

# Beasley sponsors highway bill

BY REBECCA  
BEASLEY

The 2010 legislative session convened last Tuesday with legislators facing a multitude of issues ranging from balancing budgets without compromising services to addressing the state's unemployment. They also face a huge difference of opinions on the bingo issue and how to find a way to make good promises made to fami-

lies who purchased PACT contracts.

In an effort to invest the state's resources into creating jobs in every Alabama county, Rep. Billy Beasley of Clayton has signed on as the chief House sponsor of a proposed constitutional amendment that would set aside monies from the Oil and Gas Trust Fund to improve roads and bridges throughout the state. The bill's chief

sponsor in the Senate is Sen. Lowell Barron.

House Bill 237 will be considered in the Government Appropriations Committee and Senate Bill 121 was placed in the Finance and Taxation General Fund Committee.

The bill would fund a \$1 billion highway and road construction and repair program utilizing \$100 million each year

for 10 years that will create jobs while improving the state's infrastructure. It is estimated that \$1 billion invested in highway construction creates some 30,000 jobs and the annual \$100 million investment will boost the economy by \$350 million in the decade after the roads and bridges are complete.

Rep. Beasley, a Democratic candidate for the District 28 Senate

seat, said, "My main concern is jobs. People are hurting and particularly in rural areas, the economic downturn is sapping us of job opportunities. We also need more and better roads and the roads that we do have are in need of repairs. That is why I agreed to be the chief sponsor of this important legislation in the Alabama House of Representatives." He explained that the legis-

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lation not only would create jobs and provide an improved transportation system in the state, it would improve public safety on our highways for motorists as well as truckers who are transporting goods throughout the state and school children who are traveling on our highways on a daily basis.

The advantages, he said, in using funds for road improvements from the Trust Fund is that there will be no additional taxes and the taxpayers of the state will not be faced with paying back a bond issue. Currently, the Trust Fund has about \$2.5 billion in royalties which earn about \$100 million a

year in interest. "The first \$100 million can be used to match federal highway funds from the stimulus package and the funds will be allocated as projects are approved. After 10 years we will owe no debt and we will have helped people and our roads and bridges when they are needed the most," he added.

The bill calls for an additional transfer of funds from the Alabama Trust Fund to be divided equally between the Municipal and County Government Capital Improvement Funds based on population.

Rep. Beasley said he agrees with Sen. Barron in that this legislation is a "win-win" for the people

of Alabama.

In conclusion, he said this may be the hardest legislative session he has faced in his 11 years in the Alabama House of Representatives. "There is no telling how this session will play out. There are many powerful special interests that have

their own idea about what is important. However, I feel very strongly about this legislation so I will do all I can to gain final approval of this bill."

If approved by legislators, voters will be asked to give final approval of the proposed amendment to the constitution.