



Mississippi House of Representatives Weekly Summary

Week of March 7, 2016

This week, members of the House turned their focus toward budget matters, with both the Appropriations and Ways and Means committees very active. The Appropriations committee deals with spending the state's money and is charged with designing the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 State Budget, which begins July 1. The Ways and Means Committee focuses on sources of state revenue. This committee crafts bills used as vehicles to fund the government. Early projections suggest the budget for FY2017 will be approximately \$6.2 billion.

On the House floor Tuesday and Wednesday, House members first addressed Special Funds Appropriations bills and then moved to focus on General Funds Appropriations bills. Special Funds are amounts set aside in separate accounts in the State Treasury for specific spending purposes. This money is typically generated from fees and licensing expenses collected by agencies and also includes federal funds available to agencies. General Funds are state revenues that are not restricted to specific spending purposes. General fund money is, for the most part, collected through taxation of individuals and businesses.

General Fund budget bills were taken up next. A few agency appropriations are noted:

--[House Bill 1633](#), the budget for the Attorney General: \$8.6 million.

--[House Bill 1643](#), the budget for the Mississippi Department of Education: \$2.5 billion.

--[House Bill 1650](#), the budget for the Division of Medicaid: \$962 million.

--[House Bill 1651](#), the budget for the Department of Health: \$64 million.

Members passed all 52 budget bills brought forward by the House Appropriations Committee. In the next few weeks, members will be faced with addressing the budget bills originating in the Senate. Approximately 110 total budget bills are addressed by the House and Senate during this process.

Several bills authorizing bonds and tax credits to different groups passed from the Ways and Means Committee this week onto the House calendar. Many of the bond bills were amended to include a starting amount of \$1 million with the intent of increasing the amount as the bills go through the legislative process this session.

--[House Bill 408](#) approves income tax credit up to 50 percent for employers who pay the cost of a qualified wellness program for their employees. The bill passed by a vote of 115-6.

--[House Bill 413](#) exempts a portion of income tax of physicians and nurse practitioners practicing in critical physician shortage areas. The goal of this effort is to recruit physicians to these areas. The bill passed by a vote of 119-0.



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--[House Bill 1597](#) authorizes bonds to assist Mississippi State University (MSU) with the construction of the Partnership School on campus. This sixth and seventh grade school is a collaboration between the Starkville-Oktibbeha Consolidated School District and MSU. In addition to being the only middle school in the county, establishment of the school would also permit MSU faculty and staff to send their children to school without leaving campus. MSU and Oktibbeha County have each invested \$10 million into this project. They are ultimately seeking \$10 million from the State. The bill passed by a vote of 77-40.

--[House Bill 1682](#) allows the issuance of bonds for improvements at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. A large majority would go toward the Blair E. Batson Hospital and pediatric care. The bill passed by a vote of 116-3.

--[House Bill 1683](#) allocates bonds for capital improvements at the Mississippi State Fire Academy, which is in need of upgrades to the barracks and training facility. The bill passed by a vote of 118-3.