



THE ARISE REPORT

VOLUME 22, NO. 1 • MARCH 1, 2019

Arise Legislative Day is Tuesday, March 19!

Your voice matters! Make plans now to speak up for a better Alabama for all. **Join us at Arise's 2019 Legislative Day on Tuesday, March 19, in State House Room 200 in Montgomery.** Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m., and the event will last from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Legislative Day is an annual opportunity for Arise supporters to meet their lawmakers and make the case for policy changes to improve life for everyday Alabamians. We expect this year's advocacy to focus on Medicaid expansion and untaxing groceries.

Space is limited, so pre-register today at alarise.org to save your spot! Pre-registration continues through March 12.

Attendance and registration are free, but we suggest a \$10 donation to help offset the cost of lunch if you are able. You can make a donation when you pre-register online, or you can donate in person on the day of the event. We look forward to seeing everyone there!

How to advance our vision for Alabama's next century

By Chris Sanders, communications director | chris@alarise.org

What kind of future do we want for Alabama? It's a question worth reflecting on as our state enters its third century this year. Are we all right with limiting power and prosperity to a select few? Or would we rather build a state where everyone has a voice and where people of all races, genders and incomes have a real chance to get ahead?

Alabama Arise believes in justice and opportunity for all, and our policy priorities flow from that vision. It's why we support expanding Medicaid for Alabamians who can't afford coverage. It's why we want to rebalance an upside-down tax system that taxes struggling families deeper into poverty. And it's why we urge stronger investments in education, housing, public transportation and other services that improve quality of life and promote economic opportunity.

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With your help, we will win at the State House



By Robyn Hyden, executive director
robyn@alarise.org

It may seem like a wild notion, but I think you don't need to be wealthy to influence legislation.

Here at Arise, instead of focusing on the power of money, we focus on the power of people.

Instead of donating thousands to electoral campaigns or wining and dining legislators, we invest in organizing, education and listening to people who are directly impacted by policies.

We have worked hard to recruit members in every legislative district who share our values and our vision for what this state might be. When you take the time to contact legislators to support our agenda, you show that we have something more valuable than money: we have people.

As we ask you to take actions to influence legislation over the coming months, please know this: Your voice counts. Your calls, visits and messages can make all the difference. When we speak out together, I believe that we will win.

Thank you for speaking out!

Speaking out across Alabama

By Presdelane Harris, organizing director | pres@alarise.org

We love to hear from you! Arise organizers have traveled across Alabama this year, talking with folks about Medicaid expansion, payday lending reform and other issues. And we're excited that our members have spoken out to their legislators, too.

Arise members hosted two meet-and-greets with south Alabama lawmakers to discuss how citizens and officials can work together for positive change. Seven legislators joined more than 70 constituents in Mobile on Feb. 12, and three legislators joined about 50 people in Fairhope on Feb. 18. At both events, lawmakers shared their hopes for the 2019 session as we celebrated our common ground and committed to work toward understanding in other areas.

We thank everyone who attended these events, as well as everyone who came to our events in Andalusia, Huntsville, Tuscaloosa, Uniontown and other places across the state. You continue to embody the ideal that voices raised in advocacy are fundamental to shaping a better Alabama for all.





Arise members have continued to lift their voices across Alabama in recent weeks. More than 70 people attended our Feb. 12 legislative meet-and-greet in Mobile (opposite top). Turnout also was impressive at our Feb. 18 legislative event in Fairhope, where the panel featured state Reps. Matt Simpson, Harry Shiver and Joe Faust, along with moderator Rev. Clyde Jones (opposite bottom). Sheri Powell, president of the Covington County Grassroots Alliance, was one of many people calling for change during a Feb. 25 town hall on payday lending reform in Andalusia (above left). Cortney Brown and Mary Witherspoon were among Arise members who came to meet Arise staff before a Feb. 25 legislative forum in Huntsville (above right).

Court rulings aid push for reforms of civil asset forfeiture, death penalty

By Dev Wakeley, policy analyst
dev@alarise.org

The U.S. Supreme Court sent clear signals in February that the time is ripe for reform on two of Arise's 2019 issues. In *Timbs v. Indiana*, the court unanimously blocked Indiana's attempt to use civil asset forfeiture to take a car that was worth much more than the maximum fine for the crime for which the person was convicted.

And in *Madison v. Alabama*, a 5-3 court applied the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment to halt the execution of a man whose mental capacity had diminished during 33 years of solitary confinement.

