



Week of January 30, 2017

Committee meetings to discuss House bills wrapped up on Tuesday, and the House convened as a whole Wednesday through Friday to discuss the legislation that made it to the calendar.

One of the most contested bills this week was [House Bill 480](#), an out-of-state sellers use tax bill which would collect sales tax on purchases made over the internet. Representative Trey Lamar, who introduced the bill, said there is already a law requiring this tax that is not being enforced and this bill aims to fix that. Supporters of the bill say this would provide the state with the funding needed to repair Mississippi's poor infrastructure. Opponents of the bill do not support collecting more taxes from the people of the state. Although the bill passed originally by a vote of 79-38, it is now being held on a motion to reconsider.

Another highly contested bill was [House Bill 974](#). This measure would exempt certain state agencies from the rules, regulations and procedures of the State Personnel Board. Supporters of the bill note that several agencies have asked for this exemption because it would afford them more flexibility and allow agencies to run their departments more efficiently. Opponents of the bill say that this gives too much power to the agency directors and the governor, who appoints many of those directors. The bill originally passed by a vote of 62-57, but is now being held on a motion to reconsider.

Legislators also introduced a bill that would make improvements to the area surrounding the State Capitol. [House Bill 1226](#) would create a Capitol Complex Improvement District, and would appropriate funds to the designated area in order to make repairs and improvements. Supporters say this will help enhance the Capitol and fix some problems that exist, especially in the roads surrounding the building. Opponents say they see issues with the execution of this bill and cite the area encompassed by the proposed district as being too large. The bill originally passed by a vote of 99-22, but is currently being held on a motion to reconsider.

The point of order made on [House Bill 515](#) last week was resolved. The bill, which increases penalties for those attempting to sell controlled substances near drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities, was passed and will be sent to the Senate for consideration.

Voters could have the chance to take part in a pre-election if [House Bill 228](#) is signed into law. The bill proposes establishing a 14 day period before Election Day for pre-election day voting. This would put tighter restrictions on absentee ballots received through the mail, as voters would have two weeks to visit the polls before Election Day. The bill passed by a vote of 113-8 and will be sent to the Senate for consideration.

[House Bill 1328](#) would establish a salary scale for officers of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Division. Members of this division are the only State of Mississippi law enforcement personnel required to have a college degree. The bill passed by a vote of 116-5 and will be sent to the Senate for consideration.

Craft breweries will be allowed to sell beer and light wine produced at their breweries for consumption on or off the premises upon the passage of [House Bill 1322](#). Proponents of the bill say this will bring Mississippi up to speed with surrounding states that have passed similar legislation. The bill passed by a vote of 93-23 and will be sent to the Senate for consideration.

A number of noncontroversial bills also passed through the House this week, including a bill designating March 29 as Vietnam Veterans Day in Mississippi and a bill establishing the Mississippi Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, which would provide flexible spending accounts for individuals with disabilities.

In the coming weeks, the House will continue to meet as a whole to vote on bills that will be passed to the Senate for consideration. Visitors to the Capitol are welcome to come watch the proceedings from the gallery. Capitol visitors this week included members of the Mississippi Society of Anesthesiologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Mississippi Pharmacists Association, the Mississippi Health Care Association and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources.