



Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

Week of March 10, 2014

House members faced another major deadline this week as they continued to address Senate bills on the House floor. By Wednesday, House members needed to address all general, nonrevenue bills received from the Senate. If a Senate bill was not taken up and passed by Wednesday, it died on the Calendar. Thursday was the last day for reconsidering Senate bills, and Friday was the deadline for tabling Motions to Reconsider.

To start off the week, the House and Senate Tourism and Agriculture Committees held a joint hearing to discuss the Agritourism Industry. Members from the Mississippi State University Extension Service and local farmers spoke to legislators about the benefits of supporting this growing industry. Agritourism helps preserve land for future generations and is the fastest growing sector in the tourism industry. The economic impact of activities like hunting, angling and wildlife watching alone are close to \$3 billion. Agritourism also includes lodging, crop mazes, pumpkin patches, direct sales, demonstrations, participation in actual farm tasks, etc. These methods provide additional opportunities for landowners to diversify the income received from their land.

On the House floor, members jumped in to tackle a variety of bills.

[Senate Bill 2579](#) (SB2579) creates the Marine Resources Accountability and Reorganization Act. The House proposed a Strike All Amendment to the original bill that would have removed the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) from the State Personnel Board (SPB) along with other organizational language. Members passed an amendment to keep the DMR under purview of SPB. Supporters of the amendment believe that due to the recent issues faced by the DMR, keeping them under the SPB is necessary to ensure accountability. Opponents of the amendment argued that having them under the SPB has not kept them accountable and increased flexibility with employees is desired. The bill then passed by a vote of 113-6.

Members also took up several bills pursuant to education. [Senate Bill 2288](#) (SB2288) modifies the election procedure for elected school board members only. The changes provide for a uniform procedure for a nominating petition. The requirement for 156 signatures decreases to 50. However, if there are fewer than 100 qualified electors in the area, the petition must be signed by at least 20 percent. The bill passed by a vote of 116-2.

In 2012, House members passed a measure that delayed the school start date, pushing it to the third Monday in August. This week, they amended [Senate Bill 2571](#) (SB2571), essentially abolishing the bill passed in 2012. This effort returns control of start date decisions to local school districts. The bill passed by a vote of 111-4.

Members also voted 71-50 to send House Bill 504 (HB504), the Teacher Pay Raise bill, to conference to work out the differences with the Senate. Members who voted to go to conference supported the



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House plan. The House plan starts teacher salaries at \$35,150, strips the benchmarks from the original bill, and still provides all teachers a pay raise of \$4,250 in a little more than three years. Those who voted to “concur” agreed with the Senate version of the pay raise bill that implements a merit-based pay raise of \$2,500 and starts teacher salaries at \$34,390.

The House plan now starts the pay raise of \$2,500 in the first two years as the Senate has proposed. During the third and fourth years, the raises will be given based on economic growth projections. Enactment of this measure would ensure that Mississippi’s teachers receive a total increase of \$4,250 by July 1, 2018.

Other bills that passed the House floor this week included:

--[Senate Bill 2369](#) (SB2369) recognizes October 1-February 28 as statewide squirrel season.

--[Senate Bill 2597](#) (SB2597) allows law enforcement officers and firefighters to retain their personal and major medical leave if injured in the line of duty. The unanimous passage of this legislation is in memory of Sergeant Kevin “Gale” Stauffer of Tupelo who was killed in the line of duty.

--[Senate Bill 2822](#) (SB2822) revises the Small Loan Regulatory Law by requiring consumer finance lenders to disclose a payment with and without credit insurance. The bill passed by a vote of 84-34.

--An amended version of [Senate Bill 2681](#) (SB2681), the “Religious Freedom Restoration Act,” passed by a vote of 82-35. Members voted to create a study committee comprised of House and Senate Judiciary B Committee members to further look into this issue, while preserving the “In God We Trust” language being added to the State seal.

Governor Bryant has signed and is scheduled to sign several bills that originated in House over the next few weeks.

--[House Bill 48](#) (HB48) creates the “Youth Concussion Law.”

--[House Bill 49](#) (HB49) requires drug testing for certain TANF recipients who have been screened.

--[House Bill 542](#) (HB542) includes coverage for treatment of autism spectrum disorders in State and School Employee Health Insurance Management Board.

--[House Bill 1041](#) (HB1041) designates a segment of highway in Clay County as the “Representative David Gibbs Memorial Highway.”

--[House Bill 1043](#) (HB1043) designates a memorial intersection in Hinds County in honor of Broderick Rashad Dixon.



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