



# THE CLAY FIRM

## NEWSLETTER

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### CAPITOL REPORT

The legislature saw another busy week at the Capitol as lawmakers gear up for the first big committee deadline. Tuesday, February 3, is the deadline for committees to report general bills and constitutional amendments originating in their own house. Committees on both sides of the hall held several meetings this week to keep priority bills alive in the process. Over 2,500 bills have hit the [Mississippi Legislative website](#), with more expected to drop in the coming days.

The House passed [HB 314](#) this week, which authorizes a clinical trial of ibogaine, a psychoactive indole alkaloid that aims to cure an array of problems such as PTSD and opioid addiction. Another healthcare bill, [HB 534](#), also



passed the House. [HB 534](#) creates the Mississippi Health Information Exchange, a statewide platform designed for the electronic sharing of information among health entities.

The Senate passed its fair share of bills out of committee as well. [HB 2260](#) creates the Mississippi Health and Welfare Efficiency Task Force to examine and eliminate duplicate services within the state's healthcare agencies. Several

bills passed the Senate Education committee geared toward improving educational standards in the state - [SB 2487](#) develops literacy intervention strategies for grades 4-8, [SB 2242](#) enhances K-12 mathematics instruction, and [SB 2292](#) requires civics be taught in Mississippi high schools.

The legislature has adjourned until 4:00 p.m. on Monday. However, due to a forecast of inclement weather, lawmakers may not return until Tuesday or Wednesday. Governor Tate Reeves was slated to give his annual State of the State address on Tuesday, but it has been postponed to a later date also due to the weather.

### MISSISSIPPI OPTS INTO FEDERAL TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Governor Tate Reeves has joined several other states across the country in opting into the federal government's Tax Credit Scholarship Program to promote school choice in Mississippi. The program allows taxpayers to claim a tax credit of up to \$1,700 for cash contributions to approved scholarship-granting organizations. These SGOs must use the donated funds to provide scholarships to students attending private or public

schools within their respective states. Scholarships may be used to cover a wide range of educational expenses, including tuition, supplies, tutoring, special-needs services, transportation, technology, equipment, and internet access.

This announcement comes just days after the House of Representatives passed [HB 2](#), the Mississippi Education Freedom Act. Reeves has

also been vocally supportive of this omnibus education reform bill that eases public-school transfer rules, permits up to 12,500 students in the first year to use their state-allocated funds for private school tuition, and more.



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## QUICK HITTERS

1) The Mississippi State Department of Health released its annual [public health report card](#) on Wednesday, featuring the improvements the state has made in healthcare. State Health Officer Dr. Dan Edney highlighted decreasing rates of opioid-related deaths, HIV, syphilis, congenital syphilis, teen births, and accidental deaths. He also acknowledged the challenges Mississippi still must overcome such as high rates of infant and maternal mortality, heart disease, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and the nation's highest firearm-related death rate.

2) Attorney General Lynn Fitch and State Auditor Shad White appeared before the Mississippi Supreme Court this week in a dispute over which state official has the authority to file lawsuits to recover misspent taxpayer funds. In 2024, Fitch sued White in his official capacity after he had already initiated a separate action seeking \$828,000 in interest from

Brett Favre related to the Mississippi welfare scandal. Fitch argues that only the attorney general may file civil litigation on behalf of the state. The justices heard oral arguments on Tuesday, but no ruling has been issued.

3) Governor Tate Reeves has declared a state of emergency as Mississippi prepares for unprecedented weather conditions in the coming days. The emergency warns that incoming weather could pose "a threat to the life and safety of the residents in the impacted areas of the state, as well as their property."

4) Two Mississippi chefs have been named semifinalists for the 2026 James Beard Award for the South's best chef. The James Beard Foundation announced Wednesday that Hunter Evans, chef and owner of Elvie's and the Mayflower Cafe in Jackson, and Austin Sumrall, chef and owner of White Pillars in Biloxi, were selected as semifinalists for

one of the most prestigious culinary recognitions.