



Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

Week of January 13, 2014

This week members of the Appropriations Committee heard from numerous state agencies that came forward to submit their funding requests for Fiscal Year (FY) 15.

The Mississippi State Personnel Board (MSPB) was among the agencies that prepared presentations for the committee. The group shared facts about our state employees. As of June 30, 2013, the state has 91,764 full-time employees. Thirty-seven percent are state teachers, 34 percent are under MSPB Purview, 22 percent Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), 6 percent Community Colleges and less than one percent in the Governor's office and Legislative Branch. Close to 43 percent of the state workforce is located within the Metro Jackson area. The state workforce comprises 61 percent female and 39 percent male. The racial makeup is approximately 51 percent African American, 47.5 percent Caucasian and 1.5 percent all other races. The average salary of our state employees has increased from 2012's \$34,259 to \$34,506. Sixty-two percent of our employees make less than that. The MSPB is focused on efforts to retain employees to ensure a quality workforce for Mississippi.

IHL also spoke before the Appropriations Committee. Along with sharing their budgetary needs, Dr. Hank Bounds, Commissioner of Higher Education, reviewed the benefits of higher education: lower incarceration rates, higher incomes, higher tax revenues, greater business investment, increased rates of parents reading to children and more civic-minded citizens.

Legislators received an economic briefing from State Economist Darrin Webb and Treasurer Lynn Fitch this week. Webb again confirmed that the US economy is growing gradually, with the Mississippi economy following a similar pattern. He said we have seen the strongest employment growth since 1999, with approximately 18,818 jobs added in 2013. However, income growth has been more modest due to the job growth being in the low-wage and temporary job sector. He believes Mississippi is on track to reach the revised estimate for FY14.

The Public Health Committee met Tuesday and passed [House Bill 49](#) (HB49) to the House floor, where it was debated Thursday. If enacted, this measure would require drug testing for certain Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients who have been screened. Supporters of the bill believe this effort will help people who have drug problems receive treatment. Opponents of the bill think the legislation is inefficient as it will only affect a small



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group of people and will cost the state money. They also believe it unfairly targets Mississippi's poorest and neediest citizens. They support the idea that Mississippi should track the efforts of other states with similar laws before passing such a measure. After a little more than four hours of debate on the House floor, the bill passed on a vote of 74-46.

The Democratic Legislative Caucus held a press conference this week to outline their 2014 Legislative Agenda. They discussed healthcare, education, state employee benefits, and roads and bridges.

On Thursday after Session, a joint meeting occurred between the House and Senate Judiciary A Committees to hear testimony from contractors and sub-contractors regarding their lien rights.

The 8:00 p.m. deadline to request general bills and constitutional amendments came and went quickly on January 15. Monday, January 20, marks the deadline to introduce those measures. Legislative Services staff members are especially busy as they tirelessly work with lawmakers to draft the bills that will be introduced in the House this session.