



## Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

**Week of April 9, 2012**

This week, House members reviewed a variety of bills, including their own bills returned from the Senate. If changes were made, chairmen proposed to concur with the Senate amendments or invite conference to further discuss the changes. The bills members concurred or agreed with will be sent to Governor Bryant after they are enrolled. For the bills members wanted to discuss further, they invited conference. Conference committees consist of three members from each chamber who meet to discuss the bill, while attempting to reach a compromise.

Several Senate Education bills were addressed on the House floor. Senate Bill 2330 (SB2330) requires school district consolidation in Sunflower County. Currently, Sunflower County has three school districts, which are all under conservatorship. To be under "conservatorship," a school district no longer has decision making power of its own due to an emergency situation. This control is placed into the hands of a conservator appointed by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). Two of the three school districts are failing, and one is low-performing. Should this measure be enacted, the three school districts of Indianola, Sunflower and Drew will consolidate into one county-wide district, with a newly elected school board and an appointed superintendent. In Mississippi, there are 152 school districts. This bill would lower that number to 150. The bill passed 85-34.

Senate Bill 2737 (SB2737) allows the State Board of Education (SBE) to consolidate low-performing schools and school districts in emergency situations. If a school district violates accreditation standards, their accreditation may be pulled. If pulled, privileges like extracurricular activities will also be withdrawn until the school regains accreditation. This bill also allows parents of students in districts where accreditation has been lost to transfer their child to an accredited school district. The receiving district then has the authority to approve the transfer. All money would follow a child during his/her transfer. An amendment passed that addresses the adoption of policies and procedures for local school districts having one of the three lowest accreditation ratings. It creates standards regarding the daily curriculum in schools, weekly homework assignments, parental involvement, dress codes, parent-teacher conferences, school holidays, and a school syllabus. The amended bill passed 113-7.

Two study group-based education bills were addressed and passed this week, as well. Senate Bill 2760 (SB2760) will study Bolivar county to assess the effectiveness of consolidation. Currently, Bolivar County has six school districts, and only one is considered successful. This



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study group will determine if three consolidated districts would better benefit the county. Senate Bill 2313 (SB2313) also creates a study group to assess the effectiveness of elected superintendents and appointed superintendents. Out of the 152 school districts in the state, 64 districts elect their superintendents.

In other issues, Senate Bill 2398 (SB2398) creates the Mississippi Small Business Regulatory Flexibility Act. This bill establishes a volunteer committee comprised of 12 people from associations of various businesses throughout the state. The committee includes four members appointed by the Governor; four members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor; and four members appointed by the Speaker of the House. This committee is charged with reviewing regulations put out by various state agencies that affect small businesses. SB2398 requires each agency to determine whether any proposed rules by the agency affect small business and prepare an economic impact statement. Enactment of this bill will allow the committee to file a written petition with an agency to oppose all or part of a regulation that has a negative impact on small business. The bill passed 114-7.

Senate Bill 2771 (SB2771), referred to as “Karen’s Law,” revises punishment for manslaughter of certain child victims. Once enacted, this bill would establish a new crime of “child homicide.” If a child is killed by a person over the age of 21, that person would face an increased prison sentence of up to 30 years. An amendment passed that defines “child” to include an “unborn child” as defined in the current Mississippi criminal code. Punishment for this crime would apply to any killing of any child under this provision, except for legal abortions where there is no heartbeat, a medical necessity to protect the mother, or in instances of rape or incest. The amended bill passed 83-34.

The Armed Forces Absentee Voting Law (Senate Bill 2552) passed this week, as well. It clarifies who an absentee voter is regarding military affairs. Applications may be signed by electronic signature. A member of the military who is out of the state may vote by electronic signature using fax or e-mail. Their ballot must be in by 7 p.m. on day of election.

Visitors to the House this week included Miss University Kayla Snow from the University of Mississippi; the family members of MS National Sergeant First Class Billy Albert Sutton of Mooreville. House Resolution 80 was read in his memory commending his life, legacy and service; and Robin David, executive director of the Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum,



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and Kim Ross Bush, a museum board member. They were presented with House Concurrent Resolution 89, which recognized the Glenn L. Swetman and Mike Sekul Schooners.