



Week of January 16, 2017

The state legislature had a full schedule during the third week of the 2017 legislative session, which began Monday with a joint Education and Appropriations committee meeting, where the consulting group, EdBuild presented their recommendations to revamp the state's education funding formula.

First and foremost, EdBuild suggested increasing the base student cost, or the amount of money used to educate the average student, with weights added for students with specific needs. Weights would be included for Low-Income students, English Language Learners, Special Education students, gifted students, students in the lowest and highest grade levels and students in rural or sparse school districts.

The consulting group also suggested funding schools based on their enrollment numbers instead of attendance numbers and creating a method of funding that can be easily calculated to promote transparency in education funding. It was pointed out that Mississippi's 73 percent cost guarantee in regard to education funding is much higher than that of other states. EdBuild suggested reconsidering this percentage and allowing school districts to exceed the state cap on the amount of local funds they can raise for their schools.

Finally, EdBuild acknowledged that this formula would have to be phased-in over a period of at least five years, because making all of these changes at once would not be feasible. In the coming months, legislators will be responsible for deciding how many or how few of these recommendations to implement. A more detailed account of the recommendations can be found on the state website at www.legislature.ms.gov.

On Tuesday, the House chamber hosted the State of the State address. Governor Phil Bryant outlined the accomplishments of this past year and expressed his hope for Mississippi's continued progress in the future.

Several pieces of legislation reached the House floor on Wednesday afternoon. The most contested was [House Bill 555](#), which proposes that a three-member commission be established to approve the Attorney General's use of outside attorneys in cases that could result in hefty legal awards. Members who opposed the bill pointed out that the Attorney General is bringing money into the state through these lawsuits, while supporters of the bill accused the Attorney General of engaging in "taxation by litigation." The bill failed by a close vote of 58-60 but Rep. Mark Baker, who introduced the bill, made a motion to reconsider the legislation at a later date.

Other relatively uncontested bills introduced to the House floor included a measure lifting the requirement for "no parking" signage, legislation requiring drivers to slow down when encountering certain features on the road, bills creating nursing and physical therapy licensure compacts, an

extension of the Infant Mortality Reduction Collaborative and a bill authorizing the Department of Health to establish a Maternal Mortality Review Committee.

The House adjourned on Thursday in anticipation of some members traveling to Washington, D.C., to see President-elect Donald Trump sworn into office. Rep. Andy Gipson will represent the House on Mississippi's Presidential Inauguration Committee, comprised of a number of state leaders accompanying Governor Phil Bryant to the Presidential Inauguration.

Among visiting groups to the Capitol this week were members of the American Cancer Society, Mississippi Delta Community College, MEMA, Alzheimer's Mississippi and the Mississippi State Medical Association Alliance.