



## Week of February 7, 2022

This was the sixth week of the 2022 Legislative Session. The House met as a whole throughout the week to discuss bills that made it out of committee and onto the calendar. Thursday, Feb. 10 was the deadline for members to introduce and discuss these general bills. Any bills not discussed in session by this deadline died on the calendar. The bills that were considered dealt with a wide range of topics.

[House Concurrent Resolution 39](#) proposes an amendment to the Mississippi Constitution to create a new ballot initiative process. The former process was nullified in May 2021 by the Mississippi Supreme Court when it struck down Initiative 65, or the medical marijuana initiative. Under the new process, Mississippi voters could change current statutes or introduce new statutes by a ballot initiative. After several failed amendments, HC 39 passed 92-26 and has been sent to the Senate for consideration.

[House Bill 1029](#) would create the Mississippi Broadband Accessibility Act. The act establishes the Mississippi Broadband Commission, which would coordinate all broadband expansion efforts in the state and administer all federal broadband expansion programs. The commission would be comprised of seven members: three appointed by the Governor and four appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, two of which being recommended by the Speaker of the House. Some of the funds in the bill come from the American Rescue Plan Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, both passed by Congress in 2021. House Bill 1029 passed by a vote of 111-6.

Several bills were introduced to the House that would also deal with federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act. Some of the bills included one that would establish a grant program for rural water associations ([House Bill 1421](#)); a bill that would establish a grant program to assist in wastewater and drinking water infrastructure programs ([House Bill 1425](#)); and a bill that would provide a premium to law enforcement officers and firefighters across the state ([House Bill 1427](#)).

[House Bill 884](#) would establish the Accelerate Mississippi Scholarship Program. These scholarships would be available to eligible students for dual-credit and dual-enrollment courses and career and technical education courses that lead to industry certification. The bill passed by a vote of 114-5 and will now go through the process in the Senate.

[House Bill 592](#) would suspend child support payments for incarcerated individuals under certain conditions. The bill initially failed by a vote of 51-63, but after some amendments, it passed the House by a vote of 90-18.

[House Bill 1196](#) would revise certain licensing requirements for barbers, nurses and social workers. Citizens with felonies who have paid their debt to society would now be eligible for a license in these

respective fields. Before being held on a motion to reconsider, the bill passed the House by a vote of 106-9. That motion was then tabled later in the week.

[House Bill 1510](#) was one of several bills dealing with the election process. Along with revising other provisions related to the integrity of elections, the bill would authorize the Secretary of State to audit local elections. After much discussion and several amendments, the bill passed 75-43.

[House Bill 1487](#) would designate Mississippi country artist Steve Azar's song "One Mississippi" as the official state song. Currently, the official state song is "Go Mississippi" by Houston Davis which was adopted by the Legislature in 1962. Azar wrote the song to commemorate the bicentennial of Mississippi in 2017. The bill passed by a vote of 95-12 and has been sent to the Senate.

Many bills passed the House with an overwhelming majority including a bill that would regulate the processing of sexual assault kits ([House Bill 672](#)); a bill authorizing the Mississippi Department of Corrections to offer hospice care services for terminally ill inmates ([House Bill 936](#)); a bill authorizing a leave of absence to Civil Air Patrol members for certain emergency services ([House Bill 1179](#)); two bills making changes to laws regarding campaign finance reports ([House Bills 33](#) and [1476](#)); and a bill that would require all school districts to offer a gifted education program for seventh and eighth graders ([House Bill 1168](#)).

The coming weeks will consist of floor discussion of House appropriations and other revenue bills. The deadline for these revenue bills to be sent to the Senate is Wednesday, Feb. 23. The House will then work on general Senate bills.

With the Dixie National Rodeo in Jackson this week, many visitors flocked to the Capitol. Miss Rodeo America Hailey Frederiksen of Colorado was presented with [House Resolution 20](#), which congratulates her on her new title. Frederiksen was joined in the House by Miss Mississippi Holly Brand of Meridian and the new Miss Dixie National Lila Murphy of Jackson.

Other visitors at the Capitol this week included Alcorn State University; the Mississippi Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association; the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks; and the Mississippi Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.