



Week of February 20, 2023

This was the eighth week of the 2023 Legislative Session. Wednesday, Feb. 22 marked the deadline for original floor action on House appropriations and revenue bills. While most of these bills were taken up last week, a few were discussed before Wednesday's deadline.

[House Bill 1671](#) would provide tax credits for businesses and individuals for making contributions to crisis pregnancy centers. After two amendments were tabled that would expand postpartum Medicaid coverage and increase TANF benefits, a motion to the previous question was made, thus ending debate on the bill. The bill passed 104-9 and has been sent to the Senate.

[House Bill 1721](#) would appropriate funding to the Department of Health to provide funding to Mississippi Baptist Medical Center in Jackson to establish a burn center. Before being amended, the bill originally appropriated funds to the University of Mississippi Medical Center for a burn unit. HB 1721 passed the House 102-11 and has been transmitted to the Senate.

Two bills would appropriate funds to the University of Mississippi Medical Center. [House Bill 1720](#) would give funding to the medical center for the renovation of the psychiatric program facility, and [House Bill 1722](#) would give funding for the repair and renovation of the School of Dentistry. Both bills passed the House by votes of 113-5 and have been sent to the Senate for consideration.

[House Bill 1715](#) would appropriate funds to the Department of Health to fund the ARPA Rural Water Associations Infrastructure Grant Program. [House Bill 1716](#) would appropriate funds to the Department of Environmental Quality to fund the Mississippi Municipality and County Water Infrastructure Grant Program. Both bills passed the House overwhelmingly.

[House Bill 1702](#) would exempt sales of books at the Mississippi Book Festival from sales tax. Known as the "Literary Lawn Party", the Book Festival is held every year in August inside the Capitol and on the Capitol grounds. Independent booksellers and authors from across the state sell books during the festival. HB 1702 passed unanimously by a vote of 117-0.

Committees also began to meet again this week to discuss general bills originating in the Senate. Before the deadline on Tuesday, Feb. 28, Senate bills will come out of House committees and onto the House floor for discussion. While the deadline to pass these Senate general bills on the floor is a few weeks away, more than 30 Senate bills were discussed this week.

Several bills regarding elections were introduced this week. [Senate Bill 2352](#) would penalize any person who fraudulently requests or submits an absentee ballot. SB 2352 passed the House 81-36, and it has been returned to the Senate. [Senate Bill 2353](#) would increase the wages for poll managers and workers. SB 2353 passed by a vote of 113-5 and has been returned to the Senate. [Senate Bill 2358](#) would ban

certain instances of ballot harvesting, a practice in which a person other than the voter turns in an absentee ballot. The bill would authorize election officials, U.S. Postal workers and family members or caregivers to deliver these absentee ballots. After much discussion, the bill was laid on the table subject to call.

Two segments of highways would be named in memory of outstanding Mississippians under [Senate Bill 2002](#). A portion of Highway 45 in Lowndes County would be named “PFC Bradford C. Freeman Memorial Highway,” in memory of deceased World War II veteran Bradford Freeman of Caledonia. Freeman, who passed away in July 2022, was the last surviving member of the paratroop company featured in the best-selling book and subsequent mini-series *Band of Brothers*. A section of Interstate 220 North in Hinds County would be designated as the “Senator Douglas Anderson Memorial Highway” in memory of former legislator Douglas Anderson who passed away in 2013. Senator Anderson served in the Legislature from 1976 to 1993.

[Senate Bill 2562](#) would allow public and private partnerships to establish electric vehicle charging stations and would allow the Mississippi Transportation Commission to provide grants to companies that provide electric vehicle charging stations. The bill is the Senate equivalent of [House Bill 986](#), which was passed earlier this session. SB 2562 passed by a vote of 110-6.

[Senate Bill 2569](#) would allow and regulate autonomous vehicles in the state. The bill is similar to [House Bill 1003](#), or the MS FAVE Act of 2023. SB 2569 passed by a vote of 115-1.

[Senate Bill 2853](#) would prohibit the state from purchasing drones made in China and would require that small, unmanned aircrafts only be purchased and serviced from American companies. SB 2853 passed the House by a vote of 109-0, and it has been returned to the Senate.

[Senate Bill 2433](#) would exempt eligible homeowner associations from regulation of public utilities if the neighborhood has access to a well and can provide its own water to residents. The bill passed by a vote of 76-36 before being held on a motion to reconsider.

The House was visited this week by Alcorn State University for their annual Purple and Gold Capitol Day. Other visitors to the Capitol included the Council of State Governments, school groups from across the state, UMMC’s Child Health and Development Project Fellows and the University of Mississippi wind ensemble.