



## Mississippi Senate Weekly Report, March 18, 2022

The Senate met three deadlines and passed appropriation and revenue bills while assigning others to conference where details will be worked out between Senate and House conferees. Nominations for multiple boards were also approved.

The Senate adopted the conference report on [House Bill 530](#) creating the "Strategically Accelerating the Recruitment and Retention of Teachers (START) Act of 2022," a \$246 million teacher pay plan that will boost the average teacher's pay by \$5,140.

Teacher assistant salaries would see an increase of \$2,000, rising from \$15,000 to \$17,000.

Under the START Act of 2022, a Class A teacher with a baccalaureate degree would start at \$41,500. Teachers would receive annual step increases of between \$400 and \$600 at most every year, including in the first three years of teaching. Step increases are not currently provided in the base salary schedule in statute until the third year of teaching, though many leave the profession before Year 5.

At pivotal five-year marks in a teacher's career up to year 20, teachers would receive a larger increase between \$1,200 and \$1,350 based on their certification. At Year 25, they would receive a \$2,500 increase. It has yet to be adopted by the House.

[House Bill 531](#) was amended and passed and creates the Mississippi Tax Freedom Act of 2022. It was assigned by the House to conference. It includes no tax increases or growth triggers and would be fully implemented in eight years. The proposal includes:

- An immediate reduction in the grocery tax from 7 percent to 5 percent, at a cost of about \$118.4 million.
- A 2022 rebate of up to \$1,000 for all citizens with tax liability, which totals about \$130 million.
- A reduction of the 5 percent tax bracket over the next four years to 4.6 percent, at a cost of \$136 million.
- The elimination of the 4 percent tax bracket over four years after the reduction of the 5 percent bracket is finally implemented, at a cost of \$185 million.

If implemented, the Senate's plan would eliminate about \$439.4 million in recurring revenue from the budget by 2030 and would be the largest tax cut in Mississippi history. In 2016, the Legislature passed a bill phasing out the 3 percent tax bracket by 2022.

Senators voted unanimously for [Senate Concurrent Resolution 583](#), which suspends legislative deadlines to clear the path for legislation that would codify Article 3, Section 17A of the Mississippi Constitution. It would prohibit the state or local governments from taking private property through eminent domain and conveying it to private entities for 10-years. Exemptions are provided for levee facilities, roads, bridges, ports, airports, common carriers, drainage facilities and utilities. It was assigned to House Rules Committee.

Other bills passed included:

- [House Bill 1685](#) creates the Pregnancy Resource Act, which allows the state Department of Revenue to give back 50-percent of a Mississippian’s charitable contribution to an agency that helps women in crisis pregnancy situations and helps foster parental care of children, seeks to keep children from becoming part of the foster care system and does not support abortion. It intends to create “permanency for children through adoption.” It provides \$3.5 million for state tax reimbursement of taxpayers who participate. It was assigned to conference.
- [Senate Bill 2769](#) exempts university foundations from ad valorem taxes on land and real property. It awaits the governor’s consideration.
- [Senate Concurrent Resolution 563](#) condemns the invasion of Ukraine and severs all connections with the Russian Federation. It was assigned to House Rules Committee.

Senator Sarita Simmons on Wednesday, March 16, 2022, honored Braylen Rimmer, a 9-year-old author from Cleveland, with a proclamation saluting his writing success for “*The Phoenix Son: The Saga Begins.*” Braylen is the son of Kierre and Ronda Rimmer and has a sister, Brooklyn. Braylen is an honor student at Bell Academy.

Senator Chad McMahan on Wednesday, March 16, 2022, honored award-winning Tupelo native, songwriter, turned Nashville, Tenn., resident Tommy Barnes, with a proclamation saluting his success in the music industry. In 2020, Tommy was inducted into the Mississippi Songwriters Hall of Fame. Tommy writes for Taguchi Music Corporation. Tommy performed after accepting the proclamation.

The legislature will work Saturday, March 26, 2022, and Sunday, March 27, 2022, “Conference Weekend,” as Saturday is the deadline for appropriation and revenue bill conference reports to be filed.

The Senate faces three deadlines next week:

- Deadline to dispose of motions to reconsider concurrence or nonconcurrence in appropriation and revenue bills.
- Deadline to concur or not concur in amendments from the House to general bills and constitutional amendments.
- Deadline for introduction of local and private bills that are not revenue bills.