

belk



https://eb2.3lift.com/pass?tl_clickthrough=true&redir=https%3A%2F%2Fad.doubleclick.net%2Fddm%2Ftrackclk%2FN4682.1264338TRIPLELIFT.COM%2FB206679%2F3795965%3BDC_rk_id%3D413052415%3D%3D%3Bdc_rdid%3D%3Btag_for_child_directed_treatment%3D

https://eb2.3lift.com/pass?tl_clickthrough=true&redir=https%3A%2F%2Fad.doubleclick.net%2Fddm%2Ftrackclk%2FN4682.1264338TRIPLELIFT.COM%2FB206679%2F3795965%3BDC_rk_id%3D413052415%3D%3D%3Bdc_rdid%3D%3Btag_for_child_directed_treatment%3D

https://eb2.3lift.com/pass?tl_clickthrough=true&redir=https%3A%2F%2Fad.doubleclick.net%2Fddm%2Ftrackclk%2FN4682.1264338TRIPLELIFT.COM%2FB206679%2F3795965%3BDC_rk_id%3D413052415%3D%3D%3Bdc_rdid%3D%3Btag_for_child_directed_treatment%3D

SEE MORE (https://eb2.3lift.com/pass?tl_clickthrough=true&redir=https%3A%2F%2Fad.doubleclick.net%2Fddm%2Ftrackclk%2FN4682.1264338TRIPLELIFT.COM%2FB206679%2F3795965%3BDC_rk_id%3D413052415%3D%3D%3Bdc_rdid%3D%3Btag_for_child_directed_treatment%3D)

https://eb2.3lift.com/pass?tl_clickthrough=true&redir=https%3A%2F%2Fad.doubleclick.net%2Fddm%2Ftrackclk%2FN4682.1264338TRIPLELIFT.COM%2FB206679%2F3795965%3BDC_rk_id%3D413052415%3D%3D%3Bdc_rdid%3D%3Btag_for_child_directed_treatment%3D

State employees would see 3 percent pay raise in budget

[SOUTH UNION STREET \(//WWW.MONTGOMERYADVERTISER.COM/BLOG/SOUTHUNIONSTREET\)](http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/blog/southunionstreet)

[Brian Lyman \(http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/staff/12375/brian-lyman/\)](http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/staff/12375/brian-lyman/), Montgomery Advertiser

Published 12:14 p.m. CT Feb. 14, 2018 | Updated 12:57 p.m. CT Feb. 14, 2018



Alabama Senate (Photo: File)

State employees would see their first cost of living increase in nearly a decade under a General Fund budget approved Wednesday by a Senate committee.

The 2019 General Fund, which goes into effect Oct. 1, would also provide a total increase of \$80 million to the Alabama Department of Corrections, with the goal of improving staffing and mental health care in the state's prisons. The budget added money to the Alabama Medicaid Agency, which provides coverage to about 1 million Alabamians, most of whom are children, elderly and the disabled. It also allocated money to hire about 30 new state troopers.

"It's balanced to the best of our ability," said Sen. Trip Pittman, R-Montrose, the chairman of the Senate Finance and Taxation General Fund Committee. "The appropriations we made are going to be based on the revenues we expect to get based on people going to work every day."

The \$2 billion General Fund would be the largest in a decade. During and after the Great

Recession, the General Fund [lurched from crisis to crisis \(/story/news/2015/09/16/general-fund-budget-gets-final-legislative-approval/32536919/\)](/story/news/2015/09/16/general-fund-budget-gets-final-legislative-approval/32536919/) due to its mostly-flat revenue streams. This year, growth in Internet sales taxes, estimated at about \$40 million, and about \$92 million in carry-forward money from last year's budget gave legislators some breathing room.

It also gave the state's 33,000 state employees — ranging from custodians to law enforcement officers to attorneys — a 3 percent cost of living increase. The Legislative Fiscal Office estimates the increase will cost the General Fund budget \$14.4 million.

The committee approved the pay raise bill — sponsored by Sen. Clyde Chambliss, R-Prattville — despite reservations from Pittman, long an opponent of increased spending in most elements of the state budget.

"We had funds this year that may or may not be available next year," he said.



State Senator Trip Pittman, who is running for U.S. Senate, talks with The Montgomery Advertiser at their offices in Montgomery, Ala. on Wednesday July 12, 2017. (Photo: Mickey Welsh / Advertiser)

State employees have seen merit raises in recent years but have also seen benefit costs increase.

"We're certainly appreciative," said Mac McArthur, executive director of the Alabama State Employees Association. "It's been 10 years since state employees have had a COLA. It is much needed and will cut into state employee pay gaps."

The budget will also provide an additional \$50 million to Corrections, which must improve mental health care in the state's prisons. U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson ruled last year that mental health care in the prisons was "[horrendously inadequate \(/story/news/2017/06/27/federal-judge-rules-against-adoc-mental-health-suit/431798001/\)](/story/news/2017/06/27/federal-judge-rules-against-adoc-mental-health-suit/431798001/)" and ordered the state and attorneys for inmates seeking improvements to come up with a solution.

The Department of Corrections has brought in a new health care contractor and says it plans to hire more staff and in some cases make facility upgrades to improve the delivery of care.



Jeff Dunn, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Corrections, speaks to members of the media while giving a tour of Kilby Corrections Facility in Montgomery, Ala., on Friday, Sept. 4, 2015. The facility is currently at 301 percent of its intended capacity. Kilby is currently housing 1,448 inmates and was designed for 440. (Photo: Albert Cesare / Advertiser)

"It enables us to reform and enhance our health services delivery, to address the medical and mental health issues in the department," said ADOC Commissioner Jeff Dunn, who attended the meeting. "And it starts us down the road of address our staffing issues."

If fully implemented, Corrections' 2019 budget would be 19 percent higher than its budget for 2018. A bill that would give Corrections an extra \$30 million this year to begin implementing those changes was on the Senate committee's agenda Wednesday, but consideration was delayed.

**Join for as low as
\$9⁹⁹ for a year**

**Subscribe Now
(http://offers.montgomeryadvertiser.com/specialoffer?gps-source=BEAZfeb&utm_medium=agilityzone&utm_source=bounce-exchange&utm_campaign=UWEB2017)**

"It's just getting on the same page with how that money's going to be used," Pittman said.

Medicaid, a foundation for health care in the state, will receive a \$53.8 million increase, a 7.6 percent increase over its current General Fund amount. The increase is in line with Gov. Kay Ivey's budget request. The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency will get an additional \$3.2 million (a 6.6 percent increase) for the hiring of the new state troopers.

The Alabama Department of Mental Health would see an increase of \$8.9 million in the proposed budget, an 8.2 percent increase. The Alabama Department of Human Resources, which administers most anti-poverty programs in the state, would get an additional \$3.1 million, a 5 percent increase. The state's trial courts would get an additional \$2.8 million, a 2.7 percent increase.

While the improved fiscal picture allowed legislators to be generous, election-year politics also tend to put pressure on House and Senate members to provide pay raises. McArthur said that was fine with him.

"I'll take help from anyone and anybody in seeing the pay crisis addressed," he said. "Certainly it's an election year and if it influences people, we're grateful for that, too."

Read or Share this story: <http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/politics/southunionstreet/2018/02/14/state-employees-would-see-3-percent-pay-raise-budget>

