



T H E C L A Y F I R M

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C A P I T O L R E P O R T

The session is entering its final stretch as lawmakers work to complete the remaining legislation. Conference reports on appropriation and revenue bills are due tomorrow at 8:00 p.m., followed by Monday’s deadline for conference reports to be filed on general bills and constitutional amendments. Legislators will spend much of this weekend, known as “Conference Weekend,” negotiating final details to ensure every bill meets these deadlines. Although Sine Die is set for April 5, the Legislature is expected to wrap up its work a few days ahead of schedule. Unlike last year when the regular session ended before a state budget was fully adopted, Mississippi’s FY 2027 budget should be completed before Sine Die.

[HB 1665](#), a bill to revise the Pharmacy Benefit Prompt Pay Act and the State Health Insurance Plan, died this week. As passed,



House Bill 1665 sought to accomplish Pharmacy Benefit Manager reform. However, the Senate amended the bill to add a mandatory dispensing fee for pharmacists. The changes drew intense advocacy on both sides, pressuring the House to either concur or invite conference. Instead, the House allowed the bill to die on the calendar.

A few key general bills in conference include [HB 1677](#), which will establish the Metro Jackson Water Authority; [SB 2103](#),

which will serve as the legislature’s vehicle for implementing a teacher pay raise; and [HB 4073](#), which will create the Mississippi Work and Save Program and potentially amend the newly created Tier 5 of the Public Employees Retirement System of Mississippi.

In addition to work on appropriations, revenue, and general bills, lawmakers have spent the week on several other core duties, including confirming gubernatorial appointments to boards and commissions, considering the restoration of voting rights for individuals who have completed their sentences and financial obligations, and advancing local and private legislation.

V E T O C A U S E S T E N S I O N

The first vetoes of the year landed this week, including [SB 2632](#), which aimed to create the Local Governments Disaster Recovery Emergency Loan Program to assist North Mississippi cities and counties hit by this year’s winter storm. Governor Tate Reeves argued the bill had been unconstitutionally altered after passage, claiming the final version differed from what lawmakers originally approved. The bill set a 1% per-month interest rate on loans not reim-

bursed by federal funds. Legislators later removed the word “monthly” by unanimous consent, changing the loan’s cost structure.

In his veto message, along with citing that change, Reeves accused Representative Clay Deweese and Senator Hob Bryan of attempting to “fix a clerical error” after the bill had already passed and been sent to his desk. Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann challenged

part of Reeves’ veto, stating that Senator Tyler McCaughn, not Bryan, made the unanimous-consent motion referenced.

Because lawmakers still wanted to deliver aid to communities in North Mississippi, they inserted the loan-program language into another bill on Thursday. Both chambers passed [HB 1646](#), which includes the program and sets the interest rate at 3% annually. The bill now heads to Governor Reeves for consideration.



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Q U I C K H I T T E R S

1) Mississippi State Health Officer Dr. Dan Edney was rumored this week to be under consideration to serve as the next director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the Trump administration. Edney has led the Mississippi State Department of Health since August 2022. According to reports, the administration is delaying a nomination while it searches for a candidate who aligns with Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Make America Healthy Again agenda.

2) The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on Monday in a Mississippi case challenging a state law that allows mail-in ballots postmarked by Election Day to be counted if they are received within five days after the election. The justices decided to hear the case after the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals declined to rehear a panel decision saying that Mississippi cannot count ballots arriving after Election Day. The question before the Court is whether federal elec-

-tion day statutes preempt a state law that permits ballots cast by Election Day to be received and counted after that date.

3) Former House Speaker Philip Gunn had his portrait unveiled at the Capitol this week. The portrait, which will hang in the entrance to the House chamber, shows Gunn seated with Mississippi's new state flag behind him — a symbol he played a central role in adopting. Gunn was the first Republican Speaker of the House since Reconstruction and held the position for 12 years.

4) The State Board of Education approved three new Districts of Innovation across the state last week. The new districts include Newton County, Union Public School District, and Western Line School District. Newton County was approved for its utilization of a 5x5 academic schedule that allows for workforce opportunities and includes a focus on

STEM, science of reading and AI integration into the curriculum. Union Public School District also uses a 5x5 schedule, but it includes time for intervention enrichment and individualized support. Western Line School District already had two high schools with a 5x5 schedule and was approved to expand the 5x5 block to the seventh and eighth grades.