



Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

Week of February 3, 2014

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 and constitutional amendments out of committee and onto the House Calendar. Bills not reported out of committee by that deadline are dead for the Session.

By deadline on Tuesday, 75.5 percent of the measures submitted by members had been killed. Of the 1,368 measures introduced by the general deadline, 333 survived and made it to the House Calendar. Two bills had already been signed into law by Governor Phil Bryant.

The House Appropriations Subcommittee met this week and held a budget hearing for the Mississippi Department of Education. Department members outlined their legislative priorities that include: full funding for the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP), restoration of diverted funds that include the Teacher Supply Funds and the Public School Building Funds, development of a Superintendent's Academy, continued training and funding for the Third Grade Reading Gate/Literacy, and expansion of early childhood education programs.

The full Appropriations Committee met and passed several bills to meet Tuesday's deadline, including [House Bill 748](#) (HB748), or the Transfer Bill. This bill provides the Appropriations Committee the authority to utilize excess funds that were collected last fiscal year and use them for the next fiscal year.

The House Ways and Means Committee passed [House Bill 801](#) (HB801) which would allow package retailers to allow customers to sample products. Enactment of this measure would also permit those retailers to hold tasting events.

The House Education Committee met this week to address [House Bill 504](#) (HB504), the teacher pay raise bill. First of all during calendar year 2015, HB504 increases the starting salary of teachers by \$1,500. This brings Mississippi's starting pay in line with the Southeastern average. Currently, Mississippi's base pay for a starting teacher is \$30,900, compared to approximately \$32,500 in the rest of the Southeast. This increase would happen automatically for every teacher in his or her first five years of teaching. Secondly, HB504 establishes 22 benchmarks to qualify for the pay raise. Any teacher who satisfies three of the 22 benchmarks would be eligible for a pay increase of \$1,500 in calendar year 2015, just like the starting pay increase.



Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

Furthermore, HB504 calls for a \$1,350 raise in Year 3, and a \$1,400 raise in Year 4. According to Mississippi State Economist Darrin Webb, the growth projections for Mississippi over the next three fiscal years are 4.4 percent in FY16, 4.1 percent in FY17, and 3.7 percent in FY18. Enactment of this measure would ensure that Mississippi's teachers receive a total increase of \$4,200 by July 1, 2018.

Supporters of the bill believe that this measure is a fiscally responsible compromise that combines an across the board pay raise for teachers' base salaries while additionally rewarding all teachers who are able to meet three of 22 benchmarks. Opponents of the bill do not believe the teachers are being given a large enough raise. They also object to tying a raise with professional benchmarks. The committee passed the bill to the House floor where it was debated for three hours. Six amendments were filed with one passing. The bill passed on a bipartisan vote of 86-26.

The latter half of this week, House members began addressing those bills on the General and Noncontroversial Calendars. They took up more than 70 bills on the Noncontroversial Calendar.

Among those noncontroversial bills passed:

[House Bill 641](#) (HB641) offers several changes that affect Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDL). Enactment of this measure would require the Department of Public Safety to allow electronic transmission of medical cards required for renewal of a CDL. It would further require CDLs to be issued for five-year terms.

[House Bill 620](#) (HB620) revises the authority of cities and counties to designate legal holidays. This allows cities to declare Mardi Gras Day and one other day a holiday in lieu of certain other legal holidays.

Concerning Wildlife, Fisheries and parks, [House Bill 719](#) (HB719) permits the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to expand or restrict bag limits based on deer population. [House Bill 872](#) (HB872) extends trapping season two weeks.

House members unanimously approved [House Bill 1433](#) (HB1433). HB1433 increases the death benefits of firefighters and police officers who are killed in the line of duty from \$65,000 to \$100,000. This measure also includes emergency management personnel and members of the Fire Academy.

[House Bill 1407](#) (HB1407) creates the Gale Stauffer, Jr. and Joseph Maher Law Enforcement Act of 2014. This bill authorizes a city or county to continue paying the salaries of a public safety employee who is injured in the line of duty while he/she is unable to physically perform his/her job duties.



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Visitors to the Capitol this week included: Mississippi Valley State University President Dr. William Bynum, his wife Deborah and other representatives from MVSU visited the Capitol in celebration of MVSU's Fourth Annual Green and White Capitol Day. Representative Mario M. Scavello from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and his wife Mary Ann visited the Capitol, as well, in support of Rev. Joseph R. Kopacz of Pennsylvania who was appointed by Pope Francis as the 11th Bishop of Jackson.