

Alabama Moral Monday Moral Policy Statements

1. Labor Rights

- **Policy Statement 1 (Right-to-Work Laws):** The union is the primary facilitator of working class activism and power. Our opponents know this, and that's why they have passed these laws which seek to pit worker-against-worker, and neighbor-against-neighbor. They call it "right to work"; we call it "right to work for less", and it must be rolled back.
- **Policy Statement 2 (Living Wage Bill):** According to USA Today, a worker making minimum wage in Alabama must work 72 hours a week in order to make rent. This is simply unconscionable. How can a minimum wage worker find the time to take care of their family? Be an active member of their community? The simple answer is that they cannot. Alabama's working class needs a raise, and we call on the Legislature to support Rep. Darrio Melton's and others' efforts to increase the minimum wage to at least \$10.00 an hour.

2. Women's Rights

- **Policy Statement 1 (Pay Gap):** According to the American Association of University Women, Alabama has the fifth largest pay gap by gender in the United States, with women making only 71 cents on the male dollar. The gap is even wider when race and ethnicity are parsed out. Where's the justice and equality in that? Does Alabama want to be a state that looks upon the women who serve the public as teachers, professors, doctors, and farmers and tell them that their work is somehow less than, or not valued as they should because of gender? Our legislators must provide incentives — to Alabama businesses to ensure that this violation will not stand.
- **Policy Statement 2 (Reproductive Rights):** Few relationships are more intimate than that between a woman and her doctor. If anyone should know this, it is the practicing dermatologist that occupies the Governor's Mansion. Yet we have seen an assault on the agency and decision making processes of Alabama's women unlike any in our state's history. Where all this freedom and liberty that politicians so easily espouse is, yet so easily deny to this state's women? The women of Alabama, demand liberty in their reproductive health.

3. LGBT Rights

- **Policy Statement 1 (LGBT Sex Education):** In 1992, our legislature passed a state law that mandated all sex education teachers inform students that "homosexuality is a crime" and is "not a lifestyle acceptable to the general public." Being LGBT is not a crime, and laws like this make LGBT youth targets of discrimination and bullying at the hands of the state. We are calling on our legislators to repeal this section of our state code (16-40A-2). Schools should be a place where all students feel safe and supported.
- **Policy Statement 2 (Employment Protections for LGBT):** LGBT people can be fired simply for being who they are, regardless of how well they do their job, how long they have been at their job, or how qualified they are for their job. This violates our shared values of fairness and inclusion. We are calling on our Alabama lawmakers to pass a state-wide non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. LGBT Alabamians deserve the same respect as other workers.

4. Environmental Justice

- Climate change and air emissions are global issues that require global solutions. Addressing both requires developing and deploying technologies that reduce greenhouse gases while making sure electrical energy, vehicles, and other manufactured goods remain affordable. We encourage the Governor and our Legislators to work closely and constructively with federal and state regulators to develop guidelines and standards that are consistent with the Clean Air Act and the Administration's efforts to protect the health, safety, and general well-being of the people of Alabama.
 - **Policy Statement 1 (Clean Power Plan):** The Birmingham metropolitan area, our state's largest, consistently ranks amongst the most polluted metro areas in America: last year, they were 14th. The impacts of dirty air and water are well known causes of heart disease, asthma and even death. If we really are to be the stewards of the Earth as our Lord calls upon us to be, then we must take action to make Alabama safer to live and breathe in. A start to this would be an endorsement of the EPA's Clean Power Plan by the Alabama Public Service Commission. Their name denotes that their number one responsibility is to us, the people of Alabama.
 - **Policy Statement 2 (Environmental Racism):** Environmental racism has harsh effects on communities of color, and that is evident nowhere more than Perry County, which has fought the transport of coal ash waste through their county for more than a decade. We all have to pay for this kind of insidious and immoral degradation of the air and water of Alabama's minorities, whether it is in hospital visits, missed days at work, or missed days from school.
- 5. Veterans' Rights**
- **Policy Statement 1 (Housing):** According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, 12 percent of all homeless Americans are veterans, with another 1.4 million living at risk of homelessness or in substandard housing. We hold these men and women up as heroes; defenders of the freedoms we enjoy whenever we cast a ballot, voice our opinions at council meetings, or read a book in libraries free of censorship. We think of them as America's brave, but what's brave about the government's response to veterans that are amongst our most needy? It is not enough to speak of them in moments of national unity and celebration; we must care for the members of our armed forces at home. We call on Gov. Bentley to request that Alabama be included in VA pilot programs that would alleviate veteran homelessness that are currently underway elsewhere.
- 6. Education**
- **Policy Statement 1 (Alabama Accountability Act):** Alabama ranks 38th in the nation in education spending per pupil, according to Governing Magazine. And it's getting worse; per pupil funding fell 0.8 percent between 2010 and 2011. One would think that preserving education funding would be a priority for a Governor and Legislature that claims to care so much about it, but you would be wrong. Instead we have been given the Alabama Accountability Act, which will take already precious public funding and give it to private schools in the form of vouchers.

