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TOP STORY

## Gov. Ivey weighs in on prisons, lottery and other issues

By Mary Sell Montgomery Bureau Apr 14, 2017 Updated Apr 14, 2017



Mickey Welsh

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Gov. Kay Ivey holds her first news conference as governor at the Alabama Capitol Building in Montgomery on Thursday. Robert Bentley resigned Monday over allegations he covered up an affair with an aide. [MICKEY WELSH/THE MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER via AP]

Ivey can shape 2018 governor's race whether she runs or not

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MONTGOMERY — Gov. Kay Ivey, in a meeting with reporters Thursday in the Capitol, pledged an accessible and transparent administration.

She fielded a variety of topics. Here's some of what she said.

- On her philosophy of government:

“Government is of the people, by the people and for the people. It is not designed to be self-promoting of any one individual. It is my

job, and I have taken it seriously for 14 years and will continue to do so, to focus on working for the common good ... .”

- On whether she was embarrassed by former Gov. Robert Bentley, who resigned this week and pleaded guilty to two misdemeanors:

“His actions were not complimentary to any of us,” she said.

- On the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency and legislation to change it:

“In my judgment, ALEA is fine except we haven’t had the right management,” she said. “Now, it is my job to find the right manager.”

This week, Ivey terminated ALEA leader Stan Stabler, who had been appointed by Bentley.

“My job is to find a competent manager with experience. It’s a big department. You have lots of dollars, lots of people, lots of policies.”

Rep. Phillip Pettus, R-Greenhill, has a bill in the House to abolish ALEA and return several law enforcement departments to their 2013 status, prior to them being consolidated into one agency.

“I don’t think we need to abolish it,” Ivey said.

- About her cabinet, the appointed leaders of about two dozen state agencies:

“Anytime there is a transition or change of administration, surely there are going to be changes, but we are going to be very deliberate and consider and evaluate each one of the cabinet offices,” Ivey said.

This week, she had all staff and cabinet members turn in undated letters of resignation.

“I can’t tell you when or what positions are going to be changed, but you just know there will be some changes coming,” she said.

- On the plan in the Alabama Statehouse to build more prisons:

“Certainly, we need to have the prison issue addressed,” she said. “It’s not just building new buildings, but it’s also (about) mental health and staffing, so I hope we can get that bill that came out of the Senate moving forward.”

- On Medicaid expansion:

“I don’t support Medicaid expansion right now, for sure,” she said. “The whole program is under change and possible modification, so we’ll take it as it comes and evaluate it.”

She said the plan to change the state from a fee-for-service to a managed-care model “has merit.” The proposed regional care organizations are intended to slow Medicaid’s rising costs, but there have been concerns about long-term funding.

Ivey said people also need to take personal responsibility for improving their health.

“Everybody can walk around the block, everybody can eat vegetables instead of sweets,” she said.

- On proposals to allow gambling in Alabama to increase state revenue:

“Gambling is a big word,” she said. “It’s one thing to talk about a lottery, it’s another thing to talk about casino gambling and all of that. The lottery is very popular in Alabama — a lot of people are for the lottery. And if it were just a pure, simply lottery, that’d probably have some merit. But there’s no such thing as a pure, simple lottery.”

The Alabama Constitution prohibits a lottery and to repeal that would “open the door to all types of gaming,” she said.

“... Gambling is not necessarily a stabilizing form of financial resources.”

- About whether there is a need for change in the state ethics laws:

Ivey said she thinks there is some need for clarity in the laws and would be supportive of changes.

“This is the people’s business, y’all,” she said. “It’s the people’s money, it’s the people’s tax dollars.”

- About education in the state:

“I’m a former teacher, so I truly understand education,” she said. “We need a strong education system in this state. Our young people need to come out of K-12 well prepared so they can be gainfully employed and pursue careers of their choice.”

- About being Alabama’s second female governor:

Ivey said Gov. Lurleen Wallace was a personal mentor and an inspiration to her.

“I’m honored to follow her,” she said. “... I’m proud to be the first Republican woman to hold the office.”

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