



NEWS RELEASE

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Montgomery, AL – Alabama Unified Judicial System legislative initiatives are receiving favorable action during the 2008 Legislative Regular Session.

On Wednesday, April 9, 2008, The Alabama Juvenile Justice Act, sponsored by Senator Myron Penn and Representative Tammy Irons, received a favorable vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee and will now be presented to the full Senate for vote; The Judicial Selection for Vacancy bill, sponsored by Senator Rodger Smitherman and Representative Marcel Black, passed favorably out of the Senate Judiciary Committee with previous approval by companion bill in the House Judiciary Committee; The Law Library Bill, sponsored by Representative Marc Keahey passed favorably out of House Committee.

The Juvenile Justice Act is the product of years of study and collaboration by Alabama's juvenile and family courts, agencies, and other juvenile justice professionals. This Act will repeal and rewrite the current Juvenile Code and help thousands of Alabama children and save millions of taxpayer dollars. The updates to the current juvenile laws will result in the following: Ensuring compliance with all federal requirements relevant to the State's eligibility for federal funding for abused, neglected, and at-risk children; reorganizing and clarifying the Juvenile Code for easy reference and consistent application statewide; prohibiting the use of juvenile detention facilities for children who have not committed any crime; strengthening the authority of courts to divert non-dangerous children from the juvenile justice system; and promoting accountability in juvenile court proceedings by expressly defining the duties and responsibilities of key players throughout the system.

At present Alabama has several judicial circuits that provide a Merit Selection Commission for any judicial vacancy occurring in that circuit due to resignation, removal, or death. The Judicial Selection for Vacancy bill will provide for this selection measure to be applied state wide and also provide for a Merit Selection Committee for State Appellate Judges and Justices. The Merit Selection Commissions would be made up of lawyers and no-lawyers and serve a set number of years. No one on the Commission would be eligible for recommendation for judicial appointment while serving on the Commission or for one year after service. The Commission, upon vacancy, would interview candidates for the judicial vacancy and select three, on merit, and recommend those three to the Governor. The Governor would appoint one of the three recommended to the Judicial Vacancy. The appointee would then stand for election to that office for a full term at the time of the next election.

The Law Library bill would provide the presiding circuit judge of each judicial circuit to further use moneys currently designated for use by the county law library and allow the moneys to be used for other uses that promote the effective administration of justice. *****