When talking about failing schools often the blame is focused on educators and parents. Our legislators often fail to recognize their own roll in the state of our public schools. The efforts by our legislators to dismantle our public schools must stop. We are here to tell the Legislature and the Governor that enough is enough! Restore and increase public education funding, repeal the Accountability Act, and let's give our children the tools for the brighter future that they deserve.

Policy Statement 2 (Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline): According to the Community Coalition, 70 percent of the students who have their in-school discipline referred to law enforcement are Black or Latino, and 40 percent of those expelled from school each year are Black. It should not come as any surprise that 61 percent of the world's largest national prison population is Black and Latino. We have to recognize that the ways in which we administer punishment in our public schools has a lasting effect on those students who are disproportionately the targets of it. We call on the Superintendent, the Alabama State Board of Education and our Legislators to take steps to stop the school-to-prison pipeline. One such step would be passing a bill that would not only end inflexible 'zero tolerance' policies but would also implement proportionate discipline that reduces the number of out of school suspensions, expulsions and referrals to law enforcement. The enhancement in the training of resource officers is also greatly needed.

7. Voting Rights

- **Policy Statement 1 (Repealing Voter ID Legislation):** Voter ID laws have been struck down time and again by courts for one reason: their potential to discriminate against already disenfranchised communities, particularly the elderly and communities of color. This issue is tied to so many others, poverty, transportation, and education, that it is hard to see any real benefit to having this law. When you add in the fact that nationally, there have only been 10 cases of voter impersonation, which is the only thing that voter ID can prevent, this begins to feel like an effort to systemically disenfranchise certain groups of voters. We call on the Legislature to end this discriminatory practice and return the franchise to everyone, regardless of race, age, location, or class.
- **Policy Statement 2 (Voter Registration):** According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, ten states offer same-day registration. Twenty states allow potential voters to register online. These policies help with ensuring full participation in our democratic process; to make sure that the people's voice is heard, and is representative. Why has Alabama, instead of enacting measures to ensure more voting, done everything in its power to prevent high voter turnout? We call on Gov. Bentley and the Legislature to enact policies that will expand the electorate, not contract it. We ask that Alabama implement early voting, same day voter registration and eliminate the 10-14 day requirement to be registered in order to vote in the coming election.

8. Criminal Justice Reform

- **Policy Statement 1 (Ending Police Brutality):** If the past few months have shown us anything, it's that the police don't just protect and serve; they can also maim and kill without proper regulation and supervision. We're losing swaths of our youth to largely unprovoked state violence, and this has to end immediately. We call on Gov. Bentley and the Legislature to pass a bill that would mandate protective measures such as body cams and easier citizen access to disciplinary and review boards. A case in Alabama in which young Emerson Crayton Jr. was killed by a police officer in Alexander city clearly indicates how some police officer seem to have a policy of shoot first when in doubt.
- **Policy Statement 2 (Ending the Death Penalty):** The Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution reads, "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." The death penalty is the ultimate cruel and unusual punishment, because there is no recourse for it. Five Alabamans have been exonerated from death row since 1973. And even if the possibility of executing an innocent human being is not enough to make you turn away from capital punishment as a means of criminal deterrence, then maybe Jesus Christ could be someone you will listen to. Romans 12:18-20 calls us on to remember that judgment is His and His alone, and that we must make peace with everyone, even our enemies. We call on the Legislature and the Governor to heed His Word, and end the death penalty in Alabama.

