinator Kimble Forrister said, and a strong core of support for the measure exists in both chambers. But he cautioned that the next step will be a challenge.

ACTION ITEM: **Get your legislator on board!**

Call or write your House and Senate members and urge them to support HB 274 and SB 431. Then let us know what they say! See Kimble's column for contact information.

"In lining up commitments for a floor vote, the closer you get to a majority, the harder you have to work," Forrister said. "We're excited to get the committees' endorsements. The

committee debate highlighted both the growing support for modernizing the tax structure and a lingering reluctance to correct the imbalance. We hope this will be the year the people of Alabama get a chance to vote for tax fairness."

We value our faithful contributors!

Alabama Arise thanks the following organizations and individuals for their gifts to support lobbying efforts. These gifts were received between July 1, 2007, and March 15, 2008:

AAUW of Alabama
AAUW, Birmingham Branch
ACLU of Alabama
ADEM Reform Coalition
AIDS Alabama
AIDS Service Org. Network of Alabama
Alabama Association of
County Directors of DHR
Alabama Coalition Against
Domestic Violence
Alabama Post-Conviction Relief Project
Alabama Council on Human Relations
Alabama Kidney Foundation
Alabama New South Coalition
Alabama NOW
Alabama Rivers Alliance
All Saints Episcopal Church, Mobile
Ala./W. Fla. United Methodist Church,
Church & Society
Ala./W. Fla. United Methodist Women
Anniston Community Education
Foundation
Archdiocese of Mobile
Auburn First Baptist Church
Auburn Ministerial Association
Auburn Unitarian-Universalist
Fellowship
Auburn United Methodist Church
Baptist Church of the Covenant,
Birmingham
Benedictine Sisters, Cullman
Bethel Ensley Action Tasks, Inc.,
Birmingham
Birmingham Friends Meeting
Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church,
Tuscaloosa
Birmingham-Southern College
Arise Student Chapter
Canterbury Chapel, Tuscaloosa
Carlisa, Inc., Brewton
Church of Our Savior, Mobile
Church of the Nativity, Huntsville
Church of the Reconciler, Birmingham
Church Women United of Birmingham
Church Women United of Montgomery
Church Women United of South Baldwin
Civitan Club of Montevallo
Community Enabler Developer, Anniston
Consolata Missionary Sisters, Eutaw
Covenant Presbyterian Church,
Tuscaloosa
Edgewood Presbyterian Church,
Birmingham
Edmundite Southern Missions, Selma
Fairhope Friends Meeting
Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship

Federation of Southern Cooperatives
First Presbyterian Church of
Birmingham
First Presbyterian Church of Auburn
First United Methodist Church of
Birmingham
First United Methodist Church of
Guntersville
First United Methodist Church of
Tuscaloosa
Food Bank of North Alabama
Grace Episcopal Church, Birmingham
Grace United Methodist Church, Auburn
Greater Birmingham Ministries
Highlands United Methodist Church
Explorers Class, Birmingham
Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama
Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Huntsville
Holy Trinity Community Ministry,
Auburn
Homeless Coalition of the Gulf Coast,
Mobile
Independent Living Resources of
Greater Birmingham, Inc.
Immanuel Presbyterian Church,
Montgomery
Interfaith Ministries, Calhoun County
Jefferson County Committee for
Economic Opportunity
Jubilee Community Center, Montgomery
Lester Memorial United Methodist
Church, Oneonta
Lutheran Ministries of Alabama, Inc.
Mary's House Catholic Worker,
Birmingham
Metro Birmingham Services to the
Homeless
Mobile Fair Housing Center, Inc.
Monte Sano United Methodist Church,
Huntsville
National Association of Social Workers
of Alabama
National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Ala.
Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church,
Fort Payne
Our Lady Queen of Peace Church, Selma
People for Action for Community
Enrichment, Auburn
Partners in Progress, Pine Apple
People First of Alabama
Pilgrim Congregational United Church
of Christ, Birmingham
Presbytery of North Alabama
Prince of Peace Catholic Church,
Birmingham
Project Hope to Abolish the Death
Penalty, Atmore
Revelation Baptist Community
Involvement, Mobile
Sisters of Mercy of Alabama

Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester,
Pine Apple
Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus,
Tuscaloosa
Southern Poverty Law Center
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church,
Birmingham
St. Dominic Parish, Theodore
St. John's Baptist Church, Evergreen
St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Prattville
St. Maurice Catholic Church, Brewton
St. Paul United Methodist Church,
Birmingham
St. Peter's Catholic Church, Birmingham
St. Vincent's Health System, Birmingham
The Quest for Social Justice, Mobile
Trinity Episcopal Church, Florence
Trinity United Methodist Church,
Birmingham
North Alabama United Methodist
Church, Church & Society
Unitarian-Universalist Church of
Birmingham
Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship
of Tuscaloosa
Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship of
Montgomery
North Ala. United Methodist Women
United Presbyterians of Wilcox County
University of Montevallo Dept. of
Behavioral Sciences Arise Chapter
University Presbyterian Church,
Tuscaloosa
Urban Ministry, Inc., Birmingham
Valley Christian Church, Birmingham
Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church
Vredenburg Ministries
World of Opportunity Center,
Birmingham
YWCA of Central Alabama

Anna Blair, Huntsville
Bill Dixon, Florence
Barbara Evans, Lowndesboro
Kimble Forrister & Calli Patterson,
Montgomery
Peter Furst, Birmingham
Judy Gordon, Birmingham
Ruth Gynther, Auburn
Jennett Harris, Montgomery
Sheila Jackson, Montgomery
Dorothy Moore, Montgomery
Sr. Kathy Navarra, Vredenburg
Kay Phillips, Birmingham
Barbara Readal, Montevallo
Helen Rivas, Birmingham
Judy Roy, Bessemer
Floyd Sherrod, Florence
Larry Stewart, Alabaster
Martha Vandervoort, Anniston