

## VISITING THE ALABAMA STATE HOUSE

### Legislative Schedule:

The Alabama Legislature meets in annual Regular Sessions, each of which can consist of no more than 30 legislative (meeting) days, within a 105 calendar day period. By statute, the dates for convening of annual sessions, for each year of a quadrennium (4-year period), are as follows (all times, Noon):

1st Year: First Tuesday in March  
2nd Year: First Tuesday in February  
3rd Year: First Tuesday in February  
4th Year: Second Tuesday in January

Special Sessions may be called at any time, by the Governor, for emergency or extraordinary reasons. Special Sessions can consist of no more than 12 legislative (meeting) days, within a 30 calendar day period. In his/her Proclamation, calling the legislature into such session, the Governor will state the date and time for convening of such session.

### Meeting Days:

Once in session, whether Regular or Special, the legislature regulates its own schedule of meeting days and times for convening. Normally, the schedule of a Regular Session consists of legislative (meeting) days on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with Committee meetings held on Wednesdays. However, please note, this schedule can change from week to week, and Committees may meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while their respective body is not in actual session.

Before planning a trip to see the legislature in session be sure to check the scheduled meeting days and times. You may do this by calling the Senate, at (334) 242-7800, and the House of Representatives, at (334) 242-7600. After hours, you may call these numbers to receive a recorded message, stating the day and time each body will next meet or visit the website [www.legislature.state.al.us/aliswww/aliswww.aspx](http://www.legislature.state.al.us/aliswww/aliswww.aspx).

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**VOICES for Alabama's Children's offers a full version of the Advocacy Toolkit online at [www.alavoices.org/Legislative Advocacy](http://www.alavoices.org/Legislative_Advocacy)**

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VOICES for Alabama's Children—Established in 1992 through the vision of leading child advocates was the first, and remains the only, organization to document the health, safety, education, and economic conditions of children in each of our state's 67 counties. From building public awareness to leading legislative advocacy efforts, all of our activities are based on a solid foundation of research. VOICES for Alabama's Children's goal is to ensure that all Alabama children have the best chance to succeed in life.

### State House Hours & Access:

Legislative office hours are 8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. During legislative session, evening hours are extended if either house is still in session. Access to the State House is provided during any hour that the legislature is in session.

### Meeting With Your Legislator:

If you wish to meet with your Representative or Senator, on a legislative day, it is best to call ahead to make an appointment.

### Legislative Information:

To find information on your legislator, visit [www.legislature.state.al.us](http://www.legislature.state.al.us) or call Senate information at (334) 242-7800 or House of Representatives information at (334) 242-7600.

### **IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS (Area Code 334)**

<b>Senate Office</b>	<b>242-7800</b>
<b>House Office</b>	<b>242-7600</b>
<b>Secretary of the Senate</b>	<b>242-7806</b>
<b>Clerk of the House</b>	<b>242-7609</b>
<b>Lt. Governor</b>	<b>242-7900</b>
<b>Speaker of the House</b>	<b>242-7668</b>
<b>Senate Bill Status</b>	<b>242-7826</b>
<b>House Bill Status</b>	<b>242-7730</b>
<b>Senate Public Information</b>	<b>242-7836</b>
<b>House Public Information</b>	<b>242-7730</b>

### **ELECTION INFORMATION**

For information regarding elections and registering to vote, please visit the Alabama Secretary of State's website at: <http://www.sos.state.al.us/Elections/Default.aspx> or call the Secretary of State's Election Division at 1-800-274-8683 or 334-242-7210.



# ADVOCACY MATTERS

How do we change the world for our children in a positive and sustained way? The answer is simple. If we want to change the world, we have to change policy. Children are powerless because they have no voice and they have no vote. They are virtual afterthoughts at best in the political process. That is where we come in. Through advocacy, each of us can help level the playing field for our children.

Melanie R. Bridgeforth, Executive Director  
VOICES for Alabama's Children

**WHY?** Policymakers want and need to hear from you about issues you consider important. They also know their political future lies in your hands!

**HOW?** Find your legislative representatives' contact information by visiting <http://capwiz.com/state-al/home/> and entering your home address and/or ZIP Code.

