



## Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

**Week of January 26, 2015**

In anticipation of the deadline to report general bills originating in the House out of committee, February 3, members were faced with a full week of committee work. Members and staff are in and out of meetings all day.

House Corrections Committee members heard from representatives from the Joint Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) and Mississippi Prison Industries Corporation (MPIC) early this week. MPIC was established by the Legislature in 1990 to reduce recidivism by training inmates with job skills learned at the various MPIC facilities. PEER conducted an audit in 2013 reviewing the effectiveness of MPIC. The PEER report offered several recommendations for program improvement.

Appropriations Committee members were briefed by members from the Department of Mental Health on their budget needs for Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16). The Department of Mental Health was designed to serve individuals with mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and alcohol and substance use problems delivered through three major components: programs operated by the department, 14 regional community mental health centers and non-profit/other community based providers.

The House Transportation Committee passed several bills out of committee this week, including [House Bill 1211](#) (HB1211), which creates the Transportation Network Company Act. This act, known as the Uber bill, creates a new transportation network that is focused on shifting new technology. The network requires: applicable companies to provide provisions for outlining insurance coverage for rider and driver together, a seven year background check for the driver and payments to the public service commissioner to cover all drivers. Supporters believe this is an effort to move away from vehicle-for-hire and provide new opportunities for ride sharing. Opponents argue that this bill oversteps local jurisdictions.

[House Bill 982](#) (HB982) removes the requirement of the vehicle inspection sticker.

The House Insurance Committee moved forward with the “Property Insurance Clarity Act” or [House Bill 739](#) (HB739). HB739 requires admitted homeowners insurance carriers in Mississippi to provide data to the public on premiums collected, the amount of losses incurred and the



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total number of policies in effect. The information will be reported by zip code. The bill intends to help in determining actuarial and that fair application rates are being charged to homeowners.

House Judiciary A Committee members addressed numerous bills this week, passing several out of committee and on to the House calendar.

- [House Bill 1201](#) (HB1201) expands on the Attorney General “Sunshine Bill” passed during the 2012 Regular Session. Adoption of this measure would require the Attorney General to seek approval from the Outside Counsel Oversight Commission (comprised of the governor, lieutenant governor and secretary of state) before being able to file a lawsuit over \$250,000.
- [House Bill 570](#) (HB570), or “Noah’s Law,” seeks to prohibit the sale of caffeine pills or powders to individuals under the age of 18. The bill is in memory of Noah Smith, who, at the age of 17, went into cardiac arrest and passed away as a result of taking caffeine pills.

In its first committee meeting of the Session, the House Ways and Means Committee covered a lot of ground.

- [House Bill 123](#) (HB123) allows disabled Mississippi veterans to receive a sticker, free of charge, to place on their license plates permitting them to park in disabled parking spaces in any state or country.
- [House Bill 550](#) (HB550) revises the Mississippi Pawnshop Act in two ways. First, the measure says that an individual wishing to purchase or sell a product must be at least 21 years-old. Secondly, it mandates that owners report transactions using an online system.
- [House Bill 396](#) (HB396) raises the fee-in-lieu of ad valorem taxes for lease of prison lands from \$9 an acre to \$13 an acre.

House Education Committee members passed a bill giving assistant teachers a raise ([House Bill 582](#)) of \$1,000.



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On the floor of the House, the Appropriations Committee brought forward [House Bill 434](#) (HB434), also called the Transfer Bill. This bill suspends the two percent set aside for the Rainy Day Fund until Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17), freeing up \$111.4 million to go to the General Fund to be appropriated for the coming fiscal year (FY16). For FY17 and beyond, the decision whether to suspend the two percent set aside or not will be based on the status of the Rainy Day Fund. Suspending the two percent set aside would only be an option when the Rainy Day Fund is filled to the maximum amount. Lawmakers filled the Rainy Day Fund last year.

Also passing on the House floor:

[House Bill 583](#) (HB583) exempts hospitals from the certificate of need (CON) process for repair or rebuilding when they have been significantly damaged by a natural disaster and damages exceed one million dollars. The bill passed unanimously.

[House Bill 871](#) (HB871) requires certain public retirement systems to disclose certain information to the participants in the program and any members of the public that request information. The bill requires: notification of changes made to the plan to the plan participants, a description of the plan to employees and any member of the public, and an annual report of the plan to plan participants and any member of the public. The bill passed unanimously.

[House Bill 885](#) (HB885) directs insurance companies to pay for the screening, diagnosis and treatment of children, ages 2-8, with autism spectrum disorder. Ratification of this measure will bring Mississippi in line with 38 other states and the District of Columbia that offer autism coverage through insurance companies.

[House Bill 385](#) (HB385) legislatively separates Mississippi from Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) testing and implements a new testing regimen. The bill passed by a vote of 116-3.

Committee meetings are expected to continue Friday, Monday and Tuesday to meet deadline.

Visitors to the Capitol this week included the Mississippi Pharmacists Association. They provided health screenings to members and staff as part of their Capitol Day services. City



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officials from around the State also convened in Jackson as part of the Mississippi Municipal League's annual Capitol event.