

ALABAMA
State
Member Ballot 

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1

Eliminating the State Sales Tax on Food

Should the Legislature repeal the federal income tax deduction so the state can afford to eliminate the 4 percent state sales tax on groceries that are included in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food stamp program?

Yes No Undecided

2

Card Check

Should the Alabama Legislature pass a resolution urging the state's congressional delegation to vote against the Employee Free Choice Act or any other bill establishing card check as a means to organize a union in a small business workplace?

Yes No Undecided

3

Oil and Gas Exploration

Now that the federal moratorium on offshore drilling has been lifted, should the Legislature allow oil and gas exploration off the coast of Alabama?

Yes No Undecided

4

Election of Judges

Should candidates for the Alabama Supreme Court, Court of Civil Appeals and Court of Criminal Appeals continue to run under a party affiliation?

Yes No Undecided

5

Legislators Drawing Two State Paychecks

Should members of the Legislature be able to draw a legislative salary and also be employed full time by a state agency, school system, state junior college or four-year university?

Yes No Undecided

2009 EDITION

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{COMMENTS}

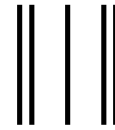
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STATE BALLOT ISSUES

1. Eliminating the State Sales Tax on Food

Should the Legislature repeal the federal income tax deduction so the state can afford to eliminate the 4 percent state sales tax on groceries that are included in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food stamp program?

Background: In 2008, the Legislature considered a bill to repeal the federal income tax deduction and eliminate the 4 percent state sales tax on groceries covered under the federal food stamp program. Under the bill, local governments could have continued to tax food.

Proponents would like to repeal the 4 percent state sales tax on food. Proponents say eliminating the 4 percent state tax would help needy families, saving them an estimated \$320 million a year. Proponents say the state would make up the lost revenue by repealing the federal income tax deduction.

Opponents argue that the federal income tax deduction helps put money back into the state's economy. Small business owners use the money saved through this deduction to upgrade equipment, hire additional employees and expand their businesses. This deduction saves taxpayers \$665 million a year. Repealing this deduction and eliminating the 4 percent state sales tax on food would amount to a \$345 million tax increase. Opponents note that cities and counties may raise local sales taxes, wiping out any savings to the consumer.

2. Card Check

Should the Alabama Legislature pass a resolution urging the state's congressional delegation to vote against the Employee Free Choice Act or any other bill establishing card check as a means to organize a union in a small business workplace?

Background: Organized labor supports federal legislation that would give unions a new method of organizing a workplace. Under current

federal labor law, employees cast secret ballots on the question of whether to organize their workplace. Under the Employee Free Choice Act, also known as card check, a workplace would be organized if a majority of employees sign cards authorizing union representation.

Proponents believe the current system of organizing a workplace is fair for employers, employees and unions. They argue that because card check wouldn't be secret, union organizers could intimidate, harass and coerce employees into signing cards against their will. One of the provisions of the Employee Free Choice Act is that federal arbitrators could dictate wages and benefits if employers and unions fail to agree on terms of a contract within a specific number of days. Proponents of a resolution opposing card check believe the Employee Free Choice Act is simply a plan to prop up weak labor unions, and that the bill would make it more difficult for independent employers to expand or create jobs or, in some cases, remain in business.

Opponents of a resolution believe the current system for forming unions and bargaining is broken. They argue that employers routinely intimidate, harass, coerce and even fire workers who try to form unions. Opponents of a resolution say the Employee Free Choice Act, or card check, is needed because it would let organizers avoid both the anti-union campaigns that can accompany such elections and direct confrontations between employees and their employer.

3. Oil and Gas Exploration

Now that the federal moratorium on offshore drilling has been lifted, should the Legislature allow oil and gas exploration off the coast of Alabama?

Background: Record-high gasoline prices in 2008 helped make energy costs the No. 2 problem facing small business owners. High prices also renewed the debate over whether to lift the moratorium on offshore drilling.

Proponents believe that allowing more offshore oil and gas exploration is a critical step toward reducing the United States' reliance on foreign oil, increasing the domestic supply of oil and natural gas, and lowering energy prices. Supporters also say offshore drilling is safe and would not harm the environment.

Opponents believe that increased offshore drilling would be a major source of pollution. Opponents worry a major oil spill would kill fish or other marine life and pollute nearby beaches. Some opponents believe the presence of more oil rigs offshore would hurt tourism by spoiling ocean views.

4. Election of Judges

Should candidates for the Alabama Supreme Court, Court of Civil Appeals and Court of Criminal Appeals continue to run under a party affiliation?

Background: Under Alabama's current election process, all candidates for elected office run under a party affiliation, including judges. For the past several years, legislation has been introduced that would no longer require judges to run under a party affiliation.

Proponents support the premise that all candidates should indicate their party affiliations. They believe some people would abstain from voting if the party affiliation was not required. Party affiliation is helpful to the voter to determine if the candidate's political views on issues are similar to the voter's views on issues.

Opponents support not listing party affiliation because candidates do not hold an office in a particular "district," but run statewide; therefore, they should not be required to list their party affiliation.

5. Legislators Drawing Two State Paychecks

Should members of the Legislature be able to draw a legislative salary and also

STATE MEMBER BALLOT ISSUES

be employed full time by a state agency, school system, state junior college or four-year university?

Background: Alabama legislators may also hold a full-time position as a public employee working for a state agency, K–12 school system, junior college or post-secondary

institution or a four-year institution. They are paid by both government entities.

Proponents say public employees should be able to run for office and serve in that capacity while continuing to work full-time for a government entity or the state school system. Public employees are supposed to use their

leave time to serve as an elected official when they are away from their full-time jobs.

Opponents say this practice, sometimes called “double dipping,” allows legislators to vote on their own pay raises for their full-time positions along with their salary as a legislator. Opponents say drawing two public paychecks is bad policy.



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