



Week of March 6, 2023

This was the tenth week of the 2023 Legislative Session. Wednesday was the deadline for the House to discuss general Senate bills. Any Senate bills that did not make it off the calendar and before the House died. The deadline to discuss Senate appropriations and revenue bills will occur next Tuesday, March 14.

[Senate Bill 2212](#) would extend postpartum Medicaid coverage for new mothers from 60 days to a full year. Proponents of the bill said that the extension would improve Mississippi's infant and maternal mortality rates, currently some of the highest in the United States. Opponents argued that the bill could open the door for a full expansion of Medicaid. The bill passed by a vote of 92-27 and has been returned to the Senate. Governor Tate Reeves has indicated that he would sign postpartum Medicaid expansion into law should the Legislature pass it.

A ballot initiative process could be restored under [Senate Concurrent Resolution 533](#). Unlike the former process, SCR 533 would allow for statutory changes, or changes to the law, rather than an amendment to the constitution. A [House amendment](#) was adopted lowering the threshold of signatures needed from 12 percent of registered voters to 12 percent of the number of voters in the last gubernatorial election. The former ballot initiative process was deemed invalid by the Mississippi Supreme Court in 2021 based on the technicality that the number of Congressional districts had gone from five to four, and the language was not updated in the initiative process. SCR 533 passed 77-9 with many members voting present. The concurrent resolution will go to conference for further revisions before the session is over.

Other Senate bills that passed the House included a bill to ban ballot harvesting ([SB 2358](#)), a bill to allow armed educators in schools ([SB 2079](#)), a bill to create a Public Funds Offender Registry ([SB 2420](#)), a bill to revise the boundary lines of the Capitol Complex Improvement District ([SB 2343](#)), a bill that would revise the penalty for motor vehicle theft ([SB 2099](#)) and the Mississippi Regional Pre-Need Disaster Clean Up Act ([SB 2538](#)).

On Thursday, the House took up the Senate's half of the state budget, which includes the Departments of Finance and Administration, Banking and Consumer Finance, Revenue, Mental Health, Corrections and Public Safety. These are all preliminary budgets, and the bills include reverse repealers, a clause that will send the bill to conference to be discussed further. Many of these bills were taken up in a block to speed up the process.

Several local and private bills were also taken up this week. These bills dealt with a variety of topics such as authorizing certain cities and counties to make various contributions to local organizations and extending repealers on certain cities' tourism taxes. The deadline for the House to introduce these local

and private revenue bills is Friday, March 17. Local and private bills that are not deemed revenue bills have until Friday, March 24 to be introduced.

The calendar also included several House bills that were passed earlier in the session, sent to the Senate and are now back before the House. With this process, the representatives will vote on whether to agree with the changes the Senate made, or to invite conference for possible further revisions before becoming law or dying.

On Tuesday, the House honored Forest native Constance Slaughter-Harvey with [House Resolution 37](#). The resolution commends Ms. Slaughter-Harvey on her impressive civil rights activism and legal career in the State of Mississippi. Among her many accomplishments, she was the first African American female to graduate from the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1970. Ms. Slaughter-Harvey was presented with HR 37 by Representative Tom Miles (D – Forest) and Representative Earle Banks (D – Jackson).

Other visitors at the Capitol this week included the SWAC Champion football, soccer and track teams of Jackson State University; Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.; the Mississippi Library Association; the Mississippi Arts Commission; Miss Biloxi Katelyn Perry; and Leadership Madison County.