



Newsletter From Rep. Sonia Eubanks Barker

District 96

February 5, 2021

Week 4 of the 2021 Regular Session



The 93rd General Assembly now prepares to enter the 5th week of the 2021 Regular Session. The House passed a resolution to extend this session, if necessary, to May 3. The resolution provides for a recess on April 9.

The deadline for members to file proposed Constitutional Amendments is February 10. The General Assembly can put forth up to 3 amendments to the voters for the 2022 General Election. The debate and votes for proposed amendments are traditionally held in the latter part of the session.

This week, the House passed bills addressing elections, transportation, and law enforcement, just to name a few.

Concerning elections, the House passed HB1112. This bill eliminates the option for individuals to complete a sworn statement to cast a provisional ballot if they did not have the required photo identification.

The House also passed HB1338, which raises the number of signatures required for an individual to be placed on the Arkansas ballot as a candidate for President of the United States. Currently, 1,000 signatures are required. This bill raises it to 5,000.

When it comes to transportation, the House passed the following bills this week:

HB1269-This bill allows counties to pass an ordinance to allow individuals to drive golf carts on county roads.

HB1244-This bill authorizes DFA to issue a driver's license or identification card without a photograph if the licensee has a religious objection to having their photo taken. This bill does not change requirements for voter identification.

HB1022-This bill states drivers must have their vehicle's headlights on from sunset to sunrise. The current law states lights must be on from ½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise.

HB1115-This bill amends the law concerning the weight threshold for commercial vehicles. This changes the definition of a commercial motor vehicle from one with a gross weight of at least 10,000 pounds to one that weighs at least 26,001 pounds.

We also passed a bill this week, which was recommended as a result of the Governor's Task Force to Advance the State of Law Enforcement in Arkansas.

HB1197 limits a law-enforcement agency to two part-time officers for every full-time officer. The task force report noted that the higher ratio of full-time officers would strengthen in-house training and enhance stability.

Another bill passed by the House that addresses law enforcement is HB1236. This bill states in the event of a civil disturbance or a crime in progress that requires additional law enforcement resources, the Governor may establish a system of unified command of law enforcement efforts. The Governor may designate which law enforcement agency or law enforcement agencies have primary jurisdiction on the State Capitol grounds and in the State Capitol building.

A few other bills passed in the House chamber recently include:

HB1315-This bill creates a state meat inspection program. The bill states that a lack of a state meat inspection program causes a significant revenue loss generated from meat processing for this state and stifles opportunities for farmers to expand their meat processing capacity. It also states that it is currently prohibitively expensive for food banks to receive and distribute meat without a state meat inspection program.

HB1212-This bill gives the Director of the Division of Workforce Services the discretion to modify employer contributions for certain unemployment insurance claims during an emergency.

HB1195-This bill requires that any woman seeking an abortion be notified of the availability of medical, welfare, and private assistance programs. It instructs the Department of Health to establish a hotline for pregnant women seeking an abortion in Arkansas to call in order to receive a resource access assistance offer. If enacted, this legislation would take effect January 1, 2023.

We will continue to keep you updated on the legislation moving forward. As a reminder, you can watch all House committee meetings and floor proceedings at www.arkansashouse.org.