Arise will work this year to remedy injustices in Alabama's civil asset forfeiture system. This process allows law enforcement to take millions of dollars from Alabamians every year, often without convictions or charges. Possible reforms include requiring a criminal conviction before the forfeiture, blocking agencies from profiting from seizures, and raising the burden of proof to link property to a crime.

Arise also will keep seeking reforms of Alabama's death penalty system, including retroactive application of the 2017 law that forbids judges to impose a death sentence when a jury recommends life without parole. Other changes include a death penalty moratorium and bans on executing people who have an intellectual disability or were minors at the time of the crime.

You can help Arise grow!

By Brenda Boman, development director | brenda@alarise.org

Our voice is more powerful than ever! As the 2019 legislative session begins, we're happy to report that Arise's individual membership has reached a record level. It's all thanks to supporters like you.

Why is this important? Because membership numbers speak volumes. That's why we're asking you to help Arise keep growing. First, make sure your own membership is up to date. If it's been more than a year since your last contribution, please renew now at alarise.org with a donation in any amount. Your gift will help to sustain our growing movement for change in Alabama.

To build a stronger coalition, we also need new members. Please tell your friends and neighbors about Arise and encourage them to join our chorus of people advocating for policies to build a better Alabama for all.

Arise speaks up to protect SNAP



Arise's work doesn't stop at the State House. Our members were part of the successful national outcry in late 2018 against a plan to cut food assistance under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). We also stood together in January to demand an end to a federal government shutdown that would have left millions of Americans at greater risk of hunger.

Arise policy analyst Carol Gundlach recently joined with other anti-hunger advocates to visit the Washington, D.C., offices of U.S. Sens. Doug Jones and Richard Shelby. Gundlach thanked them for voting against SNAP cuts and asked them to reauthorize the school meal program without harmful restrictions. She also urged the senators to continue to allow states to waive SNAP time limits in areas with high unemployment.

The delegation (top) included Laura Lester, executive director of the Alabama Food Bank Association; Kathryn Strickland, executive director of the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama; Gundlach; Caliste Chong, early childhood program coordinator for the Alabama Partnership for Children; and Kim Lawkis, director of policy and programs for the Alabama Food Bank Association. Laura Carlson, agency relations manager for Feeding the Gulf Coast (bottom, far left), also joined in meeting with Shelby staffer Michael Ciamarra (bottom, second from right).

SESSION PREVIEW

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We expect lots of infrastructure talk at the Legislature this year. The regular session starts March 5, but lawmakers may move quickly into a special session on the gas tax. Gov. Kay Ivey has asked legislators to increase the state's 18-cent gas tax by 10 cents over three years. That money would fund road and bridge maintenance and other infrastructure improvements.

Many of Alabama's deteriorating roads are overdue for repair. But the definition of "public infrastructure" goes far beyond tar and gravel. Education, health care and public transportation also help lay the foundation for shared prosperity. This session could bring chances to strengthen those investments – and to make the tax system

that funds them more progressive.

HOPE ON GROCERY TAX, MEDICAID EXPANSION

One key breakthrough could be on a longtime Arise priority: ending the grocery tax. We came heartbreakingly close in 2008, when a bill to untax groceries passed the House and fell one vote short in the Senate. But Arise members never gave up the advocacy fight. Now legislators face renewed pressure to end or cut the state's 4 percent sales tax on groceries. (Some conservative lawmakers are urging a grocery tax reduction to accompany a gas tax increase.) Alabama is one of only three states with no tax break on groceries. It's a highly regressive tax on a basic necessity, hitting hardest on people who struggle to make ends meet. *(See enclosed fact sheet.)*

Pressure also is building for Alabama to expand Medicaid to cover more than 340,000 adults with low incomes. Medicaid expansion would save hundreds of lives annually and create a healthier, more productive workforce. It also would help save rural hospitals, support thousands of jobs and pump hundreds of millions of dollars into the economy. *(See enclosed fact sheet.)*

Our work for a brighter, more inclusive future won't end there. We'll keep pushing for stronger consumer protections against high-cost payday loans. We'll make the case for the state to fund public transportation and remove barriers to voter registration. And we'll continue seeking an end to injustices in Alabama's civil asset forfeiture and death penalty systems. *(See Page 3.)* Visit alarise.org and follow us on social media for updates throughout the year.