

Local legislators focus on state budget, proposed bills

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"It's not any secret that we expect this year to be the worst budget year in possibly our state's history," said state Sen. Marc Keahey.

Because of this situation, Gov. Robert Bentley is expected to announce a large cut in the budget. The 2011 regular session of the Legislature, which began March 1, is going to be time for re-evaluating some things, according to local legislators like Keahey, Sen. Rusty Glover and Rep. Randy Davis.

"The only way we can even begin to make the budget work this year is to really examine each and every state dollar that is spent in the education budget and the general fund budget," said Keahey.

Not all talk at the session will be concerning the budgets, though. Many of the local legislators are backing bills that they hope to pass.

Glover is presenting a bill for the second time.

"This bill would not only discourage drinking and driving but it would put stiffer punishments on those who are excessively drunk," he said. "It doubles the penalty for those who are excessively drunk on the road."

In addition, Glover is focusing on coastal homeowner's insurance. "Although it's such a crisis in lower Alabama, when we have bills like this that require a better

deal for south Alabama, those from north Alabama assume that it might adversely affect their constituents," he said. "But we're looking to get it passed anyway."

Davis also has a few bills he's supporting. "I'll be sponsoring the overseas voting rights act," he said. "It supports our military being able to vote while they're out of the country during wartime."

Another bill Davis will be backing deals with the Forever Wild program, which is dedicated to the acquisition of lands in Alabama for recreational hunting or lands that are protected for environmental reasons.

"We have the lowest amount of public land in the country. We only have about 4.6 percent lands available for recreational hunting and fishing."

This program will be up for renewal, as is. If any changes are made to the program during the session, it will go back to voters for approval.

Despite the budget crisis in Montgomery, all three of the local legislators feel confident in our state's future. "There are other ways to generate revenue other than raising taxes," Keahey said.

Troy University journalism student Brittney Roberts of Mobile wrote this story as part of a project partly funded by the Alabama Press Association Journalism Foundation.