

Legislative Update: Deadline for House appropriations and revenue bills

By Guest Columnist Rep. Tom Miles, State Representative from House District #75



Special to Pelahatchie News

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.
- **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.
- **House Bill 1720** and **1722** are two bills that 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.

- **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.

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 ballots.
- **Senate Bill 2353** would increase the wages for poll managers and workers.
- **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.
- **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.

- **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**.

- **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.

- **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.

This week I was honored to meet with friends and alumni from Alcorn State University for their annual Purple and Gold Capitol Day, and the Forest Elementary and Hawkins Middle School gifted students. Thursday was Nonprofit day at the Capitol, and I got to visit with our friends from Ever Reaching Community Outreach in Pelahatchie.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you. If I can be an assistance in any way, feel free to reach out to me at reptommiles@gmail.com or 601-469-7886.



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Pictured (l to r) are: Lt. Governor Delbert Hosemann; Tammy Brun, Executive Director, Ever Reaching Community Outreach; and Representative Tom Miles.