



Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

Week of March 17, 2014

House members passed a variety of bills this week in advance of deadlines coming up in the last few weeks of the 2014 Legislative Session. Most of the bills were before the House for concurrence or non-concurrence. If the House voted to concur with Senate amendments, the bill was sent directly to Governor Bryant to sign into law. However if the decision was not to concur but to invite conference, the bill is sent to a conference committee of three members each from the House and Senate.

Monday and Tuesday, House members addressed and passed 53 Appropriation bills from the Senate to meet the 8 p.m. deadline Tuesday. At the beginning of the Session, the chairmen from both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees meet to divide the 106 Appropriation and Revenue bills. The House takes 53, and the Senate takes 53. Once each chamber votes on the measures, they go to the other chamber for approval. All bills must pass both chambers in identical form before they can be signed into law by the Governor.

Members voted to insert the House language (“strike-all”) into several of the Appropriations bills. The Department of Public Safety Appropriations bill, for instance, was changed to reflect the House language that provides for a new Trooper School. Close to \$7 million is appropriated for this effort.

On the House floor Tuesday, members addressed [Senate Bill 2975](#) (SB2975), the “bond bill.” Enactment of this measure would authorize the issuance of general obligation bonds for various projects. The House effort authorizes approximately \$400 million in bonds covering everything from a railroad project from Tennessee to Canton, Miss., to funding a new Trademart/Coliseum in Jackson. Members voted to pass a total of five additional amendments to include extra funds for different businesses and municipalities. The Senate plan authorizes close to \$100 million in bonds. House members anticipate Senate members sending this bill to conference in order to work on agreement language.

Some of the bills to which the House concurred with Senate changes include:

--[House Bill 37](#) (HB37) requires local taxing units to publish certain information regarding reappraisals to receive homestead exemption reimbursement.

--[House Bill 677](#) (HB677) or the “Results First Bill” requires certain state agencies to report their budgets in certain formats to the Legislative Budget Office (LBO) and Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) in order to increase efficiency.

--[House Bill 388](#) (HB388) permits state offenders to serve sentences in county jails if issues of overcrowding in the state penitentiary occur.

--[House Bill 1165](#) (HB1165) increases homestead exemption benefits for disabled veterans.

--[House Bill 314](#) (HB314) expands protections against government confiscation of legally-possessed firearms during a state of emergency or natural disaster.



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For those bills going to conference, the Speaker of the House and the Lieutenant Governor each assign conferees from their respective Chambers who will work together to reach an agreement on the language of the bills. Once the conference committee members agree on the language, the bills are taken back to each chamber and voted to either pass or recommit the report for further conference.

A few of the bills House members sent to conference this week include:

--[House Bill 801](#) (HB801) authorizes package retailers to sample alcoholic products and hold tastings and sampling events.

--[House Bill 641](#) (HB641) requires the Department of Public Safety to provide electronic transmission of medical card required for commercial driver's licenses.

--[House Bill 749](#) (HB749), Governor Bryant's Statewide Strike Team Act, creates three strike teams throughout the state comprised of local law enforcement officers. The strike teams would assist local municipalities and counties throughout the state should local law enforcement request it.

--[House Bill 765](#) (HB765) creates the Equal Opportunity for All Students with Special Needs Act in order to establish individual education funds (IEFs) for certain students.

A few conference reports were presented for House members, as well. [House Bill 585](#) (HB585), the omnibus bill that presented recommendations made by the Corrections and Criminal Justice Task Force, was sent to conference last week. The bill was crafted out of a desire to improve the way the criminal justice system works by giving more authority to judges and providing more alternative sentencing like house arrests and drug courts. The goal of the legislation is to provide a more just and equitable criminal justice system, while saving Mississippi around \$266 million over 10 years. While in conference, language was added related to drug trafficking offenses. The conference report was adopted on a vote of 105-13.

The deadline to file conference reports on Appropriation and Revenue bills falls on Saturday, March 29. House members voted to invite conference on all 53 House Appropriations bills addressed this week. In addition to language differences between the House and Senate versions of FY2015 appropriations, members are also working with a \$10.7 million state support funding difference as they finalize FY2014 and prepare FY2015 deficits. Next week, conferees will come to an agreement and file reports by Saturday night, March 29. House members will then take those bills up starting Sunday afternoon, March 30. On Monday, March 31, members will have to adopt all conference reports filed. These decisions affect how much each state agency will receive in state funds.

The third annual "Capitol Cook-Off" was held at the Mississippi's Farmer's Market on High Street in Jackson this week. Members of the House and Senate competed in the cook-off and helped raise close to \$25,000 for military families. The first Mississippi Musician's Day was held in conjunction with the event. Visitors to the Capitol this week included William "Bill" LaForge, Delta State University's eighth



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president; representatives from the Republic of China Taiwan; and Alfred Rankins, Jr., Alcorn State University's new president.