



The Alabama House of Representatives rejects budget that slashes agencies

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MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) – The Alabama House of Representatives on Monday overwhelmingly rejected a budget that would have cut millions of dollars from Medicaid, mental health services and other state agencies

House members voted 92-2 Monday night against a Senate-passed spending plan that included such cuts. The move sent lawmakers back to the drawing board as a

special session on the budget winds down.

“We don’t want to send a bad budget over to the governor that we are committed to making sure we fund state government at a level where it can operate. I think that’s the message that was sent very clear. We want to fund law enforcement. We want to fund Medicaid at a level that it can operate,” House Speaker Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, said.

Lawmakers have been at an impasse for months over where to enact tax increases or make budget cuts.

Gov Robert Bentley had called lawmakers into special session and asked legislators to approve \$302 million in tax increases to avoid reductions in state services in the fiscal year that begins Oct 1. However, the Republican governor has thus far been unable to muster the votes in the GOP-controlled Alabama Legislature

Senators instead voted 19-15 earlier Monday on the plan that proposed cutting nearly \$200 million from state agencies.

“I think the citizens expect us to live within our means as they live within theirs’ and that is what we’ve done,” Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston said. “The appetite is not there in my opinion in the Senate to raise taxes and quite honestly it must not be there in the House.”

The Senate-passed budget would have cut \$31 million from the state’s Medicaid program, \$5.3 million from the Department of Mental Health, \$13 million from the court system and \$14.7 million from the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency. The Senate plan also would have given an increase to state prisons and the parole board to maintain efforts to alleviate severe crowding in state prisons.

The proposed cuts drew harsh criticism on the House floor before being voted down.

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“All they did was move around the chairs on the deck of the Titanic,” House Ways and Means General Fund Committee Chairman Steve Clouse, R-Ozark, said of the Senate budget.

The Alabama Senate has been the most opposed to tax increases. The House has been somewhere in the middle. A House committee narrowly voted down a cigarette tax during the special session.

The deadlock means state agencies are without a spending plan for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1.

The special session by law must end Tuesday.

Bentley is expected to call lawmakers back to try again in a second special session.

To read the full General Fund Budget, click here.



UPDATE: Alabama Senate approves budget that slashes agencies



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