



Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

Week of January 28, 2013

House members were faced with a full week of committee work in anticipation of the approaching February 5 deadline for reporting general bills originating in the House out of committee.

Members this week addressed several bills focused on Second Amendment rights. House members voted 101-18 to pass [House Bill 485](#) (HB485). HB485 exempts the names and addresses of people who have concealed carry permits from being a matter of public record. Supporters of this bill believe that enactment of this measure will protect the rights and identities of those law-abiding citizens who have concealed carry permits. Opponents believe that exempting any records from the public is contrary to the spirit of the First Amendment. Additionally, House members voted 111-8 in support of [House Bill 2](#) (HB2) that would clarify language affecting citizens licensed to carry concealed weapons in Mississippi. Enactment of this measure would protect people who have a permit to carry a concealed weapon even if the weapon is holstered and thus not totally hidden.

The House Education Committee passed several bills out of committee this week, as well. Governor Bryant's Mississippi Education Works Program comprises two of these bills. [House Bill 890](#) (HB890) focuses on student literacy in reading and math, and on teacher performance. Many different elements compose this bill: requiring third graders to meet specific standards in reading before advancing to the fourth grade; instilling intensive reading instruction for children who fall behind in grades K-3; allowing seventh graders to advance to the eighth grade if they meet certain goals in reading and math; requiring high schools with graduation rates below 80 percent to submit plans on how they propose to increase graduation rates; raising the requirements for students to get in to schools of education by requiring them to have a 3.0 grade average and a 21 on the ACT; offering a certain number of scholarships to students who have a 3.5 GPA and a 28 ACT score to become teachers in Mississippi for at least five years; and creating a pilot program in four Mississippi school districts to implement the performance-based compensation program for teachers. Additionally, committee members also passed [House Bill 906](#) (HB906) that creates the Mississippi Opportunity Scholarship Program. This program targets low income students and affords them scholarships to attend nonpublic schools in Mississippi. Individuals and businesses can receive a tax credit for donations made to the scholarship program. [House Bill 449](#) (HB449) also passed out of committee this week. It enacts that by 2016, all superintendents in each Mississippi school districts will be appointed.



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State Auditor Stacey Pickering spoke to the House Appropriations Committee on the funding formula for the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP) on Tuesday morning. Auditor Pickering outlined why his office was unable to certify the formula in 2012. He addressed two key components of the formula: average daily attendance and at-risk students. Both of these components use numbers that are either not standard across the board, or not auditable. Additionally, Auditor Pickering expressed concerns with the transportation component of the formula, which also has no oversight or auditing. His office has found that most school districts are in non-compliance with the laws regarding textbooks for students. Auditor Pickering then offered various proposals for the issues he raised.

[House Bill 560](#) (HB560) or the “Medicaid Technical” bill passed out of the House Medicaid Committee this week, but failed on the House floor by a vote of 62-52. It required a 3/5 vote to pass. Supporters of the bill believe that its passage would have continued many vital services for approximately 641,194 Mississippians. It also would have lifted the freeze on nursing home reimbursement rates, ensured payments to hospitals and doctors, and kept the healthcare of many Mississippians intact. As a result of its failing, supporters believe the Medicaid department will lose many needed procedures in order to continue the program that provides healthcare to many Mississippians. Opponents of HB560 believe that the bill did not contain the necessary code section to accept Medicaid expansion should the possibility arise.

In the Transportation Committee meeting this week, members discussed [House Bill 265](#) (HB265) that revises the rate of the gasoline excise tax. Mississippi’s gasoline tax is currently 18 cents. HB265 proposes lowering the gas tax to 12 cents and putting a six percent excise tax on wholesale gas that moves. The additional money brought in would go into the state bridge program and give money back to the cities and counties so they can start working on repairing their infrastructure. The bill passed out of committee.

Visitors to the Capitol this week included Erin Merryn, who was in Jackson to promote “Erin’s Law,” which has been filed in both chambers. If passed, [House Bill 492](#) (HB492) and [Senate Bill 2133](#) (SB2133) would implement education into the state’s curriculum for grades K-5 aimed at preventing sexual abuse of children. Parents would have the option to opt-out. Various mayors and city leaders from around the state convened at the Capitol this week as part of the Mississippi Municipal League’s (MML) annual meeting. They also held a press conference for the right to levy local sales taxes. The “Citizens for Economic Development Act” proposed by MML would permit cities to instill a one-cent sales tax for specific projects, given 60 percent of local voters approve.