

Alabama Special Session?

Two of Alabama's major **industrial incentive acts** that the state used to lure businesses will expire later this year without legislative action, raising the possibility that lawmakers could be called back to Montgomery for a special session.

The Alabama Jobs Act, which provides tax credits and rebates to new industries, will expire on Dec. 31 and the Growing Alabama Act, which provides tax credits for donations to economic development organizations, will expire Sept. 31 unless they are renewed by lawmakers.

Lawmakers were originally slated to consider them in the last legislative session, but it was cut short because of COVID-19 concerns. Calling a special session would require lawmakers to return during the pandemic. No action would leave the incentives — two of the major tools the state uses to recruit industries to the state — lapsed until at least February when lawmakers return to the Alabama Statehouse for the 2021 regular legislative session.

“This would impact future projects and our ability to negotiate future job creating projects as we move forward in time,” said Commerce Secretary Greg Canfield, who is the state's chief industrial recruiter.

Canfield said it would not impact projects that have already been announced and for which incentive agreements have been signed.

The decision on whether to call lawmakers back to Montgomery falls solely to Gov. Kay Ivey. A spokeswoman said the governor has not made a decision either way.

“We have been aware of those concerns, as well as others. The governor continues to have discussions with legislative leadership, but no decisions have been made at this time. All options are on the table,” Ivey spokeswoman Gina Maiola said.

The chairman of a House budget committee said it was a possibility that lawmakers will be called back.

“I think it's a possibility before the end of the year,” Rep. Steve Clouse, the Ozark Republican who chairs the House General Fund committee, said.

“I think we could get in and get out,” he said. However he noted that there are still “concerns in the House about being able to operate under COVID-19.” It is difficult for the 105-member House to spread out in the chamber.

Clouse said while the acts would only lapse for a number of weeks, it would leave the state without one of the “tools in the toolkit” during that time while competing with other states for projects.

House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels said he could see the possibility of a special session in December, “but not before.”

“I think a lot of people would like to see one. I know the Commerce Department would. But only the governor can make the decision,” said Sen. Cam Ward, a Republican from Alabaster.