



*Mississippi House of Representatives
Weekly Summary*

Week of April 16, 2012

House members passed a variety of bills this week in advance of various deadlines coming up in the last few weeks of the 2012 Legislative Session. Most of the bills were before the House for concurrence or nonconcurrence. If the House voted to concur with Senate amendments, the bill was sent directly to Governor Bryant to sign into law. However if the decision was not to concur but to invite conference, the bill is sent to a conference committee of three members each of the House and Senate.

Some of the bills to which the House concurred include House Bill 696 (HB696), which prohibits certain school administrators and district employees from influencing teachers to change student grades. The Senate version of the bill removed the \$250 fine and possibility of termination that House members had originally included, but leaves intact the strict language of the bill. Penalties for changing a grade in violation of this new law may result in accreditation being taken away from a school, which essentially removes athletics and extracurricular activities. Administrators and/or principals will be held accountable. The motion to concur passed by a vote of 86-34.

House Bill 1091 (HB1091) corrects a situation involving the Mississippi State Port Authority at Gulfport. Although for years the Port Authority operated as a governing authority, a recent legal interpretation was given to the effect that the Port Authority was a "state agency." HB1091 makes clear that the Port Authority is not a state agency, but in fact is a governing authority and may operate as such. Under current law, the State Port Authority at Gulfport must go through the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) during bid processes. The enactment of HB1091 removes DFA and its procurement review board from the process. The Port Authority at Gulfport would still be required to follow certain state bid laws during its post-Katrina expansion and restoration. The House's motion to concur passed by a vote of 86-33.

For those bills going to conference, the Speaker of the House and the Lieutenant Governor each assign conferees from their respective Chambers who will work together to reach an agreement on the language of the bills. Once the conference committee members agree on the language,



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the bills are taken back to each chamber and voted to either pass or recommit the report for further conference.

Some bills House members sent to conference this week include:

--Senate Bill 2934 (SB2934): the Inventory Tax Bill

--House Bill 1134 (HB1134): requires the appointment of superintendents by governing authority in those school districts abolished by the Governor.

--House Bill 1019 (HB1019): allows bill breweries to provide samples subject to certain conditions.

--House Bill 211 (HB211): the Attorney General Sunshine Act

The deadline to file conference reports on Appropriations and Revenue bills falls next weekend, April 28-29. House members voted to invite conference on all 51 House Appropriations bills addressed this week. Once conferees are named, the conference committee will then meet. Next week, conferees will come to an agreement and file reports before 8 p.m. Saturday night, April 28. House members will then take those bills up starting Sunday afternoon, April 29. On Monday, April 30, members will have to adopt all conference reports filed. These decisions affect how much each state agency will receive in state funds.

This week in the Ways and Means Committee Room at the State Capitol in Jackson, Miss., Rep. Percy W. Watson was honored during a ceremony for his time in the Legislature, specifically the eight years (2004-2011) he spent as Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Rep. Watson is from Hattiesburg and has served in the Legislature since 1980. He was recognized today by former and current colleagues, friends and family for his mark on history at the Capitol. Rep. Watson is the first African-American to have served as Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. With tradition, Rep. Watson's portrait was revealed and hung directly behind the seat of where the current chairman of the committee (Rep. Jeff Smith) sits.