



# Report

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## Arise Legislative Day

**Tuesday, Feb. 28**  
9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Capitol Auditorium  
Montgomery

## Upcoming events

**Jan. 8, Birmingham** – Public transit issue preview, Unitarian Universalist Church of Birmingham, [12:15 p.m.](#)

**Jan. 10, Mobile** – South Alabama Arise meeting, Dauphin Way United Methodist Church, [6 p.m.](#)

**Jan. 19, Florence** – Arise issue preview, Royal Avenue Recreation Center, [11 a.m.](#)

**Jan. 19, Huntsville** – Arise issue preview, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, [6:30 p.m.](#)

**Jan. 23, Birmingham** – “Ban the box” advocacy training, Greater Birmingham Ministries, [6 p.m.](#)

**Jan. 24, Decatur** – Arise issue preview, Decatur-Morgan County Senior Center, [11 a.m.](#)

**Jan. 26, Tuscaloosa** – Arise issue preview, Grace Presbyterian Church, [5:30 p.m.](#)

**Jan. 26, Montgomery** – Arise issue preview, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Montgomery, [6 p.m.](#)

**Feb. 7, Montgomery** – Alabama Legislature’s 2017 regular session begins, [noon.](#)

## **Together, we’re pushing back against threats** **Our work is more vital than ever**

By *Chris Sanders,*  
*communications director*

**What kind of future will we leave for our children and our grandchildren?** It’s a question that has animated Arise’s work since our founding, and one that must remain at the core of our advocacy, analysis and organizing.

**There’s no gentler way to put it: Huge challenges lie ahead for families across Alabama.** Leaders of

the new Congress have vowed to repeal the Affordable Care Act and likely will seek big changes to Medicaid’s structure. Those plans could jeopardize health coverage for hundreds of thousands of Alabamians – and they may move quickly in the new year. (*See Page 2 for details.*)

**Arise members have plenty of work to do at the state level, too.** We’ll continue calling for improvements to Alabama’s upside-down tax system, which drives many families deeper into poverty while raising too little money to provide adequate support for education, public health and public safety. We’ll keep urging an end to the chronic shortfalls that make it harder to invest in affordable housing and public transportation. We’ll build on growing momentum to protect consumers from getting trapped in high-cost payday



*For more than 25 years, Arise has worked through advocacy, analysis and organizing to build an Alabama where everyone has a voice and an opportunity to get ahead in life. We’re grateful for your support, and we need you to continue to stand with us – and encourage your friends and neighbors to join us, too! – as our movement for change enters the next 25 years.*

and title loan debt. And we’ll continue making the case for a higher minimum wage, a “ban the box” law and other policies that can help Alabamians build better lives for their families.

**The road to a better Alabama may be long, but we’ll get there together.** With your support, Arise has built a movement for a more just, more equitable Alabama. We’ve accomplished a lot together over the years – a permanent tax cut for low-income families, a law to protect renters’ rights, repeated success in blocking Medicaid cuts – and we can’t stop now.

**Please continue lending your voice and your financial support to keep Arise strong.** Together, we can build a brighter future that we’ll be proud for our children and grandchildren to inherit.



## A few words from Kimble

By Kimble Forrister,  
executive director

**“What gives you hope?”** That was the question that started the meeting of Arise members in Mobile this week. Some said Arise gives them hope – just knowing that hundreds of people across Alabama are speaking out on urgent issues at the same time. I agree. Y’all do great work!

**Don’t be surprised if your first Arise alert in 2017 is about the Affordable Care Act.** Congress may vote on “repeal without replace” in its very first week back. It may sound reasonable for lawmakers to set a repeal date two years away (and take their time to devise a replacement), but it’s fraught with danger. We must insist – as some moderate Republicans do – that they shouldn’t repeal the ACA until they can compare plans to see which (if any) is better.

**The day after the election, we began to get press calls about Medicaid block grants.** We have some educating to do on this issue. When a sour economy pushes more children and seniors into poverty, Medicaid costs rise. Legislators see the growing General Fund costs, but they don’t always realize that a \$300 million state increase for Medicaid brings in nearly \$700 million in federal funds.

**If Congress turns Medicaid into a block grant, the federal amount would be frozen.** From then on, any shortfall would be entirely Alabama’s to pay. We believe all Americans should help pay for the health care of children, seniors, and people with disabilities in high-poverty states, because poverty is a national problem.

**It’s going to be a tough year.** We’re glad you’re with us, and we hope you will invite others to join the cause!

With peace,

## Threats to Medicaid, ACA loom in new Congress Affordable health care at risk in 2017

By Jim Carnes, policy director

**Millions of Alabamians will lose basic health protections** if the new president and congressional leaders make good on their promise to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Those hit would include not only the 195,000 Alabamians enrolled in Marketplace health coverage, but also the millions who gained coverage of pre-existing conditions, free preventive services, the right to stay on parents’ health plans up to age 26 and other benefits. The impact will be especially harsh if Congress fails to have an alternative plan in place at the time of repeal.

**Nine out of 10 Alabamians who have Marketplace coverage get income tax credits to reduce premium costs.** Losing these discounts likely would make health insurance unaffordable for most Marketplace participants. A repeal plan may eliminate the Marketplace altogether, causing further disruption.

**Damaging changes could be ahead for Medicaid as well.** Medicaid is now a federal-state partnership that operates as an entitlement program, serving anyone deemed eligible by the state. Medicaid covers one in five Alabamians – mostly children, seniors, people with disabilities, and pregnant women. Alabama now contributes only about 30 percent of its Medicaid program’s funding, with federal matching dollars covering the remaining 70 percent.

**Many congressional Republicans are pushing to change Medicaid to a block grant.** That move would limit Alabama’s federal Medicaid allocation to a fixed amount each year, regardless of the state contribution. Many state legislators are on record in support of such a plan. They tout increased flexibility from relaxing federal requirements on eligibility and covered services. But because Alabama has cut Medicaid eligibility and coverage to the most stringent levels in the country,

that flexibility likely would come at a high price to children, seniors and other vulnerable Alabamians.

**Conversion to a Medicaid block grant would mean higher state costs or less coverage in the future.** Other block-granted programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) have seen their funding fall dramatically over time, making it harder to respond to recessions or meet the needs of a growing population.

**States like Alabama, with minimal Medicaid funding in the first place, likely would suffer the most under a block grant,** which offers no margin to meet higher demand during economic downturns or to pay for new medical breakthroughs. A related proposal to enact a per capita (or per-person) cap on Medicaid funding would allow for enrollment growth, but it also would severely limit the program’s ability to respond to economic downturns or health emergencies. It also could open the door for new eligibility restrictions.

**Alabama is one of 19 states that have not expanded Medicaid to include low-income working adults.** That decision will make the coverage gap permanent and deprive our economy of billions of dollars a year if Congress converts Alabama Medicaid to a block grant based on current spending.

**The specter of these changes raises additional concerns for Alabama’s forthcoming Medicaid regional care organization (RCO) reforms.** Three of the proposed 11 RCOs already have pulled out of the program because of uncertainties about the Legislature’s commitment to long-term Medicaid funding. With the future of federal funding in doubt, the remaining RCOs and their supporters, including Arise, face a steep challenge in securing the groundbreaking Medicaid reforms that emphasize preventive care to help keep patients healthier across Alabama.

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# Thank you for your support!

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