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GOP LEGISLATIVE LEADERS UNVEIL
“REPUBLICAN HANDSHAKE WITH ALABAMA”
PLATFORM DETAILS PRIORITIES UNDER REPUBLICAN LEGISLATURE

Montgomery – Republican legislators and members of the party’s House and Senate Leadership gathered on Wednesday to pledge their support for Governor Bob Riley’s *Plan 2010* and unveil their *Handshake with Alabama* campaign platform, which they pledge to pass quickly in the next regular session if voters give the GOP control of the Legislature.

“Members of the House and Senate Republican Caucuses and our first-time legislative candidates on the ballot are united behind Gov. Riley’s bold agenda,” House Republican Caucus Leader Mike Hubbard said. “If Republicans gain control of the Legislature, we pledge to support the governor’s *Plan 2010* initiatives and further pledge to pass the items in our agenda within the first ten legislative days of the next regular session.”

Sen. Bradley Byrne (R – Fairhope) said voters can trust Republicans to pass the agenda items because, unlike legislators from the Democrat Party, GOP members are consistent in their conservative beliefs.

“For too long, Democrat legislators have told the voters back home that they stand for one thing and then come to Montgomery and do the opposite,” Byrne said. “Rather than serving the voters’ interests, many Democrats choose to serve the liberal special interests.”

In putting together their legislative agenda, House and Senate members chose six planks from Gov. Riley’s *Plan 2010* campaign platform and promised to make them the top priority of a new, Republican Legislature.

The six items on the *Republican Handshake With Alabama* agenda include:

- **Extending Income Tax Cuts to Middle-Class Alabama Families and Removing the Sales Tax on Over-The-Counter Medication** – Building upon the tax cuts that were proposed by Gov. Bob Riley and pushed by Republican legislators last year, this plan would bring the filing threshold for a family of four to \$15,000 and allow more for personal exemptions, dependent exemptions and standard deductions. Under this plan, 90 percent of Alabama’s families would receive tax relief. Because the prices for both prescription and non-prescription medication continue to rise, Republicans will remove the sales tax from over-the-counter drugs, a plan that will allow families and seniors to benefit most.

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- **Ensuring Property Tax Reappraisals Occur Only Once Every Four Years** – For the past several sessions, Republican lawmakers have pushed legislation that would change current law and mandate that property tax reappraisals occur no more often than once every four years. Each time Republicans have proposed the legislation, the Democrat leadership has killed it. If given control of the Legislature, Republicans will ensure that this is among the very first bills to become law.
- **Offering Tax Incentives to Small Businesses that Offer Health Insurance** – In order to ensure Alabamians and their families are covered by good, quality health insurance programs, Republicans propose a tax incentive plan for small businesses that cover their employees. Businesses will be allowed to deduct from their taxes twice the amount they pay for health insurance premiums, and, to encourage participation, employees will be able to deduct twice the amount they contribute toward their coverage.
- **Providing “Back to School” Tax Credits for Workforce Development** – Because of our state’s success in recruiting high-skilled jobs in the automotive, manufacturing and other fields, employers are in need of a trained and adaptable workforce. To accomplish this goal, Republicans propose tax credits for adults who return to school to receive skills training in fast growing job areas. Employers who send their workers for such training will be qualified for the tax credits, as well.
- **Requiring Immigrants to Prove Legal Residency Before Accessing Public Benefits** – In order to ensure that those who access programs funded by taxpayer dollars are living in Alabama legally, this legislation will require immigrants to provide proof of legal residency before receiving public benefits offered by state and local governments, including in-state tuition rates for public universities.
- **Passing an Aggressive School Construction and Repair Bond Issue**- Because many schools across the state were built as many as 40 to 50 years ago and contain outdated electrical and heating systems, it is time for the state to begin an aggressive construction and repair program for public schools. Republicans will pass a bond issue of at least \$500 million to begin addressing the problem. Portions of the plan may be financed with an anticipated surplus in the Education Trust Fund Budget.

The lawmakers stressed that Republican legislative candidates across the state have embraced *Plan 2010* in its entirety, but chose these six issues as the priorities to address first.

“If Democrats retain control of the Legislature, or if they capture the Governor’s Office, these much-needed programs will never become a reality,” Hubbard said. “The only way middle-class Alabamians will see their taxes being cut or schools being built is if Gov. Riley has his team calling the plays in the Legislature.”

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Byrne said most, if not all, Republican House and Senate candidates plan to campaign using the “Handshake” as a common theme that bonds them together.

“When Republican candidates talk with voters, they can point to the Handshake and say ‘This is what our party pledges to accomplish’,” Byrne said. “There was much dissension within their ranks when Democrats announced their agenda because many disagreed with the items it contained. Our caucus members and first-time candidates are committed to keeping our promise and seeing these items passed by a Republican-led Legislature.”