

THE ARISE REPORT

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Our 2025 priorities — and changes for 2026

By Chris Sanders, communications director
chris@alarise.org

More than 450 members voted to affirm Alabama Arise's 2025 legislative priorities after this fall's Annual Meeting:

- Adequate state budgets, including Medicaid expansion and equitable public school funding for all students
- Tax reform, including untaxing groceries
- Voting rights
- Criminal justice reform
- Maternal and infant health care
- Public transportation
- Death penalty reform

Arise's board also voted in November to approve a new approach to member voting on legislative priorities for 2026. This approach, starting in fall 2025, will help us better commit to multiyear advocacy on the issues that matter most to our members. And it will better reflect the depth and breadth of Arise's work. (See [page 2 for more details.](#))

Read the enclosed flyer for more on our 2025 legislative priorities. And email organizing director Presdelane Harris at pres@alarise.org to set up an issue preview event in your area ahead of the Legislature's 2025 regular session.

The federal policy fights and opportunities ahead

By Carol Gundlach, senior policy analyst | carol@alarise.org

Alabama Arise and our members have worked for more than 35 years to push for policies that improve the lives of people struggling to make ends meet. We have remained steadfast in this mission and our values, and we will continue that commitment in the coming years.

Arise is deeply concerned about the prospect of harmful federal tax and budget changes next year. And we are working closely with national allies and those in other states to educate and advocate on these issues. We'll be calling on you, our members and partners, to help us protect Alabamians with low incomes. We will be responding to numerous federal issues in 2025. These include:

TAX CUTS FOR THE WEALTHIEST HOUSEHOLDS

Federal tax cuts passed in 2017 benefited wealthy people and highly profitable corporations at the expense of revenue for essential services like public education and health care. We expect Congress to move quickly to try to renew these skewed tax giveaways to the wealthiest households and corporations. We also are concerned that targeted tax credits for people with low incomes, including the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit, might be cut to offset the cost of tax cuts for wealthy households.

FEDERAL FUNDING CUTS FOR HUMAN SERVICES

Arise and our partners expect Congress will try to freeze or reduce spending on services that help working people, in an effort to offset the cost of tax giveaways

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A new year, a new issue selection process

By Robyn Hyden, executive director | robyn@alarise.org

From our founding, Alabama Arise has been strongly committed to member leadership. Directly impacted communities, our member organizations and individuals guide and decide our policy agenda.

Over the years, the way we select this agenda has changed as our work has evolved and as times change. Now we are proposing another change.

During our November board retreat, the Arise board voted to adjust the way we select our legislative agenda in 2025. This change will not go into effect until we go through issue selection next summer. We will ask you, our members, to approve this new agenda format at next year’s Annual Meeting.

WHAT WILL CHANGE

We will ask members in 2025 to adopt a multi-year, broad strategic priority agenda for four years (2026-29). The strategic priorities will roughly mirror our current priority issues, but they will include multiple policy approaches under each umbrella. The seven broad issues are:

- 1. Adequate state budgets**
- 2. Health equity**
- 3. Hunger relief**
- 4. Inclusive democracy**
- 5. Justice reform**
- 6. Tax reform**
- 7. Worker power**

In recent years, Arise has advocated in



Tari Williams of Greater Birmingham Ministries speaks Sept. 28 at Arise’s 2024 Annual Meeting. Cover photo: Arise staff at an October retreat in Columbiana.

power now reflect huge areas of work for Arise that did not previously appear on our priority agenda in any clear way.

At the same time, other categories are much broader than they appear. Under the existing categories of voting rights and criminal justice reform, for example, we work on multiple bills. By renaming our categories of work using broader, values-based framing, we can include and adjust our agenda much more flexibly.

You may notice that specific issues that appear on our current agenda, like death penalty reform and criminal justice reform, will be combined in this new format. Public transportation will roll under “adequate state budgets” along with affordable housing, child care and public education – all budget priorities where we have consistently advocated for further investment. Voting rights will roll into a broader category called “inclusive democracy,”

all these areas. But several of these topics were under “adequate state budgets,” with no way for members to provide input or rank priorities in these areas. Health equity, hunger relief and worker

which also may include issues related to racial equity and inclusion, free speech and immigration policies.

