



THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REPUBLICAN CAUCUS “WE DARE DEFEND OUR RIGHTS” 2013 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Republicans in the House of Representatives understand that the rights of Alabamians are under constant threat from an ever-expanding and encroaching federal government, committed liberal activists, and entrenched special interests fighting to preserve the dysfunctional status quo. For that reason, House Republicans propose this “*We Dare Defend Our Rights*” agenda for the 2013 legislative session, and will prioritize their work to ensure that each of these items become law.

Based upon the official state motto, adopted in 1923 at the suggestion of State Archives Director Marie Bankhead Owen, this agenda is designed to preserve the rights and liberties that Alabama citizens hold dear while also creating jobs, improving the economy and cutting needless spending and government waste. The items in the agenda include:

WE DARE DEFEND OUR RIGHT TO LIFE

The Women’s Health and Safety Act – Questionable Supreme Court rulings have eliminated the state’s ability to prohibit abortions altogether. However, states may enact meaningful abortion-related reforms, and the Women’s Health and Safety Act is such a measure. With this bill, House Republicans make clear that should a woman choose to have an abortion, it should be performed in the safest pre-and-post operative environment available. Specifically, this legislation would require direct physician involvement and set mandatory standards for nursing care and post-operative follow-up visits at abortion clinics as well as establishing severe penalties for non-compliance.

WE DARE DEFEND OUR RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS

Alabama Firearms Protection Amendment – House Republicans understand that many Alabamians cherish their right to own and use a firearm. Recent 5-to-4 opinions of the Supreme Court have threatened the sanctity of the 2nd Amendment, but have ultimately upheld the right of American citizens to keep and bear arms. If President Obama has the chance to fill any Court vacancies during his second term, these opinions could be overturned. Consequently, our state

constitution should, as strongly as possible, protect the right of every Alabamian to keep and bear arms. With this amendment, Alabama's 1901 Constitution will contain the strongest gun protection provisions in the country. If ratified, this amendment would require future courts to use strict judicial scrutiny in evaluating state laws that infringe on the right to keep and bear arms.

WE DARE DEFEND OUR RIGHT TO REFORM EDUCATION

The Local Control School Flexibility Act – Often, the rules and regulations passed down by the State Department of Education come in a one-size-fits-all, cookie cutter form. Yet, since school officials in the urban centers, suburbs, and Black Belt region of Alabama face different issues, schools should have the freedom to address them in a manner that makes sense for their unique situation. Through No Child Left Behind, we learned that the federal government's intervention in local education policy is plagued with issues. That's why decisions directly affecting public education on the local level should be made at the local level. With this bill, House Republicans will provide local school systems the ability to request more flexibility from certain state statutes, policies and regulations in order to make decisions that improve education within their districts.

WE DARE DEFEND OUR RIGHT TO TAXPAYER ACCOUNTABILITY

The People's Trust Act – When Alabamians overwhelmingly approved the transfer of \$437 million from the Alabama Trust Fund to the General Fund budget, they did so, in part, because legislators from across the state promised that repaying this loan would be their first priority for the 2013 session. Before any other bill comes to the floor of the House, we will pass legislation mandating that every borrowed penny be repaid. Unlike past politicians and legislative leaders, we intend to keep our promise. The payback structure will give the governor flexibility in making the Alabama Trust Fund whole, while containing benchmarks that ensure repayment by the end of FY 2026.

Government Reduction and Taxpayer Savings Plan – With the recent 'fiscal cliff' that raised \$43 in taxes for every \$1 in spending cuts, President Obama and Congress have demonstrated that they do not have Alabama's best interests in mind, and they will not get our fiscal house in order anytime soon. Republicans in the Alabama Legislature are committed to streamlining government, as demonstrated by merging two state agencies, the Departments of Labor and Industrial Relations, into one during the 2012 session. But more can, and will, be done. The Government Reduction and Taxpayer Savings Plan will focus on streamlining initiatives in the areas of law enforcement, information technology, and legislative services. Together, these bills will prove to Alabama taxpayers that House Republicans are serious about cutting wasteful spending, saving taxpayer dollars, and living within our means.

The Truth in Balloting Act – Citizens have no higher duty in a democracy than making decisions at the ballot box. When taxpayers are called to answer a ballot question, they deserve to know the exact ramifications of a yes or no vote. What they most certainly do not deserve is ballot language that is either filled with undecipherable legalese or embellishment designed to scare them into voting one way or the other. Too many times in the past, politicians have said one thing and done the opposite – this bill will eliminate that manipulation at the ballot box. Every time a statewide ballot initiative is proposed, a panel of five citizens, five attorneys, and five lawmakers will draft a ballot statement that plainly outlines the consequences of approving or disapproving a ballot question. The ballot statement will also be made available on the Legislature's website at least thirty days prior to the vote.

WE DARE DEFEND OUR RIGHT TO FREE ENTERPRISE

The 21st Century Workforce Act – Taxpayers deserve the strongest economy possible, yet President Obama continues to enact policies that are burdensome to business. Nevertheless, Alabama's economy is improving each year because companies choose to utilize the talent of our state's workforce. Instead of resting on our laurels, House Republicans want to strengthen the state's investment in career technical education by making sure high school students across the state have access to updated technology and equipment. This will help prepare tomorrow's workforce with the skills needed for a successful career in whatever field they choose, ensuring that Alabama businesses have the tools, and employees, they need to succeed in the 21st century.

The Red Tape Reduction Act – It's no secret that too many state and federal regulations hurt small businesses and inhibit their ability to create jobs. Businesses spend money, time and other resources complying with regulations, too often at the expense of productivity and employment opportunities. Before implementing a new regulation, agencies should ALWAYS consider the impact on jobs. The Red Tape Reduction Act would require each state agency to prepare an economic impact analysis prior to the adoption of any proposed regulation that could have an adverse impact on small businesses. This gives the Legislature an additional mechanism to protect our state's economy from needless and damaging bureaucratic initiatives.

WE DARE DEFEND OUR RIGHT TO OPPOSE OBAMACARE

The Religious Liberty Act – The Obama Administration and many federal agencies use mandates in an attempt to take over the religious freedoms guaranteed to employers by the U.S. and Alabama Constitutions. But House Republicans will not stand idly by and watch this President trample on provisions that our founding fathers viewed as sacred. The Religious Liberty Act would allow certain employers to opt out of specific overreaching ObamaCare mandates requiring employers to provide insurance coverage for contraceptives and abortion-inducing agents.

The Medicaid Block Grant Compact – Expenses for Alabama's Medicaid program choke up almost 35% of our State General Fund. Even though the Legislature appropriates money to the program, the state has little influence in who qualifies for Medicaid or what benefits they are provided. What's worse, ObamaCare regulations stand to make Medicaid even more unaffordable for our state. With Congressional consent, the Health Care Compact would place the authority and responsibility for healthcare regulation to the member states, and would provide the funds to the states to fulfill that responsibility. By becoming the fifth state to join this interstate compact, Alabama would send a strong message to Washington that demonstrates states can do a better job of efficiently running their Medicaid programs if the federal government would stay out of the way.

The Medicaid Fraud Reduction Act – No greater abuse can be committed against taxpayers than cheating a program designed to give a helping hand to our country's most vulnerable citizens. Medicaid is just such a program. But as with many entitlement programs, federal regulations and liberal activists have forged pathways for Medicaid to be abused and misused. With the Medicaid Fraud Reduction Act, Republicans are committed to increasing the efficiency of our state Medicaid program by improving the ability of the Attorney General's Office and the Alabama Medicaid Agency to pinpoint, investigate, and prosecute instances of Medicaid fraud and abuse.