9. Poverty and Inequality

Policy Statement 1 (Ending the Grocery Tax): According to the Tax Foundation, Alabama is one of 14 states that have a tax on groceries. Not only that, but it has the highest grocery tax in America at 3 percent. Taxing the food that families need to survive is not just regressive, it's oppressive. Organizations such as Alabama ARISE have been working for years to end this practice, and as the old saying goes, "There's no time like the present." This is one tax cut that Alabama can afford to take on.

Policy Statement 2 (Public Transportation): According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, Alabama had the seventh lowest spending on public transportation in America as a proportion of the state's budget. This has obvious consequences for those seeking work, and studies have shown that one of the biggest determinants of local and state workforce participation is the availability, cost, and efficiency of public transit. When we give so much money to multinational corporations to stay here, why wouldn't we fund a coherent transportation system to get working people to and from work? Our 1901 Constitution states that no monies from fuel or motor vehicle taxes can be spent on anything other than roads or bridges. We do not have a statewide transportation authority and ALDOT has no authority or money for statewide public transportation. Only Alaska and Hawaii lack a statewide system like Alabama. We ask the Governor and the Legislature to authorize a statewide authority for public transportation, allowing some funding even if it means passing a constitutional amendment to allow some of the money from vehicle taxes to do so.

10. Health Care

Policy Statement 1 (Expanding Medicaid): The moral charge of any government is to care for its least of these. Gov. Bentley is a Christian man; he should understand this more than anyone. Yet his decision to not advocate for Medicaid expansion in Alabama is hurting its most vulnerable in magnitudes that few of us can understand. According to a White House study, Gov. Bentley's decision is costing Alabama \$3.63 billion in federal funding, over 15,000 jobs, and \$2.6 billion in economic development through 2017. And while those numbers are important, none are more important than this one: 235,000. That's the number of Alabamians who worry nightly about getting sick or injured, from fear that it will bankrupt their family. That's the number of Alabamians who aren't getting life-extending care for their ailments. And that's the number of Alabamians who are wondering: will Gov. Bentley uphold the Christian ethic that he so proudly wears on his sleeve? Or is it just one more sad and cynical ploy to get votes. There's only one person that can answer that, and we call on him to answer it forthwith. Alabama does not have a Health Exchange so that citizens can receive a subsidy if they are enrolled and qualify for a subsidy. Alabama citizens get their health insurance through Federal Health Exchanges. The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a case threatening subsidies for anyone on a Federal Health Exchange, but allow it for those citizens on State Health Exchanges. If the court decides that only those on State Exchanges will receive subsidies, then our Alabama citizens on Federal Health Exchanges will suffer. Ask the Governor and the legislators to establish an Alabama Health Exchange.

11. Immigration

Policy Statement 1 (Issuance of Driver's License): The successful integration of immigrants into Alabama communities is a major part of our work, and as such, we call for the state of Alabama to extend as many rights as possible to all immigrants in the state. As an issue of public safety, all immigrants, regardless of immigration status, should be granted drivers licenses to safely drive themselves and their families around Alabama.

Policy Statement 2: (Repeal of HB 56 and 658): We are calling for a full repeal of Alabama HB56 and HB 658. Last year, the coalition partners reached a legal settlement with the state permanently blocking the worst parts of HB 56 and HB 658. Now we urge the State Legislature to finish the job, and completely remove HB 56 and 658 from the history of our great state.