### Send a letter or email to your legislator...

A well-written letter or email is one of the best ways to let your legislator know your thoughts and opinions about a particular issue. Here are some tips for getting your message across effectively:

- **Be specific, brief and courteous** even if you don't agree with the policymaker's position on the issue. Legislators have many demands on their time. They appreciate letters that are short and to the point.
- **Identify that you are advocating** for VOICES for Alabama's Children and the children of Alabama.
- **Put the message in your own words.** Form letters and petitions don't have the same impact as personal, informed opinions.
- **Address your letter to a specific legislator(s).** Depending on your message, you may want to write to the sponsor of a bill, certain members of a committee, or your own legislators. Don't address your letter to the entire legislature.
- **Identify bills** by their number, sponsor and title (if appropriate).
- **Explain your position** on the bill and the importance of the legislation to you, your community and our state and ask for the legislator's support or opposition.
- **Give any sources of information** that you use to make your point. When possible, incorporate data from the *Alabama Kids Count Data Book* to strengthen your message.
- **Include your name, address and a little about you** — for example, where you work or what school you attend and remind them that you are a registered voter in their district.
- **Request a reply.** Always close by asking for a response in writing from the policymaker. You are taking time to contact them concerning this issue and since they are representing you, they should take time to write you back.

You may also consider sending a letter via fax which is another way to communicate quickly when time is of the essence.

#### Addressing a letter to a Senator:

Honorable (full name)  
(room #) Alabama Statehouse  
11 South Union Street  
Montgomery, AL 36130

Dear Senator (full name),

#### Addressing a letter to a Representative:

Honorable (full name)  
(room#) Alabama Statehouse  
11 South Union Street  
Montgomery, AL 36130

Dear Representative (full name),

#### Note:

- ♦ *If the Legislature is in session and your Senator/Representatives are in the Chamber, you may request that a message be sent to him/her through the receptionist.*
- ♦ *The House Chamber is on the 5th floor; the Senate Chamber is on the 7th floor.*
- ♦ *One of the best and most convenient ways of visiting with legislators is in their hometown offices, when schedules and timing may not be quite as hectic as during the legislative session in Montgomery.*

### Make a phone call to your legislator...

This is quick, easy and can be done at a moment's notice, making it an attractive method for legislative contact. Telephone contact is best utilized if you are asking a legislator to support or oppose a particular bill before a public hearing, a committee vote or a floor vote. Follow these steps for an effective call to your legislator:

- **Plan** your call carefully. Keep to the point and discuss only one issue. Organize your thoughts ahead of time and make notes to help you stay on track.
- **Begin** by introducing yourself and identify yourself as a constituent. Legislators are most responsive to the people who can keep them in office. If you voted for the legislator, mention that as well. State your topic and say WHAT you care about, SUPPORT or OPPOSE, and WHY. Use data from the *Alabama Kids Count Data Book* when possible.
- **Request** a response. Regardless of your legislator's stand on an issue, never use abusive language or threaten them in any way. If the policymaker does not support the bill you are calling about, kindly let them know that you are disappointed in their position and hope that he will reconsider his position on the bill.
- **Thank** the legislator for their time and let them know that you will track the issue.
- **Recruit** and persuade other like-minded individuals to make a call as well. Particularly with phone calls, quantity is critical.
- **PLAN to call from time to time** as you are following the issue. Let them know you are talking to people in your community and will follow up with them as events develop.
- **Remember** you may not be able to reach your legislator if you are calling his office during the legislative session. Be prepared to leave a message instead.

During the session, Representatives may be contacted by calling (334) 242-7600;

Senators may be contacted by calling (334) 242-7800.

You may also find a direct number using ALISON:

<http://www.legislature.state.al.us/aliswww/aliswww.aspx>

### Meet face-to-face...

The most effective means, to express your view on an issue to your legislator, to positively affect the outcome of policy debates and legislation, is to speak with legislators face-to-face. Follow these steps for a productive meeting:

- **Plan** your call or visit carefully. Keep to the point and discuss only one issue. Organize your thoughts ahead of time and make notes to help you stay on track.
- **Make an appointment.** Be respectful of the legislator's time. Call or write for an appointment before your visit to the Capitol.
- **Discuss how the legislation you are concerned about will affect you,** your family, your friends, and your community. Personal stories make a powerful statement and are proven to achieve results.
- **Prepare a one-page fact sheet** about your issue that will provide the legislator with content, background to help them decide.
- **Follow-up after the visit** with a personal thank you letter to the legislator or staff member for their time. Also, offer your assistance or expertise on this matter in the future.