



March 29, 2019

# **'19 MS Legislature Adjourns**

## ***Teacher and Employee Raises approved; Elections ahead***

Mississippi lawmakers Friday adjourned the 2019 regular session nearly two weeks ahead of schedule, raising salaries of teachers and state employees on their way out of the door. The *adjournment Sine Die*, as the motion is formally known, caps a four-year legislative term, though the governor can call them into special session should urgent issues arise before January 2020.

Voters this summer and fall will face a phalanx of candidates at their doors and on their television screens as the governor, seven other statewide officers and every House and Senate district are on the ballot. With those elections on the horizon, leadership worked this year to focus on a few key issues – such as teacher salaries, fighting human trafficking and protecting commercial property owners from frivolous lawsuits.

Highlights of the 2019 Session include:

**Passage of HB 740, to reestablish the Oil and Gas Board as a special fund agency –This is a huge victory and required a great deal of work on all involved parties representing the interests of the oil and gas industry.** <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2019/pdf/history/HB/HB0740.xml>

Passage of HB 1660, providing for the 2020 appropriations for the Oil and Gas Board, including a significant increase for the agency and reestablishing the well capping fund. <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2019/pdf/history/HB/HB0740.xml>

Passage of SB 2910, the Landowners or Premises Liability legislation, protecting the rights of property owners in lawsuits against frivolous lawsuits and protecting private property owners against liability from crimes or negligence by others on their property. <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2019/pdf/history/SB/SB2901.xml>

Defeat of all negative and/or problematic legislation that could have adversely affected the business interests of Spire.

**Teacher Pay Raises:** Legislators voted in [SB 2770](#) to increase salaries of teachers and other professionals such as counselors by \$1,500 across the board. That salary increase comes on top of built-in step increases teachers already receive. It also raises salaries of teaching assistants. State dollars make up the bulk of teacher salaries, but local school jurisdictions can and do add varying amounts as a supplement. The average teacher salary last year in Mississippi was \$44,926.

**State employee raises:** Lawmakers focused state employee raises – with language spread throughout the dozens of bills that appropriate the state’s funds – on those workers who had not over the last three years received automatic salary realignments.

**Human Trafficking:** [HB 571](#) would prevent minors from being charged with criminal prostitution, recognizing that they are actually the victims of trafficking. It also includes other measures to focus state and local resources on stopping human trafficking and providing support for victims.

**Abortion:** [SB 2116](#) will prohibit abortions if a heartbeat can be detected. It is expected to face a court challenge.

**Broadband:** [HB 366](#) will give electric power cooperatives the authority to go into the business of providing broadband services to their customers. The bill does require cooperatives to conduct a feasibility study to examine whether they can fiscally afford to borrow money to provide the expensive service to customers in rural areas.

**Donor Privacy:** [HB 1205](#) will ensure that private groups do not have to disclose the names of their donors.

**Constitutional Convention of States:** [SCR 596](#) approved by both chambers, lends Mississippi’s voice to those calling for a national Constitutional Convention to address changes to the United States Constitution.

**Delta Senate District:** In response to a federal court order, lawmakers tweaked two Mississippi Senate Districts in the Mississippi Delta – Senate Districts 22 and 13. By swapping some key precincts, lawmakers increased in District 22 the black voting age population from about 50% to 58% and thus increasing the likelihood a minority candidate could win. The district is currently held by Sen. Buck Clarke (R-Leland), who is running for treasurer. The court had found the district had been gerrymandered in a way that prevented a minority from winning the seat. The court must still approve the senate tweaks