



Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

Week of March 26, 2012

This week, House members raced the clock to meet Wednesday's deadline for original floor action on Appropriations and Revenue bills originating in the House, and Thursday's deadline of reconsideration on Appropriations and Revenue bills originating in the House. House members also began addressing Senate bills this week.

On the House floor Monday, members discussed and passed House Bill 1547 (HB1547) by a vote of 120-1. The "**Mississippi Critical Physician Shortage Incentive Act of 2012**" incentivizes physicians to locate in impoverished areas of Mississippi through a state tax exemption of any income greater than \$100,000 for up to ten years of the physician practicing in the rural area. An amendment passed requiring the Department of Revenue to provide an annual report of what this exemption costs the General Fund and whether it is significant to improving healthcare access in Mississippi. This bill incentivizes physicians to live and work in rural areas of Mississippi where there is a shortage of physicians.

The Corrections Committee passed several bills on the floor, Monday, including Senate Bill 2195 (SB2195), which extends the repeal date for the Parole Board. The bill passed 119-1 after the defeat of amendments offered to address gubernatorial pardons.

House members also voted on and passed Senate Bill 2878 (SB2878) by a vote of 69-49. Enactment of this measure permits an increase in the amount of alcohol in beer from five percent to eight percent by weight. This measure allows specialty/craft beers to be bought and sold in Mississippi. This is the companion bill to House Bill 1422 (HB1422) which passed the House in February.

On Wednesday, House members passed the "**Inventory Tax Bill**" by a vote of 85-33. House Bill 536 (HB536) increases the income tax credit authorized for the ad valorem tax paid on inventory starting in 2014. The existing \$5,000 credit increases to \$10,000 in 2014, then \$15,000 in 2015. For the 2016 taxable year and each taxable year thereafter, the tax credit of the taxpayer shall be the lesser of the amount of the ad valorem taxes paid on the inventory or the amount of the income tax liability. The tax credit mechanism employed by the bill means that there will be no adverse impact whatsoever on municipalities or counties.



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House Bill 1631 (HB1631) authorizes bonds for various economic development programs and other purposes. Enactment of this bill provides \$280 million to be used toward Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), community and junior colleges, state agencies, Local System Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Fund, and updating jails affected during Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters. The bill passed by a vote of 104-16.

Governor Phil Bryant's "**Mississippi Health Care Industry Zone Act**" (House Bill 1537) unanimously passed the House floor Wednesday. Adoption of this would bill provide certain tax incentives for qualified businesses located within certain hospitals or medical zones. MDA can designate areas in counties as a Health Care Industry Zone if they meet certain criteria. Special incentives encourage health-related businesses to relocate to these areas. In order to qualify for the incentives, a Health Care Industry Facility must create at least 25 full-time, permanent jobs.

Parents and teachers receive another perk to the tax-free weekend at the end of July. With the passage of House Bill 1620 (HB1620), school supplies now fall into the category of tax-free items. A few years ago, legislation passed providing the tax break to clothes during this weekend. Now, parents can add supplies like pencils, backpacks, paper, etc, to their list of items to shop for during the last weekend in July.

Thursday, House members narrowly passed Senate Bill 2576 (SB2576) by a vote of 60-56. The revisions to the **Workers' Compensation law** sparked debate among House members. Several weeks ago, the House version of the bill, House Bill 555, died on the House calendar. Proponents argued that the primary purpose of SB2576 is to pay the temporary and permanent disability benefits to every worker who legitimately suffers a work-related injury or occupational disease arising out of and in the course of employment, to pay reasonable and necessary medical expenses resulting from the work-related injury, and to encourage the return to work of the worker. Provisions include restoration of "fair and impartial interpretation;" requirement of workers to provide medical proof of injury that occurs on the job; stronger measures related to drug and alcohol usage; clarification of an employee's choice of physician; and significant increases in benefits for surviving spouses and funeral costs.



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Opponents, however, contend that the bill would unnecessarily restrict the opportunity of injured employees to collect benefits owed to them and that it represents a negative change to current law. The bill was held on a Motion to Reconsider, which will be taken up at a later date.

Visitors to the Capitol this week included Mississippi's New Poet Laureate, Natasha Trethewey; Paul LaCoste with Fit for Change; Dr. Carolyn W. Meyers, President of Jackson State University, presented with House Concurrent Resolution 81 commending and recognizing her for her accomplishments; Taiwan visitors, presented with House Resolution 78; the families of Samuel Clayton Kelly, Jr., Charles Walker Kelly and Bryant Mason Wilbanks, presented with House Resolution 78 mourning the loss of the lives of the three boys who died on their way back to the University of Mississippi after a surprise visit home to their families; and Rear Admiral Michael Jabaley, originally of Jackson, who spoke about the upcoming commissioning of the U.S. Navy's most modern Virginia class attack submarine, the USS Mississippi. The USS Mississippi, the fifth U.S. Navy vessel in history to bear the name of The Magnolia State, will be commissioned on June 2 in Pascagoula. Persons interested in obtaining tickets to attend this historic occasion may apply online at www.ussmississippi.org.