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Jobs biggest issue for Ivey

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State Treasurer Kay Ivey, who is running for governor this year, says government must focus on job creation.

The Republican visited Clanton on Wednesday, and said the No. 1 thing she hears about on the campaign trail is, “jobs, jobs, jobs.”

Ivey said the state must diversify what businesses it recruits, not just automobile manufacturers.

“We are not going to put all our eggs in one basket,” Ivey said. “I thought we learned that with the textile mills.”

Instead, Alabama should work to recruit aerospace, biomedical and knowledge-based industries, she contends.

The state should also focus on bringing in medium- and smaller-sized businesses too and not rely solely on companies that employ thousands, Ivey said.

The former schoolteacher said the state needs a well-trained workforce.

Ivey supports charter schools, saying they put competition into the classroom, remove bureaucracy and allow education decisions to be made on the local level.

Classrooms should also have software and technology that allows teachers to specialize lessons to focus on areas individual in which students are struggling, Ivey said.

Something must be done to keep students from dropping out of school, Ivey said.

She proposes having community college counselors go into fifth-, sixth- and seventh-grade classrooms to expose students to different technical careers.

“Dropout students are not dumb; they are very capable,” Ivey said. “They just need hope and vision.”

Ivey also addressed the state's troubled Prepaid Affordable College Tuition program.

"If was easy to fix, we wouldn't have a problem," she said.

Her plan for PACT would guarantee college tuition for people who have paid into the program.

"The program is alive and well. No payment has been missed; no payments would be missed," she said.

To do that, she proposes dividing current PACT assets to state colleges and universities in exchange for the institutions educating those students.

She also addressed gambling, saying it was a poor enterprise.

"Gaming enterprise is fool's gold," Ivey said.

She said government should never fund essential services with unsteady industries like gaming.