WHAT WILL STAY THE SAME

Each year, we still will ask you to propose new pieces of legislation to adopt on our agenda under these broad category headings.

We still will ask you to rank the legislative priorities under each broad heading, much in the same way we did member voting this year.

And we still will ask member groups to present pieces of legislation or strategic approaches that they want us to adopt on our agenda.

If you see a broad category of work that is not reflected here that you would like to see added to Arise’s agenda, we will have a process for that as well. That process will involve a research period to assess our capacity and strategic approach more broadly. Arise staff will look into how the category may fit in with our other areas of work and report back to our membership about whether we think we strategically can undertake a new broad issue area.

Please reach out to me or our organizing team with questions or concerns about this new format. Our goal here is to include more voices in selecting Arise’s agenda, and to lift up more of the policies that you, our members, have said you value.

Arise staff make an Impact at SPP conference



Alabama Arise staff met and learned from advocates from across the country at the State Priorities Partnership (SPP) Impact Conference in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 4-6. Left: Arise's Jacob Smith gives a powerful ImpacTalk on how people of all backgrounds and skill sets have a part to play in the movement for a better future. Top right: Arise staff members Adam Keller, Whitney Washington, Matt Okarmus, Robyn Hyden and Chris Sanders smile for a photo at the event. Bottom right: Keller takes part in a panel on community organizing.

Must-haves for any Medicaid expansion plan

By Debbie Smith, Cover Alabama campaign director | debbie@alarise.org

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama is publicizing a plan called ALLHealth to close Alabama's health coverage gap. We expect the plan would use Medicaid expansion dollars to buy private insurance for many eligible Alabamians, much as ALL Kids provides children with private coverage on a sliding cost scale.

Alabama Arise is tracking this plan closely with our Cover Alabama coalition partners and will assess it as more details become public. Arise commits to our members that we will only support a plan that provides quality insurance to everyone in the health coverage gap. Read the enclosed flyer for our list of must-haves for any plan to close the gap.

Join Arise this holiday season!

By Jacob Smith, advancement and operations director | jacob@alarise.org

In this season of generosity, we can't forget all of the Alabamians struggling to make ends meet because of bad policies.

At Alabama Arise, we take our cue from you, our members, to build a better future. Together, we're focused on advocacy for a more just and prosperous state.

More than 15% of our financial support comes from members like you. And your giving ensures Arise focuses on the issues you care about, such as access to health care and an inclusive democracy.

Will you join us in building a better Alabama? Join or renew your membership with a gift! There are many ways to give:

- Make a one-time or monthly gift online at alarise.org.
- Mail a check to P.O. Box 1188, Montgomery, AL 36101.
- Provide a gift of stock.
- Make a gift from an IRA, 401(k) or other tax-deferred savings account.
- Leave a gift in your will.
- Give a gift membership to someone.

Once you've given, invite your friends, family and network to join you in making a difference!

If you have any questions or would like more information about how to make a gift, email my colleague McKenzie Burton at mckenzie@alarise.org. Thank you for your generosity this holiday season.

FEDERAL POLICY

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to the wealthiest Americans. Services at risk could include education services for struggling students, affordable housing and public transportation. Congress also could reduce state grants under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which provides income and work supports for people with extremely low incomes.

We also expect to see proposals to cut food aid under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and health coverage under Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (known as ALL Kids in Alabama) and the Affordable Care Act. We are particularly worried about the possibility of state block grants or privatization of health care programs.

Arise expects to fight against harmful new work reporting requirements for participants in Medicaid, SNAP, affordable housing and similar programs. These would result in many costly paperwork barriers and arbitrary denials for people eligible for these services.

ATTACKS ON UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

Efforts to deport large numbers of undocumented immigrants likely would disproportionately hurt Hispanic communities and result in human rights abuses. These initiatives also likely would drive up the price of goods and services for everyone. The first Trump administration tried to make it easier to deport people who participated in programs like Medicaid or SNAP. We anticipate another effort to impose a similar "public charge" rule.

HARMFUL LONG-TERM STRUCTURAL CHANGES

Further down the road, we are watching for potential harmful changes to SSI disability cash assistance. We also are concerned about potential proposals to privatize Social Security and to cap federal funding for Medicaid and SNAP by turning them into block-grant programs.

WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER

The federal road ahead will not be easy for Alabamians with low incomes. But we have survived serious policy threats before, and we can again, as long as we all work together. It is important to remember a few key strengths that we have:

- Congress is deeply divided, especially in the House. Some things that require congressional action may be hard to pass.
- Federal administrative rule changes are a slow and tedious process. Public comments can play a major role in slowing or stopping harmful regulations.
- Equitable tax policy and adequate budgets for human services are broadly popular. Public opinion matters and can make a real difference.

Arise pledges to help our members stay informed with fact sheets, blog posts and other informative materials. We will share timely action alerts to help our supporters speak out to elected officials on issues that matter to working families. And we will support immigrants, people of color, low-income communities and other Alabamians at risk of policy harm.

We are stronger together. Arise's coalition has a decades-long track record of credibility and success. And with your ongoing advocacy and support, we will continue advancing our shared vision of a better Alabama for all.

2025 Legislative Priorities



Our policy roadmap to a better, more equitable Alabama

Tax Reform



A more equitable tax system can help struggling people make ends meet. Alabama should untax groceries and ensure fair, sustainable funding for vital services.

Adequate State Budgets



Strong public services broaden opportunity for all. Alabama must expand Medicaid and protect funding for public schools. Our state also should reduce hunger and hardship by supporting universal free breakfast in public schools.

Voting Rights



Everyone deserves a say in our democracy. Alabama should pass no-excuse early voting and lift barriers to voting rights restoration for disenfranchised people.

Criminal Justice Reform



Our justice system must ensure fairness and justice for all. Alabama should improve its parole system, reform punitive sentencing laws and reduce reliance on fines and fees as a revenue source.

Maternal and Infant Health Care



The health and safety of families is paramount. Alabama should improve access to high-quality health care, ensure life-saving pregnancy care is not criminalized and extend paid parental leave for state employees and teachers.

Public Transportation



Community connection is vital. Alabama should fund the Public Transportation Trust Fund so everyone can get to work, school, medical care and more.

Death Penalty Reform



All Alabamians deserve equal justice under the law. A key step in this direction would be to apply Alabama's ban on judicial overrides of jury sentencing verdicts retroactively to people sentenced under this now-illegal policy.

Join Arise's movement for change! Visit alarise.org to learn more.

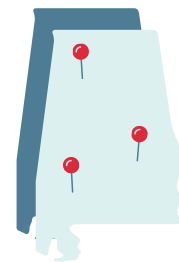
AN ALABAMA SOLUTION:

CLOSING THE HEALTH COVERAGE GAP

Closing the health coverage gap will protect hospitals, increase workforce participation, provide health coverage to 5,000 uninsured veterans and improve access to mental health services. Alabama could receive a signing bonus of \$619 million in federal funding over two years while extending health coverage to nearly 200,000 Alabamians.

A plan to close the health coverage gap in Alabama must...

- Cover adults with incomes between 0% and 138% of the federal poverty level.
- Protect rural access to health care.
- Support labor force participation by keeping workers healthy.
- Minimize administrative barriers and red tape to obtaining health coverage.
- Maximize federal dollars to reduce state costs and ensure the long-term financial health of Medicaid.
- Address wraparound services, including non-emergency medical transportation.
- Ensure access to all medically appropriate drugs.
- Increase insurance coverage across ethnic, racial, age and income groups.



Scan for polling and research, or visit coveralabama.org.



Criminals and cyber-attackers are trying to trick you so they can take your EBT benefits!

DON'T LET THEM.

Don't: Give your information to ANYONE:

- On the phone,
- Through text or
- By clicking links in emails

DHR will never ask for your card number or PIN number over the phone, via text or by email.

Be mindful of any third-party apps you put your SNAP card information on.

Do: Change your PIN every month right before you get your benefits on your EBT card.

Not sure how? Call the number on the back of your card and select option 3.

What to do if your benefits are stolen

- Visit your county DHR office to complete a stolen benefits report at <https://dhr.alabama.gov/county-office-contact/>
- If you are unsure, contact your local office at <https://dhr.alabama.gov/county-office-contact/>
- Call the number on the back of your card to report your card stolen and order a replacement card.
- To get help finding a food pantry, visit <https://feedingalabama.org/need-help/>

Protecting your benefits keeps **YOU** from being a victim!

