



Weekly Update

*A weekly update from the
Association of County Commissions of Alabama*

This Week in the Alabama Legislature...Feb. 15, 2008

The House and Senate left Montgomery early Thursday for Valentine's Day and a holiday weekend, but not before passing one ACCA bill and putting several others in position for possible consideration in the coming days. Both chambers will return to work on Tuesday, the 6th work day of this year's session. And again, we anticipate a very busy week for county officials.

Although still early in the 2008 session, the hard work of county officials is already being noticed by both House and Senate members. Several members have stopped the ACCA staff to comment on calls or visits they have received from the county level. ***It is important that we continue this momentum. County officials and employees are encouraged to remain involved in the Legislative process and to quickly react to requests from the ACCA staff.***

Road and Bridge Funding — Three of the four-bills anticipated as part of this year's funding package for County Road and Bridge Construction were introduced on Thursday. In the House, two bills sponsored by **Rep. Mac Gipson (HB 470 and HB 471)** would increase the statewide gas tax and allow county commissions to levy a local gasoline and diesel fuel tax. A third bill, **HB 466 sponsored by Rep. Mike Hill**, clears the way for a second County Bridge Bond Issue.

The bills are pending in the House Government Appropriations Committee. The members of the Committee are listed below. Although the bills are not expected on the committee agenda this coming week, it is important that county officials use this time to contact each member to secure a commitment to vote to give the bills a "favorable report." House Government Appropriations Committee: *Chairman, Rep. John Knight; members: Reps. Page, Gaston, Allen, Baker, Beasley, Canfield, Grantland, L. Hall, Letson, C. Newton, Salaam and E. Thomas.*

The bridge bond issue legislation was also introduced in the Senate as **SB 357 by Sen. Larry Means.**

Bid Law Amendments — The House version of the bill that expands the local bid preference to 5 percent (**HB 100 by Rep. Pebblin Warren**) gained floor approval by the House this week. Appreciation is expressed to Rep. Warren whose remarks and leadership from the House floor helped secure the bill's passage. The legislation now goes to the Senate, where it is sponsored by the **Dean of the Senate, Bobby Denton.**

Litter — The ACCA-initiated resolution establishing a study commission on the enforcement of litter in Alabama, **SJR 13 by Sen. Hinton Mitchem**, was passed by the House on Tuesday and is awaiting the signature of Gov. Bob Riley. Appreciation is expressed to Sen. Mitchem for his leadership in passing the resolution so early in this year's session.

9-1-1 Communication — The Legislation that would allow local 9-1-1 districts to contract with the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center for network communication access was approved by a Senate Committee this week. **SB 220 by Sen. Ted Little** is now ready for action on the floor.

The House version, **HB 253 by Rep. Mike Curtis**, is awaiting action in the House Government Appropriations Committee and could come up for a vote this coming week. County officials are encouraged to contact the members of the Government Appropriations Committee, who are listed above under the Road and Bridge Funding section.

County Modernization — Both the House and Senate versions of the second County Modernization Act (**HB 110 by Rep. Richard Lindsey** and **SB 211 by Sen. Hank Sanders**) were given committee approval this week. Both bills are now ready for floor consideration in the House and Senate.

If the bills are to be considered in the early part of this year's session, it is important that county officials contact both House and Senate members to solicit their vote.

Amendments to Sex Offender Notification Act — The amendments to the Sex Offender Notification Act aimed at reducing the number of “released” offenders who are immediately re-arrested and placed in county jails is now pending committee action in both chambers.

The House version, **HB 332 by Rep. Blaine Galliher**, is expected on the agenda of the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday. The members of the Judiciary Committee are: *Chairman, Rep. Marcel Black;* *members, Reps. C. Newton, McMillian, Collier, DeMarco, Dunn, England, Hall, Irons, Ison, Keabey, J. Robinson, Salaam, Sanderford and Ward.*

The Senate bill (**SB 110 by Sen. Myron Penn**) is also expected on the agenda of the Senate Judiciary Committee. The members of that committee are: *Chairman, Sen. Rodger Smitherman;* *members: Sens. Penn, Bedford, Benefield, Brooks, Figures, Lindsey, Ted Little, Marsh, Pittman, Sanders, Singleton, Mitchell, Zeb Little and Orr.*

County Budget Authority — The legislation aimed at stripping the counties' budget authority (**SB 242 by Sen. Steve French**) is still awaiting action in the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee. Although many county officials have made calls, it is important that each member of the committee be contacted this weekend and asked to vote to “indefinitely postpone” the legislation. Senate Governmental Affairs Committee: *Chairman, Sen. Wendell Mitchell;* *members, Sens. Beason, Benefield, Coleman, Denton, Dixon, Figures, Lindsey, Means, Penn, Preuitt, Ross, Smith, Zeb Little and Waggoner.*

Safety Zones — County officials and employees are reminded to continue their contacts on the bills that would allow counties to post signs on dangerous road and bridge locations (**HB 16 by Rep. Jim McClendon** and **SB 121 by Sen. Tom Butler**). The passage of this bill would expose counties to increased liability because the failure to post such signs would be cited in court as the reason for every accident occurring on county roads.

Expansion of Bid Law Exemptions — Legislation increasing the bid law limit to \$15,000 and allowing the inclusion of “life cycle” considerations in determining the lowest bidder has been introduced in both the House and Senate (**HB 442 by Rep. Jeremy Oden** and **SB 364 by Sen. Parker Griffith**). The legislation violates ACCA policy, which states the Association will not support increasing the bid threshold beyond \$10,000. Further, the Association staff is very concerned about the “life cycle” provisions because the bill lacks specifics and could lead to many adverse audits by the Department of Examiners.

County Presence in Montgomery — **Tuesday, Feb. 19**, is the scheduled County Commission Day for *Bullock, Chambers, Clay, Coosa, Lee, Macon, Randolph, Russell and Tallapoosa* Counties. **Thursday, Feb. 21**, County Commission Days are set for *Baldwin, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecub, Escambia, Marengo, Mobile, Monroe, Washington and Wilcox*. Also, this year's County Day at the Legislature is set for **April 16 and 17**. It is important that all counties be represented at this event.

The real-time status of all ACCA, Danger and local bills can be found by going to acca-online.org and following the steps under “Legislative News.” Please make copies of this report for all county officials and employees. And remember, ACCA staff will update the Association's web site — acca-online.org — with the latest information on the activities in Montgomery.