



Week of April 4, 2022

This was the final week of the 2022 Legislative Session. Legislators completed the last day on Tuesday, April 5, after working past the initial deadlines to negotiate the more than \$7 billion state budget. Many monumental pieces of legislation made it through the process this year. Bills are either awaiting the governor's signature or have already been signed.

The largest tax cut in state history will be realized thanks to the House's Mississippi Tax Freedom Act. Each year, \$525 million will be cut until 2026. By that time, Mississippi will have the fifth best marginal tax rate of states with a personal income tax. This legislation provides a path for total elimination of the income tax.

Mississippi teachers will be getting their largest pay raise in state history under the House's START Act. The average pay raise for teachers is \$5,140, and teacher assistants will get a bump of \$2,000. Starting salary for Mississippi teachers is now well above both the regional and national averages.

The Legislature appropriated \$1.5 billion in federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) to water, sewer, broadband, healthcare and other needs.

Under the Mississippi Equal Pay for Equal Work Act, no employer can pay women less for doing the same amount of work as a man. Before this session, Mississippi did not have any equal pay laws on the books.

New lines were drawn for Congressional, State Senate and State House districts, which uphold the "one person, one vote" principle. Each State House district contains approximately 24,000 people.

The Pregnancy Resource Act provides a \$3.5 million tax credit to nonprofits that operate as a crisis pregnancy center.

Under Parker's Law, a person giving or selling fentanyl that leads to the recipient's death could serve 20 years to life behind bars.

The Broadband Accessibility Act will expand coverage to Mississippians with little to no internet access.

The Bill Kinkade FAITH Scholarship Program will provide financial assistance for postsecondary education to all current and former foster children who entered the program on or after age 13.

Mississippians will now have a new state song. "One Mississippi" by country artist and Greenville native Steve Azar will be Mississippi's contemporary state song. The law also creates the Mississippi State Songs Study Committee, which will decide on official state songs in other genres.

Passed early in the session, the Mississippi Medical Cannabis Act outlines a medical marijuana program that will treat conditions such as cancer, Parkinson's, ALS and epilepsy, to name a few.

Proposed legislation that did not make it through the bill-making process includes restoring the ballot initiative process, expanding postpartum Medicaid coverage and privatizing liquor sales in the state.

The House adjourned sine die on Tuesday evening. This concluded the 2022 Legislative Session, which was the third session in the four-year term.