



# Report

P. O. Box 1188, Montgomery, AL 36101  
Street address: 400 South Union St. #340  
(800) 832-9060 | [www.arisecitizens.org](http://www.arisecitizens.org)  
Facebook & Twitter: @AlabamaArise

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## We're hiring!

**Our longtime executive director Kimble Forrister is retiring.** We're seeking a new director to help keep Arise strong. Visit [arisecitizens.org](http://arisecitizens.org) for details on how to apply.

## Upcoming events

**March 12, Fairhope** – Baldwin County Arise meeting, Fairhope Friends Meeting House, 6 p.m.

**March 13, Mobile** – Mobile County Arise meeting, Dauphin Way United Methodist Church, 6 p.m.

## The staff corner



By *Presdelane Harris*,  
*organizing director*

People who don't speak aren't heard. But Arise members are some of the most outspoken people in our state. Faced with threats to our values and vision, you push past frustration, grief and anger to find the hope and strength to go to work. Since 2016, you've moved with new urgency to keep advocating for a better Alabama. You've gained new friends and allies in a broader awakening to civic engagement and action.

Together, we've informed, equipped and motivated folks to action. Your perseverance gives me hope that the committed actions of people loyal to their values can resist and overcome any threats. Though it may be long and difficult, this work transforms communities, cities, states – our nation. Keep speaking up, keep taking action, keep moving forward!

## Nearly 200 urge passage of public transit bill **Legislative Day shatters record!**

By *Chris Sanders*,  
*communications director*

**It's a good "problem" for Arise to have: Our crowds keep bursting at the seams.** Supporters like you helped us break yet another Legislative Day attendance record, as 199 people came to Montgomery on Feb. 6 to speak out on public transportation and other issues vital to making Alabama better.



**Your advocacy helped fuel a big policy win.** Shortly after Legislative Day, the House on Feb. 22 voted 99-0 for a bill to create the Alabama Public Transportation Trust Fund and sent it to Gov. Kay Ivey. (See Page 2.) Your energy and passion are setting the stage for other wins, too. Let's keep it going!

*Public transportation, payday lending reform and opposition to Medicaid work requirements were the policy focuses at Arise Legislative Day on Feb. 6 in Montgomery. The morning began with a policy briefing at St. John's African Methodist Episcopal Church (above). After lunch, members made their way to the State House to speak with their lawmakers about several Arise priorities, including a bill to create a state Public Transportation Trust Fund. Arise board member Alice Paris (below) speaks at a news conference about the proposal as the plan's sponsors – Rep. Jack Williams, R-Vestavia Hills, and Sen. Rodger Smitherman, D-Birmingham – look on at her left.*





## A few words from Kimble

By Kimble Forrister,  
executive director

**Is it a conspiracy?** Sometimes it feels like somebody is plotting to throw every possible obstacle into our legislative path. We've worked hard to stop five misguided work requirement bills. There's a bill to tilt the careful balance of the Landlord-Tenant Act back in the landlords' favor, cutting from seven days to three the notice they have to give for eviction. (See Page 3 for more.) That's not the first time they've tried that approach. And there is even more costly mischief afoot.

**U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz came up with a brand-new bad idea: to let money from 529 education savings plans pay for private K-12 school tuition.** The plans are popular as a college savings option, but turning 529 plans into a way to give a state tax break on private school tuition could spell trouble for Alabama's Education Trust Fund. It was a controversial idea in the U.S. Senate, where the vote was tied 50-50 until Vice President Pence broke the tie. If Alabama changes the rules for its 529 plans to embrace the idea, the average \$7,000 tuition for private schools will essentially become a tax deduction – at the expense of public schools. The ETF could lose as much as \$28 million a year. It would become Alabama's first broad-based tax break for private school tuition.

**I can't remember when we've had to play defense on so many bills.** Thanks to the 199 of you who made a great impression on our Legislative Day, the rest of our members can build on the image of a gallery packed with advocates. Now wave after wave of your emails are reaching lawmakers' inboxes, and our partner organizations are weighing in as well. Believe me, y'all are making a difference.

Yours in peace and hope,

## Trust fund creation sets stage for future funding A big win on public transportation

By Chris Sanders, communications director

**Alabama lawmakers have created an important tool to allow future state investment in public transportation.** The House on Feb. 22 voted 99-0 for a bill to establish the Alabama Public Transportation Trust Fund and sent the measure to Gov. Kay Ivey for her signature. SB 85, sponsored by Sen. Rodger Smitherman, D-Birmingham, and carried in the House by Rep. Jack Williams, R-Vestavia Hills, sailed through the Senate 26-0 last month.

**“Creating the Alabama Public Transportation Trust Fund is an important step forward for public transportation,”** Arise executive director Kimble Forrister said. “This move brings us closer to the day when our state will finally step up and invest meaningfully in public transportation so all Alabamians can get where they need to go in a timely manner.”

**Alabama is one of five states with no state public transportation funding.**

As a result, the state leaves tens of millions of dollars of federal matching funds on the table every year. SB 85 does not provide any state public transportation funding, but it creates a landing place for future appropriations.

**“The lack of state investment in public transportation makes it hard for thousands of Alabamians, especially seniors and people with disabilities, to meet basic everyday needs like going to the doctor's office or the grocery store,”** Forrister said. “It also serves as a barrier to economic development by making it harder for people to get to work. This bill sets the stage for needed investments to support and expand public transportation across Alabama. We thank Sen. Smitherman and Rep. Williams for sponsoring this important legislation, and we urge Gov. Kay Ivey to sign it into law.”

## Bill would cut cost of payday loans in Alabama ‘30 days to pay’ on move in Senate

By Chris Sanders, communications director

**Borrowers across Alabama would get more time to repay payday loans under a bill that cleared a Senate committee Feb. 15.** SB 138, sponsored by Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, awaits action in the full Senate.

**SB 138, known as the “30 days to pay” bill, would help consumers in several ways.** By increasing the state's repayment period for payday loans to 30 days (up from as few as 10 days now), the bill effectively would cut Alabama's maximum annual percentage rate on payday loans in half, from 456 percent to about 220 percent. It also would ease financial pressure on struggling families by putting payday loans on the same repayment cycle as many other debts, such as mortgages, utilities and credit cards.

**“This bill would help thousands of Alabamians avoid falling into a debt trap,”** Arise executive director Kimble Forrister said. “That would boost the state's economy by saving consumers millions of dollars in payday loan fees that are taken out of our communities every single year to benefit primarily out-of-state corporations.”

**“The ‘30 days to pay’ bill would be good for consumers, good for our state's economy and good for Alabama,”** Forrister said. “We thank Sen. Orr for sponsoring it, the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee for approving it, and the many members of Alabama Arise and the Alliance for Responsible Lending in Alabama who came to the State House to promote it. We urge the Senate to pass this bill quickly, and we ask for House members to do the same.”

# Cuts would come on the heels of tax breaks for corporations, wealthy Trump budget would slash housing, Medicaid, SNAP

By Chris Sanders, communications director

**Health care, food assistance and affordable housing would face huge federal funding cuts** under the White House's proposed 2019 budget. Those massive cuts to services that help everyday families get by would stand in stark contrast to the trillions of dollars of tax cuts that big corporations and wealthy people will receive over the next decade under the federal tax law that Congress passed in December.

**“The White House’s budget proposal lays out a vision of a dark and troubling future for struggling families across Alabama,”** Arise executive director Kimble Forrister said. “This plan would make it even tougher for hard-working Alabamians struggling to make ends meet. Life would become harder for folks at low and middle incomes, even as big corporations and

wealthy people would continue to enjoy huge federal tax cuts.”

