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Time running out on removing Alabama grocery tax

If the Alabama Legislature is finally going to move toward eliminating the state portion of the sales tax on groceries - something that should have been done years ago - lawmakers need to act next week.

With the regular legislative session down to just five meeting days, lawmakers are running out of time to get legislation through to eliminate the 4 percent sales tax on groceries that goes to the state.

Committees in both the House and Senate have approved different versions of legislation removing the sales tax, but it remains to be seen whether either chamber will take the issue up for debate.

This is not a tax cut per se, since the revenue would be replaced by capping the state deduction for federal income taxes paid for Alabamians with higher incomes. But it would shift some of the taxation burden toward working Alabamians more able to bear it.

A recent poll by the Capital Survey Research Center, an arm of the Alabama Education Association, found that almost two-thirds of Alabamians support ending the state sales tax on groceries and replacing the revenue to the state by increasing income taxes.

The poll questioned respondents on the Senate version of the plan, which would replace the revenue by capping the state deduction for federal income taxes for taxpayers with annual adjusted gross incomes above \$100,000 for singles and \$200,000 for couples.

The House version would end the state grocery tax and phase out the deduction for federal income taxes for singles above \$75,000 and couples above \$125,000.

Kimble Forrister of Alabama Arise said he is not surprised that a range of Alabamians favor ending the state sales tax on groceries.

"Alabama is one of the last two states with no tax break on groceries, and people of all races and political beliefs are getting tired of that," he said.

Since the issue involves a constitutional amendment, the voters would have to approve whatever comes out of the Legislature before it becomes law.

Legislators should trust the people of Alabama to decide this issue.