



## Week of February 6, 2023

This was the sixth week of the 2023 Legislative Session, and it proved to be the busiest thus far. The House met as a whole throughout the week to discuss bills that made it out of committee and onto the calendar. Thursday, Feb. 9 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 almost 150 bills that were considered dealt with a wide range of topics.

The most debated bill this week was [House Bill 1020](#). The bill would create inferior courts in the Capitol Complex Improvement District, a portion of the city of Jackson, to hear criminal and civil cases within the CCID. The chief justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court would appoint two judges to this new district, the attorney general would appoint four prosecutors, the state defender would appoint public defenders, and various other court staff would be appointed as well. Proponents of the bill said that the bill would help with the current backlog in the court system due to crime in Jackson. Opponents argued that the CCID is located in majority-white neighborhoods in a majority-black city and that the appointments of the court officials would strip Jacksonians of their right to elect judges and prosecutors. After almost five hours of debate, the bill passed with a vote of 76-37 before being held on a motion to reconsider. That motion was tabled the next day by a vote of 76-37, and HB 1020 has been sent to the Senate for consideration.

After causing some debate and being laid on the table subject to call earlier in the session, [House Bill 370](#) came back before the House on Thursday. The bill would have authorized a removal process of municipal elected officials using the same process of removal of county elected officers. The bill failed by a vote of 54-60.

[House Bill 1276](#) would provide for a runoff election for state officials if no candidate receives a majority of the votes. The runoff would be held three weeks after the general election. HB 1276 passed by a vote of 75-39.

[House Bill 698](#) would require equity-based billing on municipal water, wastewater and sewer services. The bill comes after a suggestion that the city of Jackson change to a billing system based on property values instead of water usage. The bill passed by a vote of 83-26 and will now be considered by the Senate.

Penalties for fleeing law enforcement would increase under [House Bill 402](#). The bill comes after several accidents across the state that occurred were caused by police pursuit of a suspect. HB 402 passed by a vote of 85-31.

[House Bill 1317](#) would have authorized pharmacists to test for minor, nonchronic health conditions and administer treatment for those conditions. The conditions included influenza, COVID-19, lice, and skin

conditions like ringworm and athlete's foot. Proponents of the bill said that this would alleviate long waiting room times at a doctor's office and that pharmacists are knowledgeable about diseases and medicines after going to pharmacy school for four years. Opponents argued that doctors are specifically trained in diagnosing and treating conditions. HB 1317 was tabled, therefore it died on the calendar.

[House Bill 1070](#) would create the Patriotic Education Grant Program under the Department of Education. The program would encourage school districts to teach American history outside of regular school requirements. School districts would be able to apply for grants for activities like after-school clubs, field trips and guest speakers. HB 1070 passed with a vote of 110-6 and will now go to the Senate.

[House Bill 1490](#) would require the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to suspend hunting licenses for people who fail to pay child support. The bill passed 81-29 and has been sent to the Senate.

[House Bill 723](#) would establish the Mississippi Transit Corporation and create a study committee to make recommendations for bus, rail and light rail services in Mississippi. The bill passed with bipartisan support by a vote of 109-7.

Two bills would give Mississippi an official gemstone and an official fruit. [House Bill 772](#) would designate the Mississippi Opal as the official state gemstone. Opal is the only gem found thus far to be naturally occurring in the state. HB 772 passed unanimously and has been sent to the Senate. [House Bill 1027](#) would make the blueberry the official state fruit of Mississippi. Fourth graders from Mannsdale Elementary School in Madison conducted research and discovered that the blueberry is the most grown and sold fruit within the state. The students contacted Representative Jill Ford (R – Madison) who introduced the bill on their behalf. HB 1027 passed by a vote of 110-1 and will now go to the Senate for consideration.

[House Bill 264](#) would extend the repealer on the statute requiring certain buildings to meet energy efficiency standards. The bill was introduced by Representative Andy Boyd (R – Columbus) marking his first time presenting a bill from the well. HB 264 passed by a vote of 117-2.

Several bills that passed overwhelmingly with little debate included the following: the Department of Public Safety would be authorized to issue state identification cards to homeless individuals ([House Bill 368](#)); language in the Mississippi Code regarding rape would be updated, and spousal exception of rape would be removed ([House Bill 995](#)); a domestic abuse court program would be established ([House Bill 170](#)); and the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks would be allowed to issue a hunting license to a person whose parents was born in Mississippi and on active duty military service at the time of the applicant's birth ([House Bill 49](#)).

The coming weeks will consist of floor discussion of House appropriations and other revenue bills. The deadline for these types of bills to be sent to the Senate is Wednesday, Feb. 22. The House will then begin work on general originating in the Senate.

Visitors to the House this week included the Mississippi Film Office; Miss Rodeo America Kennadee Diggs, Miss Rodeo Mississippi Jacqueline Ervin and Miss Dixie National Wren Algee; students and teachers from Barack Obama Magnet School; leaders from Mississippi 4-H; Miss Mississippi Emmie Perkins of Hattiesburg; Crusaders for Veterans; Teen Pact; and the Mississippi Chapter of The Links, Incorporated.