



## Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

**Week of April 2, 2012**

During the first part of the week, House members addressed Senate bills in committee in anticipation of Tuesday's 8 p.m. deadline to move all general bills received from the Senate out of committee and onto the House Calendar.

In the Judiciary A Committee, members passed Senate Bill 2283 (SB2283), which allows sirens to be used on Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) vehicles at the discretion of the executive director. The MEMA vehicles are currently equipped with emergency lights. In addition to this bill, Senate Bill 2543 (SB2543) also passed out of committee. SB2543, the "Move Over Law," states that when utility or service vehicles are on the side of the road, general traffic is required to move into the far left lane when passing.

Passing out of the Appropriations Committee, Senate Bill 2631 (SB2631) addresses the subject of uninsured motorists. Its passage will allow the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Revenue to establish an electronic system that would determine if a person who has been pulled over has the required and active automobile insurance coverage under state law. Vendors of the electronic software will incur the \$1 million upfront cost. A fiscal note estimates that approximately \$6 million will be made in revenue from this system each year based on fines paid by drivers who do not have insurance.

Among the bills discussed by the Education Committee, Senate Bill 2401 (SB2401) prompted the most discussion. SB2401 is the companion bill to House Bill 888 (HB888), the "Mississippi Public Charter Schools Act of 2012." HB888 passed through the Education committee several weeks ago, but died on the House calendar. After weeks of anticipation on both sides, SB2401 failed to make it out of committee on a vote of 15-16.

On the House floor Wednesday and Thursday, members covered a lot of ground as they addressed more than 100 bills, many mirroring previous House bills. Many of the Senate bills that passed adopted the "Strike-All Amendment" put in place by House members. When a "Strike-All Amendment" is adopted, the House language is inserted into the Senate version of the bill. In most instances, the language between the two chambers is identical, except for minor changes. However in other instances, the nature of the bill is changed more dramatically. In either case, the bill goes to "conference," whereas three members from each chamber meet to reach a compromise on the wording of the bill.



## Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

Senate Bill 2380 (SB2380) addresses revisions to the State Personnel Board's Reduction-In-Force (RIF) policy. House members voted to adopt the Strike-All language. SB2380 places less focus on seniority and more focus on performance in employees. Adoption of the bill would allow RIF to be implemented in three instances: if there is a shortage of funds or work, if there are changes in an employee's duties, or if there is a merger between two agencies. Opponents believe adoption of this measure would result in loss of jobs to employees who have invested a lot of time in a company. Supporters believe enactment of this bill would encourage people who perform well to stay vested in the system. After lengthy discussion, the bill was Laid on the Table, Subject to Call. It will be addressed at a later date.

Senate Bill 2572 (SB2572) authorizes the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) to borrow funds to establish and operate a certified registered nurse anesthetist program. Currently, no nurse anesthetist program exists in Mississippi. Students who are interested in pursuing this specialized degree are forced to go out of state. Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg has offered to provide USM an interest-free loan to establish this program. These start-up funds will go toward a variety of needs like equipment, educational materials and hiring employees. Once students enroll, the tuition they pay will support the program. The bill passed the House 109-12.

The **Workers' Compensation Law** (SB2576), which was held on a Motion to Reconsider last week, passed the House floor narrowly by a vote of 59-58. The bill now goes to conference whereas members from both sides will work together on unified language.

Other bills passed in the House this week include:

--SB2772 establishes an election law task force that would study Mississippi's election process and consider all matters related to elections. The task force is designed to only make recommendations of change to the legislature. The bill passed 75-43.

--SB2451 clarifies requirements for dual enrollment programs for high school students taking community college courses. For every three hours of credit earned in a community college, the high school student will be rewarded one high school Carnegie unit.



## Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

--SB2851 eliminates the three-day waiting period and blood test requirements to marry in Mississippi.

--SB2494 revises the penalties for false reporting of a crime. Enactment of this bill would increase jail time up to one year and/or a fine up to \$5,000. An amendment passed allowing the victim to receive a free copy of the incident report.

--SB2376 creates a felony offense for voyeurism when a victim is under 16 years of age. The Strike-All Amendment adopted will punish those who videotape or spy on children under 16 years of age in secret, without the subject's knowledge.

--SB2549 makes it a crime to sell "knock-off" or counterfeit goods. People who violate this law will face criminal charges.

--SB2289 refers to traffic citations. If a driver receives a camera citation from another state, the charge will not be placed on their driving record in Mississippi.

Visitors to the Capitol this week included representatives of Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority for AKA Day at the Capitol on April 4. AKA was founded at Howard University in Washington D.C., January 15, 1908.