**The service cuts would add up over time and hurt people in every part of Alabama.** The budget would slash more than \$200 billion over the next decade from SNAP assistance, which helps one in five Alabama families put food on the table. It would end the national Housing Trust Fund and cost Alabama more than \$140 million in federal funding for affordable housing next year, even as the state faces a shortage of more than 76,000 affordable and available homes for households with extremely low incomes. And it would cap federal funding for Medicaid, which provides coverage for one in five Alabamians – almost all of whom are children, seniors, pregnant women, or people with disabilities. By 2028, those cuts would balloon to hundreds of billions of dollars nationwide.

**The budget’s harmful proposals don’t end there.** The plan would cut benefits for people with disabilities and energy assistance for low-income households. It also would end Medicaid expansion for low-wage workers and allow state insurance regulators to make changes to weaken protections for people with pre-existing conditions like asthma, cancer or heart disease.

**“Public policies should make it easier, not harder, for working families to get ahead,”** Forrister said. “This budget is a wake-up call about the legislative goals and values of this administration. It paints a bleak picture for our country’s future, and we can’t afford to allow that vision to become a reality. Alabama’s members of Congress should reject this misguided agenda and instead work to ensure that families have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential.”

## HB 421 would allow rushed evictions Alabama’s renter protections at risk

By Den Wakeley, policy analyst

**Just three days.** If HB 421 becomes law, that’s all the time Alabama renters would get to correct a minor lease violation before landlords could kick them out of their homes. It would be a bad deal for more than 1 million Alabamians who rent their homes.

**HB 421, sponsored by Rep. David Sessions, R-Grand Bay, would undermine important safeguards for Alabama renters.** This bill would reduce the time for renters to cure, or fix, a lease violation from the current seven days to just three days. That would apply not just to unpaid rent but to any other breach of the contract. The bill also would change current state law so that any second breach of the same provision, no matter how minor, within a 12-month period would be incurable.

**Current law allows tenants to cure up to four lease violations within a 12-month period** as long as those breaches don’t involve activities such as illegal drug use or criminal assault. Here’s one example of just how unforgiving HB 421’s changes would be for tenants: If a landlord on a Friday found a tenant’s guest’s vehicle parked outside a rental home for a second time without a valid tag, the tenant could end up on the street by Tuesday.

**Alabama’s 2006 Landlord-Tenant Act set out a balanced set of protections for both sides of rental relationships.** Families shouldn’t be kicked out of their homes over minor mistakes. But HB 421 would tilt the scales back in landlords’ favor by allowing disproportionate responses to minor breaches, while giving tenants no meaningful chance to fix issues before losing their homes.

### **Updates on a few Arise bills of interest:**

**Child care:** HB 76 would expand state oversight requirements for child care and preschool facilities. *Passed the House and approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee.*

**Criminal justice debt:** SB 55 would allow the creation of hardship driver’s licenses for certain Alabamians with suspended or revoked licenses. *Passed the Senate and approved by the House Public Safety & Homeland Security Committee.*

**Death penalty reform:** HB 233 and SB 103 would impose a three-year moratorium on executions. *In the House Judiciary and Senate Judiciary committees.*

**Grocery tax:** HB 238 would end the state sales tax on groceries. *In the House Ways & Means Education Committee.*

**Housing Trust Fund revenue:** HB 273 and SB 242 would increase the mortgage filing fee to provide funding for the state HTF. *In the House Ways & Means General Fund and Senate Finance & Taxation General Fund committees.*

# Packed house: Scenes from Arise Legislative Day



*Our biggest Arise Legislative Day yet attracted nearly 200 people (above). Dan Clemons of Montgomery (left) was one of many Arise members who shared feedback on visits with his legislators. Other members, including Harriette Huggins of Auburn (right), wrote notes to lawmakers who were unavailable to meet. Policy director Jim Carnes (below right) argued strongly against Medicaid work requirements for parents. Our news conference drew statewide attention to creation of a Public Transportation Trust Fund – important progress on a long-term Arise priority. Executive director Kimble Forrister (below) spoke with reporters about how the plan will help urban and rural areas.*

