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to Washington,  
ARA is there  
to benefit you!*

Friday, March 2, 2007

## **SPECIAL SESSION:**

### **Governor Wants to Raise Trust Fund Cap for Economic Development;**

Lower Interest Rate for School Construction

The Alabama Legislature returned to Montgomery a week early, because Gov. Bob Riley called them into a five-day special session to help bring new jobs to Alabama and get the lowest possible interest rate on money it will borrow for school construction.

The session began Monday, Feb. 26. The House General Fund Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance and Taxation-General Fund Committee both voted today to approve the governor's call proposals.

"A successful special session can set the stage for a decade of economic growth," Riley said. "So I am calling on legislators from both parties to put aside their political and personal differences – just for five days – and work together for the common good of our state."

A special session before the regular session begins was necessary because the governor's proposals require amendments to the state constitution. Proposed amendments cannot go before voters until at least 90 days after the close of the legislative session in which they are passed by the Legislature.

By approving the proposals in a special session ending March 2, the people will get to vote on them in June. The regular session doesn't end until June 18.

Riley has asked the Legislature to increase the state's bond-issuing capacity from \$350 million to \$750 million in order to offer industrial incentives to 10 plants the state is recruiting.

The Alabama Retail Association supports the governor's call to expand the state's economic development capability. "Any economic development is good for the retail industry," said

## **CRR EXTRAS**

### **BILLS**

### **ARA CONTACTS**

[Rick Brown](#)  
President

[Alison Wingate](#)  
Vice President

[Nancy Dennis](#)  
Dir. of Public Relations

[Brett Johnson](#)  
Member Relations Mgr.

### **LEGISLATIVE CONTACTS**

To contact members of the Alabama Legislature:

#### **WRITE:**

Alabama State House  
11 South Union Street  
Montgomery, AL 36130

#### **CALL:**

HOUSE: (334) 242-7600  
SENATE: (334) 242-7800

#### **E-MAIL:**

Most representatives can be reached through the House e-mail system by using the following format:

[firstname.lastname@alhouse.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@alhouse.org)

Those without e-mail addresses can be reached through the general e-mail

ARA President Rick Brown.

The governor is also asking that the voters to approve the creation of irrevocable trusts for the Public Education Employees' Health Insurance Plan and State Employee Insurance boards and guarantee that the funds in the trusts can be used solely for their intended purpose. These trusts are to address the unfunded liabilities of the state's health care costs for retired teachers and state workers. By creating these trusts for that purpose, Alabama will strengthen its bond rating, just before the Legislature considers new bonds for school construction in the regular session. The more positive the bond rating, the lower Alabama's interest payments will be over the life of the school construction bonds.

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## >> Other News

### ARA Legislative Agenda

#### ARA Sets Its 2007 Legislative Agenda

At its Jan. 23 meeting, the Alabama Retail Association board of directors approved the ARA's 2007 State Legislative Agenda. You can [read the full agenda online](#).

The agenda includes some old and some new issues. Among the new issues on the ARA agenda are online filing and payment of business license applications, a slight increase in late fee charges for consumer credit transactions to create parity and fairness, stiffer penalties when thieves make their escapes through emergency or fire exits and tax credits for small businesses that provide healthcare coverage for employees. Some issues that have appeared on the ARA agenda previously but have yet to be addressed by the Legislature include: further business license reform, completion of tort reform efforts begun in 1999 and a monthlong sales tax holiday for energy efficient products.

In a legislative session, ARA screens all legislation introduced to determine if it will affect retailers and then monitors any bills that could impact your bottom line.

In the 2007 regular session, which begins March 6, a divided Senate may make it difficult for any legislation to wind its way through the process. Still, your association and its governmental affairs staff has been and will continue to work for the issues mentioned and others of importance to retailers.

ARA's staff wants to make certain you get the most benefit

address:

[house3@alhouse.org](mailto:house3@alhouse.org)

There is no general e-mail address for senators. [Click here](#) for a roster of the state senators with their complete contact information.

#### LINKS GO TO CONTACT INFO:

The link to each lawmaker mentioned in this publication goes to their individual websites, which have contact information. You can also find out whose legislative district you live or work in under [Find Your Lawmaker](#) in the [Political Affairs](#) section of [alabamaretail.org](http://alabamaretail.org).



For committee assignments and clerk contacts for the Alabama Legislature, see [ARA's 2011 Legislative Roster](#).

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**Your Business Can Save  
Thousands**

from the value of your membership. As always, our legislative action requires your input. If you have a question or insight that you'd like to share, please contact [ARA President Rick Brown](#) or [ARA Vice President Alison Wingate](#).

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ARA constantly strives to increase the Value its members received from membership. Many members have been using our low-cost workers' comp program for years, but were asking for more. In January, we announced more savings. ARA members now have access to:

### **Cost-Saving Credit Card Processing:**

Through a partnership with Huntsville-based **CHECKredi**, ARA members get rates normally reserved for only the largest stores.

### **Discounted Inbound and Outbound Shipping:**

Through our arrangement with **PartnerShip** ARA members can save up to 27% on FedEx services and up to 70% on other shipping needs.

### **Budget Friendly Email Marketing:**

**Constant Contact** brings ARA members cutting edge e-mail marketing technology for as low as \$15 a month; members save up to 25%

### **Find Out More Today**

### **IMPORTANT EVENT THIS WEEK**

WHAT: **Birmingham Business Leadership Exchange**  
WHEN: **6 p.m. Wednesday, April 6**  
WHERE: Regions Center Upper Lobby Auditorium, 1900 5th Avenue North

*Complimentary parking available at Regions Center deck via 19th St. North*

The Speaker's Commission on Job Creation is partnering with the Birmingham Business Alliance to invite business owners of companies across the industrial

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spectrum to attend a "Business Leadership Exchange," and share their ideas about how to improve the business climate in the state. If you have any questions, please **contact the office of House Speaker Mike Hubbard at 334-242-7668**. If you are unable to come to the Birmingham exchange but would like to submit ideas and recommendations, you may [email them to Alabama Jobs Commission](#)

or join the conversation on Facebook at

[facebook.com/speakersjobscommission](https://facebook.com/speakersjobscommission)

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The *Capitol Retail Report* is another **Benefit from the Value** of **Alabama Retail Association** membership. For more benefits, go to [www.alabamaretail.org](http://www.alabamaretail.org)