

Alabama budget chairman says smooth year was 'reprieve'

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By **Mike Cason**, mcason@al.com



Rep. Steve
Clouse,
R-Ozark

Even after a substantial increase for state prisons, Alabama lawmakers had enough left in next year's budget to add new money for mental health, law enforcement and other programs and cover the first cost of living raise for state employees in a decade.

The 2019 General Fund budget passed with little disagreement during the abbreviated, election-year session that ended last week.

It was much different than 2015 and 2016, when lawmakers took multiple special sessions to reject an assortment of tax increases and lottery bills intended to close a yawning gap between needs and available revenue.

One bill approved during the 2016 special session, a plan to allocate most of a \$1 billion oil spill settlement from BP, has helped close that gap. It allowed legislators to carry over \$93 million from the 2018 budget to next year





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