



Week of February 13, 2017

With general House Bills out of the way, representatives began working on House Appropriations Bills, which will determine how much money is given to various state organizations.

The House was responsible for looking at the preliminary budgets of 54 state agencies, including the departments of transportation, public health, Medicaid, education and public safety.

Budgets included reverse repealers, a clause which ensures that a bill cannot become law before going to a conference committee for further revisions. With reverse repealers in place, most appropriations bills were voted on in a block to help speed up the process.

Bills discussed individually addressed budgets for the Department of Health and the Department of Education.

[House Bill 1511](#), which appropriates money to the Department of Health, would give the department approximately \$4.2 million less than the agency receives currently. A few representatives expressed concern that this would not be able to meet the needs of the public. Representatives responsible for putting together the budget said this reflects the changing role of the health department and the budget cuts facing many state agencies this year.

The Department of Education's budget, proposed in the form of [House Bill 1502](#), received an extra \$20 million in general funds for the School Recognition Program. This incentive program provides financial rewards for teachers and staff in high performing school districts. The school funding formula, a source of much conversation this session, was not included in the bill. It is possible that the Governor will call a special session to discuss revamping the education funding formula and whether or not to incorporate the suggestions made by the consulting group EdBuild earlier this year.

Next week is the deadline for action on appropriations and revenue bills. After that, House committees will begin considering bills which passed through the Senate.

Several groups visited the Capitol this week, including the Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, the Mississippi Egg Marketing Board, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the Mississippi Water Resources Association, the Mississippi Council on Economic Education, March of Dimes, the Mississippi Center for Nonprofits and the Mississippi Sustainable Agriculture network.