

ALABAMA   
**Arise**  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Medicaid expansion, end to grocery tax highlight Arise's 2019 priorities**

*Payday lending reform, universal voter registration among other issues chosen at annual membership meeting*

Medicaid expansion and legislation to end the state sales tax on groceries are among the top goals on Alabama Arise's 2019 legislative agenda. More than 200 Arise members picked the organization's issue priorities at its annual meeting Saturday in Montgomery. The seven issues chosen were:

- Tax reform, including untaxing groceries and closing corporate income tax loopholes.
- Adequate funding for vital services like education, health care and child care, including approval of new tax revenue to protect and expand Medicaid.
- State funding for the newly created Public Transportation Trust Fund.
- Consumer protections to limit high-interest payday loans and auto title loans in Alabama.
- Legislation to establish automatic universal voter registration in Alabama.
- Reforms to Alabama's criminal justice debt policies, including changes related to cash bail and civil asset forfeiture.
- Reforms to Alabama's death penalty system, including a moratorium on executions.

"Public policy barriers block the path to real opportunity and justice for far too many Alabamians," Alabama Arise executive director Robyn Hyden said. "We're excited to unveil our 2019 blueprint to build a more just, inclusive state and make it easier for all families to make ends meet."

Alabama's failure to expand Medicaid to cover adults with low wages has trapped about 300,000 people in a coverage gap, making too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to receive subsidies for Marketplace coverage under the Affordable Care Act. Expanding Medicaid would save hundreds of lives, create thousands of jobs and pump hundreds of millions of dollars a year into Alabama's economy. Expansion also would help keep rural hospitals and clinics open across the state.

The state grocery tax is another harmful policy choice that works against Alabamians' efforts to get ahead. Alabama is one of only three states with no sales tax break on groceries. (Mississippi and South Dakota are the others.) The grocery tax essentially acts as a tax on survival, adding hundreds of dollars a year to the cost of a basic necessity of life. The tax also is a key driver of Alabama's upside-down tax system, which on average forces families with low and moderate incomes to pay twice as much of what they make in state and local taxes as the richest Alabamians do.

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[Alabama Arise](#) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan coalition of congregations, organizations and individuals promoting public policies to improve the lives of low-income Alabamians.