



Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

Week of February 27, 2012

House members were faced with a full week of committee work in anticipation of the approaching March 6 deadline for reporting general bills out of committee.

On **Monday, February 27**, the full committee of Medicaid met to discuss House Bill 421 (HB421). HB421 regulates Medicaid from services provided. Under this bill, Medicaid seeks to obtain flexibility in the ways they provide reimbursement. Currently, a per diem reimbursement method is used. With the proposed bill, a Diagnosis-Related Group (DRG) method would be adopted. Additionally, Medicaid wants to be excluded from the State Personnel Board. They believe that with this separation, they can be more efficient in hiring qualified individuals.

After adjournment Monday, House Education Subcommittee A met to discuss House Bill 888 (HB888) or the "Mississippi Public Charter Schools Act of 2012." After brief discussion, the subcommittee passed the bill on to the full committee. HB888 declares that charter schools are public schools. The purpose of the law is to foster innovation and increase community involvement in the education of community children. Parents have a choice in where to send their children, just as teachers have a choice of applying to the new schools. Under this bill, teachers and administrators would be exempt from state licensure requirements, but be held to higher standards of achievement. No extra cost to taxpayers is expected. Money to fund the new schools would follow a student. If a student leaves an existing school to attend a charter school, the money allotted to them would follow the student to the new school. If a charter school fails; it closes. The full Education Committee narrowly passed HB888 by a vote of 14-12 on **Wednesday, February 29**.

The House passed two bills dealing with gun rights on **Tuesday, February 28**. House Bill 455 (HB455) eliminates weapons dealers from being required to keep duplicative and obsolete records on weapons and ammunition bought or sold. Federal legislation already requires this information. House Bill 695 (HB695) expands reciprocity with gun permits allowing Mississippi citizens more opportunity to legally carry firearms out of state. On **Thursday, March 1**, House Bill 627 (HB627) passed the House. This bill prohibits gun buy-back programs so as to protect antique or stolen guns.

House members voted on and passed House Bill 1422 (HB1422) Thursday, as well. HB1422 increases the amount of alcohol in beer from five percent to eight percent by weight. This allows specialty/craft beers to be bought and sold in Mississippi. The bill passed 67-45. Of all the states, Mississippi currently permits the lowest alcohol by weight for beer.



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Longtime Capitol fixture and former Representative Ed Perry said his farewell at the end of Wednesday's session. Mr. Perry has been assisting the House staff during the transition since the beginning of the year. He delivered Soggy Sweat's Whiskey Speech to a standing ovation from the House.

Visitors to the Capitol this week included the family of fallen Corporal Edward Dycus. Rep. Hines presented the family members with a proclamation in Corporal Dycus' honor. Present were his mother Theresa Dycus, sister Martha Dycus and stepfather Franky Drury. Rep. Alyce Clarke introduced the first African American Judges in the State of Mississippi: Chancellor Denise Owens, Chancellor Patricia Wise, Judge Betty W. Sanders, Judge Lillie Sanders and Judge Ermea J. Russell. Several members welcomed family members for first –time visits.