



Week of February 6, 2017

The House met as a whole throughout the week to discuss bills that made it out of committees and onto the calendar. Thursday, Feb. 9, was the deadline for representatives to discuss House Bills. Any bills that were not discussed by Thursday died on the calendar.

Legislation regarding internet sales tax, [House Bill 480](#), officially passed the House this week and will be sent to the Senate for consideration.

The House approved [House Bill 974](#), which would exempt certain state agencies from the rules, regulations and procedures of the state Personnel Board. The bill, originally discussed last week, will allow agency heads to run their departments how they see fit and remove employees' civil service protections.

Also discussed last week, [House Bill 1226](#), which details plans for a Capitol Complex District, passed the House with an amendment that will give the city of Jackson more power in addressing the repairs and enhancements that need to be made in the area surrounding the Capitol. The bill will be sent to the Senate for consideration.

The Rivers McGraw Act passed the House this week in the form of [House Bill 1089](#). This bill states that within eight hours of the arrest of someone under the age of 21, law enforcement officers must make reasonable efforts to notify parents before releasing the minor. This bill was requested by the parents of Rivers McGraw, a college student who took his own life after being released from an arrest for substance abuse. The measure passed unanimously.

[House Bill 645](#), known as the Back the Badge Act, sparked a lengthy discussion among House members. The act increases penalties for violent crimes committed against law enforcement officers, first responders and emergency medical technicians. Many representatives expressed that, while they support protecting officers, they also want to see more done in regards to holding officers accountable for the fair treatment of all citizens. The bill passed by a vote of 85-31.

The death penalty became a topic of discussion at the introduction of [House Bill 638](#). The bill revises the methods by which the death penalty can be carried out. In the event that lethal injection is deemed unusable, death penalty could be carried out by use of a gas chamber, a firing squad or electrocution. Supporters say this is necessary to ensure that the death penalty can be carried out by giving alternatives in case one or more methods is blocked or appealed. Those opposed to the bill say the alternatives offered are too extreme and inhumane. The bill passed by a vote of 74-44.

The introduction of [House Bill 926](#) proposed the Health Care Collaboration Act. This act would authorize the board of trustees of the state Institution of Higher Learning (IHL) and the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) to enter into a health care collaborative with other health organizations in the state. Supporters say this act will save rural hospitals and consumers money, while helping to modernize health care in rural areas. Those opposed say this could give UMMC an unfair advantage over other hospitals that have power to enter into a collaborative, but are not backed by the state. The bill passed by a vote of 89-24.

The House Transportation Committee presented [House Bill 509](#) to the floor. This bill would require driver's education curriculum to include information about how to respond to an officer in the event of being stopped or pulled over. An amendment was adopted which would also require the curriculum to teach driver's education students their constitutional rights in regards to being pulled over by a police officer. The bill passed unanimously.

Another transportation bill would expand requirements on seat belt usage. [House Bill 539](#) would require passengers in the back seat of the car to wear a seat belt. The bill passed by a vote of 76-40.

The House Education Committee presented two bills regarding compulsory school age. [House Bill 567](#) increased the compulsory school age of a child to the age of 18. [House Bill 565](#), originally intended to allow students to miss school for preapproved activities, was amended twice during debate. The first amendment offered would allow a student who turns the minimum compulsory school age at any time during the calendar year to be enrolled in school at the discretion of the parents or legal guardian. The second amendment would lower the minimum compulsory school age to five. Both House Bill 567 and House Bill 565 passed and will be sent to the Senate for consideration.

A number of other bills passed the House this week including a bill that will make it easier for victims to receive a Criminal Sexual Assault Protection Order and a bill that lays out a plan to provide the Mississippi Highway Patrol with a new headquarters.

Each of these bills will now be sent to the Senate for consideration.

As always, many visiting groups joined us at the Capitol this week, including members of the Mississippi Community Education Center, the Mississippi School Boards Association, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Natchez Inc., the Mississippi Association of Health, AARP Mississippi and the Mississippi Dental Association.