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Calendar notes

Tues., Feb. 8 – Kimble Forrister on “Budget Priorities,” 7:00 p.m., University Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa.

Feb. 18-19 – Conference on the death penalty, Mountain Brook (See box at lower right.)

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET HEARINGS

Tues., Feb. 8, Capitol Auditorium

10:00 a.m. – Legislative Fiscal Office budget overview by LFO Director Joyce Bigbee

11:00 a.m. – Governor’s budget overview by Finance Director David Perry

1:00 p.m. – State employee and teacher retirement programs

Wed., Feb. 9, House Chamber

10:00 a.m. – Alabama Medicaid

1:00 p.m. – Corrections

Thurs., Feb. 10, House Chamber

10:00 a.m. – Higher education

1:15 p.m. – K-12

3:00 p.m. – Postsecondary

2011 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Tues., March 1 – Opening day! Between now and then, arrange to see your lawmakers in the district. (To find your state senator and representative, go to “Shortcuts” on the arisecitizens.org home page and click on “Find your legislators.”) Welcome the new ones, and tell everyone Arise looks forward to working with them.

ARISE 2011 POLICY CONFERENCE

Fri., March 4 – AUM. See enclosed brochure. Registration deadline Feb. 25!

Report

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Vol. 14, No. 1

January 21, 2011

\$55 million bonus for Medicaid

Alabama #1 in children’s outreach

By Jim Carnes, health policy analyst

For the second year in a row, Alabama has led the nation in enrolling uninsured low-income children in health coverage through Medicaid. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services last month awarded Alabama Medicaid a \$55 million performance bonus for its outreach efforts. The state exceeded its 2010 federal enrollment target by 133,000 children. Alabama’s bonus was the largest of 15 state awards and made up more than a quarter of the \$206 million total. Technical assistance from ACPP helped the state meet the bonus requirements.

Funding for the performance bonuses was part of the Children’s Health Insurance Program Re-authorization (CHIPRA) law signed by President Obama in February 2009. To qualify for the awards, states had to meet two sets of performance goals defined by CHIPRA: adopting at least five of eight recommended simplifications in child enrollment and retention processes and exceeding federal expectations for Medicaid enrollment of eligible children.

Alabama already had implemented four of the simplifications before CHIPRA passed: a 12-month continuous enrollment period; elimination of the in-person interview; removal of asset limits for pregnant women and children; and a joint application for Medicaid and ALL Kids, Alabama’s children’s health insurance program. ACPP provided research and technical support for

implementing a fifth simplification, Express Lane Eligibility. This change allows Medicaid workers to accept income findings from other state programs in determining children’s eligibility for Medicaid coverage.

The other states receiving performance bonuses for 2010 were Alaska, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin. In 2009, Alabama received a \$39 million performance bonus, more than that year’s nine other state awards combined.

“Once again, Alabama’s aggressive approach to children’s health coverage has put us out front,” ACPP executive director Kimble Forrister said. “This award is a timely reminder to the new Legislature that our system is a national model and needs continued support.”

Feb. 18-19, Mountain Brook Matters of Life and Death: Alternatives to the Death Penalty

A gathering for people who want to:

- Learn about Alabama’s death penalty.
- Consider faith-based responses.
- Hear from victims’ families who oppose the death penalty.
- Explore restorative justice.
- Share ideas for further thought and action.

Canterbury United Methodist Church
Get details at arisecitizens.org.

A few words from Kimble —

“March 4th is the only command in the calendar.” So says Dale Clem, the Huntsville pastor who recruited me to this job. And we’ve planned a nifty conference for that date to help our members and others “march forth” informed, equipped and inspired.

This year’s conference (our fourth such biennial event) will be different: We’ll be in Montgomery, we’ll offer only 10 break-out choices, and the space can hold only 250 participants. Since the Legislature convenes on March 1 this year, we will draw attention to critical issues and hear a legislative panel give its insights on what to expect in the weeks ahead. Our keynote speaker will be Anton Gunn, an energetic social-worker-turned-lawmaker-turned-regional director for HHS. He will give us an overview of the changes Alabama can expect when health care reform is fully implemented in 2014. Hope you can join us!

It’s a pet peeve of mine: empty claims that Alabama is Number 1. When Gov. Guy Hunt claimed he was signing an education reform bill that would make our schools the best in the country, a cartoonist drew a bus with no engine under the hood. When our new governor says we now have the “toughest ethics package in the country,” I want to see the independent report that ranks the states’ laws.

But when Alabama enrolls 133,000 more children for health coverage than the federal target specified, and far more than any other state, we have to be impressed. This is one more example of a spirit of collaboration in our health care community, from dedicated state employees to a range of stakeholders, including ourselves! Thank you for helping to make it happen.

Yours in peace and hope,

Thank you for your support!

Discerning readers may have noticed that some of the same names appear in every newsletter. These individuals help provide stability and sustainability to our organization through regular monthly donations. To learn how you can donate \$5 or more monthly, visit arisecitizens.org or contact brenda@alarise.org. Arise Citizens’ Policy Project thanks the following for their gifts received between Dec. 10, 2010, and Jan. 4, 2011:

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