

Legislative Update
2017 Regular Session
WEEK 9

2017 Regular Session adjourns without passing a budget

The 2017 Regular Session ended without the passage of an operating or capital budget for the 2017-2018 fiscal year. This is the first time since 2000 that an operating budget hasn't been passed as of the 6 o'clock deadline for adjournment required by the Constitution.

Disagreements between the House and Senate leadership centered on whether the budget should utilize all available means of financing or leave a portion of funding unspent as a precaution against the need for mid-year reductions. Senators attempted to compromise on the House's desire to not spend all available dollars with concessions on the amendments made that restored funding and a resolution, [SCR 125](#), which requested all branches of government to develop contingency plans in the event of budget shortfalls.

For the Conference Committee, President Alario appointed himself and Senators Tarver and LaFleur while Speaker Barras appointed himself and Representatives Henry and Smith. While Representative Smith signed the report, two signatures are required of the three appointees on Conference Committee reports in order for the report to be considered by the full House. In the final minutes of the session, several efforts to force a vote on the conference committee report were led by Speaker Pro Tempore Walt Leger, but were unsuccessful.

To watch the video footage of the last hours of session in the House, click [here](#).

Without an operating budget, the House will be back at the State Capitol on Monday, June 12. The Senate plans to begin its business on Wednesday. Since it's the House that must introduce bills that either create or spend revenue, the Senate is in a holding pattern until the House sends over a bill.

WRAP UP: BILLS PASSED DURING 2017 REGULAR SESSION

While there was little progress made on the budget and reforms to the state's tax system, other issue areas saw a great deal of progress.

Juvenile Sentencing and Criminal Justice Reform

[SB 16](#) by Senator Dan Claitor made it through the process on Thursday after a conference committee report removed the House amendments that would have allowed for parole eligibility after 30 years of time served. The bill was returned to its former posture, which required a minimum of 25 years of time served. The Legislature also passed House Bills [249](#) and [680](#) on Wednesday, which ease the financial burdens ex-offenders face when they are released. Other

bills on the Governor's criminal justice reform agenda were also passed, including Senate Bills [220](#) and [221](#) by President Alario and [SB 139](#) by Senator Martiny.

Transportation

While pushes to raise additional revenue for infrastructure improvements through an additional gasoline tax failed, other bills, such as [HB 598](#) by Representative Abramson were passed. The bill allows the Joint Transportation Committee to add road and bridge projects when DOTD submits its list of priority projects each year. Current law only allows the Joint Committee to subtract projects from the list. The bill passed on a 60-38 vote.

Natural Resources

[HB 144](#) by Zeringue providing for real property interests for integrated coastal restoration projects made its way to the Governor's desk, along with [HB 474](#) by Garofalo to authorize the issuance of an alternative oyster culture permit to a person holding an oyster lease on a privately-owned water bottom. The Legislature also passed [HB 596](#) by Leger relative to the contracting authority of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, as well as the comprehensive master plan for integrated coastal protection ([SCR 1](#) by Morrish) that will be utilized over the next five years. [HB 266](#) by Representative Connick was also passed that makes changes to term limits of the nominating committee of the East and West Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authorities.

Local Government

A bill by Representative Tanner Magee, [HB 19](#), was passed that will allow for the imposition of community service as a possible penalty for a violation of any parish ordinance. [HB 533](#) by Hunter was also passed relative to drinking water standards, as well as [HB 601](#) by Stokes to establish the Louisiana Uniform Local Sales Tax Board and the Louisiana Sales and Use Tax Commission for Remote Sellers.

Alcoholic Beverages

[HB 114](#), by Representative Chad Brown was passed. The bill authorizes the sale of wine in 250 milliliter containers. Also passed was [HB 315](#) by Representative Bishop, which specifies that beverages of high and low alcoholic content may be donated to certain organizations and events.

School Nutrition

[HB 556](#) by Representative Pearson was passed, which provides relative to sick leave granted to school bus operators, teachers, and other public school employees in certain instances. [SB 25](#) was also passed by Senator Morrell, which sunsets the individual income tax education credit.

Civil Law

[HB 159](#) by Representative Dustin Miller to require mental health providers to be licensed under the Behavioral Health Services Provider Licensing Law is on its way to the Governor, as well as [HB 343](#) by Representative Franklin relative to termination of parental rights. Also on their way to the Governor's desk are [SB 37](#) by Martiny, [SB 38](#) by Morrell, [SB 39](#) by Boudreaux, and [SB 54](#) by Mizell.

TOPS

[SCR110](#) by Senator Blade Morrish was passed which creates a task force to study the TOPS Program amid the growing cost of sustaining the scholarship program. Also passed was [SB71](#) by Senator Donahue, which ties the cap on TOPS awards to tuition prices charged at the time the cap was created during the 2016 Regular Session rather than the TOPS award the Legislature determines each year.