



FORMAL STATEMENT BY ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE MARSHALL ON HB317

(MONTGOMERY) – Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall issued the following statement on HB317, a bill before the Alabama Legislature addressing commerce and economic development:

“I opposed HB317 in its original form. The ethics-related language in that bill altered the definition of lobbying in a manner that, I believe, was far too broad. I requested that the bill be halted to give me the opportunity to work with Secretary Canfield towards a proposal that was more in line with the approach to economic development found in the comprehensive ethics reform bill that my Office crafted over the course of the last two years and that Senator Marsh filed as [SB343](#). A top official from my corruptions unit handled the negotiations for my Office. Ultimately, my Office’s proposed approach to economic development was adopted in an amendment that the House accepted on Tuesday. As a direct result of this change, the bill moved forward and will be taken up by the Senate next week.

“The amendment provides a narrowly-drawn exemption for full-time economic development professionals from being treated as lobbyists under the ethics law. This would include, for example, high-level individuals from foreign car companies or staff members of local chambers of commerce. Lawmakers and other public officials are specifically prohibited from claiming this exemption. As the amendment clearly states, no public official, public employee, lobbyist, or employee of a lobbyist can claim exemption as an economic development professional. Individuals who are lobbyists, but also perform economic development functions, would still be treated as lobbyists under the law.

“Policymakers can debate the merits of this proposal and will have the final say on this bill. Those debates should be based in fact and [the words of the amendment](#), not in rhetoric and misinformation. Whatever the fate of HB317, I will continue to push my Office’s ethics reform bill and will call the first meeting of the Ethics Reform Commission early this spring.”

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