



## Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

**Week of March 21, 2016**

The majority of House committees met and worked diligently toward the end of last week and up until Tuesday of this week. By Tuesday, deadline day to move all general bills received from the Senate out of committee and onto the House Calendar, 91 general bills passed out of committees and onto the House Calendar. Members have until Wednesday, March 30, to address those bills.

In the Appropriations Committee, several agency consolidation bills were proposed and passed.

--[Senate Bill 2361](#) suggests combining the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environmental Quality. The Strike All directs MS Soil and Water Conservation Commission and Pearl River Basin Development District to put together a plan for consolidation of those two agencies and report back to the Legislature by December 31, 2016. Under Senate plan in original version, the efficiencies were not there to sacrifice the loss of services of the original mergers of more agencies.

--[Senate Bill 2384](#) recommends combining the Mississippi Departments of Medicaid and Human Services. The goal of consolidating these two agencies is to encourage them to discuss ways they can save money. Enactment of this legislation would allow a request for proposal (RFP) to audit and assess this possibility and return to the Legislature if there is a potential to save money or not by this effort. The original Senate version of the bill did not include this study.

--[Senate Bill 2158](#) requires that the cost of the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP) be determined by the average daily membership (ADM). Schools that do not maintain an attendance rate of 94.5 percent or higher return to the average daily attendance (ADA) formula.

Floor action on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday was slow and steady. For each bill presented, a request was made to have the bill read in its entirety. This request, in turn, dramatically slowed down the pace of activity.

[Senate Bill 2167](#) requires independent party candidates to pay qualifying fees and raises the existing fees for party candidates. Examples include, but are not limited to, state senator or representative, sheriff, statewide elected officials, tax assessor, board of supervisors. Supporters believe the fee increase would help with the cost of conducting elections in the state. Opponents believe the fee increases are extreme. The bill passed by a vote 95-23.

[Senate Bill 2625](#) requires fingerprinting and criminal background checks of students working in healthcare settings. The bill passed by a vote of 119-0.



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The passage of [Senate Bill 2366](#) generated bi-partisan support and a round of applause from members. Enactment of this measure would add cell phones to the Do Not Call List. The bill passed 119-1.

[Senate Bill 2438](#) requires that all local school board superintendents be appointed after January 1, 2019. If a superintendent was elected after the last general election, that superintendent would be permitted to maintain his or her position until the next qualifying date. The bill passed by a vote of 80-36.

Two bills specifically surrounding the City of Jackson garnered generous interest on the House floor during this time.

[Senate Bill 2162](#) expands the makeup of the board of the Jackson Airport Authority to now include members appointed not only by the City of Jackson, but also Rankin and Madison counties, the Mississippi Development Authority, the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor. Currently, board members are appointed by the Mayor of Jackson and are confirmed by the Board of Alderman. A House amendment was adopted to provide that the majority of the members be made up of citizens from Jackson. The two appointments made by the Governor and the one made by the Lieutenant Governor must now be residents of Jackson. This change gives the City of Jackson five members on the board of nine.

Supporters of the bill believe the airport's realm of service extends well beyond the City of Jackson. They believe that a more representative group from the immediate areas serviced will be better suited to operate the board than one comprised of members solely from Jackson. They are worried that with the departure of air carriers and the recent downgrade of the authority's bond rating, a revamp of the board is necessary. Opponents argue the airport was originally paid for by the taxpayers of Jackson, and other municipalities should respect that. They believe that with the leadership of the new director, who has been in the position for about a year and half, the airport is now turning a profit and will be able to recruit another low-cost carrier. Opponents of the bill also contend that changing the board makeup is hostile and not good for the business climate or growth of the area. The bill passed by a vote of 74-46.

[Senate Bill 2525](#) creates the Capitol Complex Improvement District. The Strike All amendment of the bill inserts the language of House Bill 1564. Enactment of this measure would direct almost \$21 million in additional sales tax to a designated area in Jackson for assistance with infrastructure and fire and police protection. The area includes, but is not limited to, the Jackson Medical Mall, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson State University and a portion of Lakeland Drive. A commission would be established to help facilitate use of the funds for improvements to this area should the City of Jackson not be able to carry out the projects. The bill passed by a vote 113-7.

Additional school consolidation bills were brought forward, as well:



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--[Senate Bill 2495](#) proposes administrative consolidation of Montgomery County, Carroll County and Winona City schools. Using the criteria applied to other school consolidations, it was determined that Carroll County should be removed from the bill. Carroll County School District has increased to more than 1,000 students and is now a C district. Winona City Schools would absorb the two schools in Montgomery County. Because the Winona County School District would bring 80 percent of enrollment, they would keep the majority of the school board.

--Senate Bill [2500](#) provides for the administrative consolidation of the Lamar County School District. The Lumberton School District pulls from two counties, Pearl River County and Lamar County. In the Strike All passed by the committee, the local leaders in Lumberton, Lamar and Poplarville School Districts would be tasked with determining a way to dissolve the Lumberton School District by July 2019. Enactment of this measure would include maintaining a school in Lumberton despite dissolving the Lumberton Central Office.

After a very intense week, the House adjourned Friday evening at 6 p.m. and will return to work Monday afternoon.