



Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

Week of March 5, 2012

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

In committee this week, Judiciary B passed House Bill 729 (HB729) which states consumption of alcoholic beverages by individuals under 21 years of age will be treated as a misdemeanor. Minors are already prohibited from purchasing and/or possessing alcoholic beverages. A conceptual amendment to provide for religious exceptions was passed.

The full education committee passed House Bill 488 (HB488). HB488 focuses on illegal immigration. In addition to broader provisions to deter illegal immigration, this bill states that students must be able to present an original birth certificate or a certified original if one is requested. If a child of an unlawful alien cannot produce the birth certificate, they have 30 days to notify the school they are illegal. Additionally, each school district will be required to provide an annual report on the number of illegal aliens who are students. Federal law states that identifying the children by names is unlawful.

On the floor Wednesday, House Bill 928 (HB928) was reconsidered whereby it failed to pass on Tuesday. It passed by a vote of 65-54 Wednesday. HB928 proposes to allow certain municipalities (those that are currently dry) to determine on their own whether they would want to emerge from the "dry law" for limited alcohol sales. This law only applies to a municipality with a population of at least 5,000 people. A petition and a passing vote of 20 percent must occur. Once an area passes the vote, hotels and restaurants in the municipality would be allowed to sell alcohol by the glass only.

Judicial Pay Raise was also contested on the floor and passed 83-37. House Bill 484 (HB484) enacts judicial pay raise over four years at a rate slightly higher than 7.5 percent annually. Mississippi currently has the lowest paid judges in the country. This increase would bring judicial pay in line with the average pay in the Southeast and help prevent turnover. This increase does not involve additional general funds. Increased civil filing and appellate court fees would be used to fund the increases in salaries.

House Bill 1095 (HB1095) waives the out-of-state tuition policy for universities and institutions of higher learning if fiscally responsible. Each year, Mississippi loses students to neighboring state schools that have similar policies intact. The goal is to retain Mississippi students and attract out-of-state students who can bring in additional revenue. HB1095 passed 120-0.



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Thursday, House members addressed and passed 88 bills on the Noncontroversial Calendar. They covered topics such as prohibiting manhole covers from being sold as scrap metal to proper disposal of prescription drugs.

House Bill 1094 (HB1094) is referred to as the Scrap Metal Law bill. With the increased problem in manholes being stolen, this bill adds manholes into the current scrap metal law. The bill passed.

House Bill 1019 (HB1019) passed 73-46. It permits beer breweries to provide samples subject to certain conditions. Many states have tasting tours, and HB1019 will permit people with permits to brew beer the ability to offer limited amounts (no more than six ounces) of beer on premise to visitors over 21 years old and within the hours of 8 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Classroom supplies were addressed with House Bill 821 (HB821). This bill allows school districts to distribute procurement cards to teachers for the purchase of classroom supplies. The cards will have a predetermined expiration date on them and the allotted \$150 that each teacher is granted for supplies. This bill attempts to eliminate paperwork and ensure that all teachers receive the money they are entitled to for their classroom supplies. The bill is intended to ensure that these funds are used for classroom supplies. Teachers will be required to turn in receipts from their purchases. HB821 passed 121-0.

Members also passed House Bill 423 (HB423). This bill focuses on prescription drug abuse and proper disposal of prescription drugs. On the first Monday of each month, Mississippians will be permitted to go to the Bureau of Narcotics Task Force to turn in medicine they no longer use. There are 12 locations around the state. The task force members check in the medication, maintain records and keep them in a safe location. This bill assists law enforcement agents by attempting to cut down on prescription drug abuse and environmental concerns. This issue received national attention from people flushing medicines down the toilet, which affects water supplies.

Visitors to the Capitol this week included Republican Presidential Candidate and former Speaker of the US House of Representatives Newt Gingrich. Gingrich visited the House members on his tour of the South Thursday, March 8. Dr. Howard Clark of Morton was recognized with House Resolution 56 for his long career of serving the citizens of Mississippi. Miss Mississippi Mary Margaret Roark from Cleveland visited the Capitol and thanked members for their work and dedication. Rep. Martinson commended the Special Olympics Athletes of Mississippi for their outstanding achievements in athletics. She also welcomed Special Olympian Loretta Claiborne to Mississippi. House Resolution 20 was read in their honor. It recognized them on their athletic accomplishments.