



Newsletter From Rep. Stephen Meeks District 42

February 26, 2021

Week 7 of the 2021 Regular Session



In the 7th week of the 2021 Regular Session, the House passed bills addressing taxes, medical care, scholarships, the duty to retreat, and more.

The following tax measures were advanced by the House:

- HB1023-This bill excludes certain school fundraisers from the sales tax laws regulation special events.
- HB1374-This bill amends the law concerning which sales by charitable organizations are exempt from sales and use tax. It allows an organization to exempt sales from up to 10 events. The previous limit was 3.
- SB236, which exempts unemployment benefits paid in 2020 and 2021 from state income tax.
- HB1049 allows the state to withhold state income taxes from unemployment benefits starting in 2022.
- HB1361-This bill would exempt COVID-19 relief loans for small businesses, such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), from state income tax.

Several bills addressing public health passed this week including:

- HB1434-This bill creates the Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Advisory Council. The council will research the needs and services available to the nearly 50,000 Arkansans living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

- HB1215-This bill grants full practice authority to certified nurse-midwives.
- HB1254-This bill states the Arkansas Medicaid Program shall recognize an advanced practice registered nurse for all purposes as a primary care provider authorized to carry out the duties of a primary care case manager.
- HB1177-This bill authorizes emergency medical services personnel to administer certain emergency prescription medications to a patient with a health condition that requires specialized treatment.

We passed two measures aimed at recruiting needed professions in Arkansas.

HB102 creates the First Year Medical Student Scholarship Program. It authorizes a one-time scholarship to a medical student who completes their undergraduate requirements for acceptance into medical or osteopathic school within 24 months. After successful completion of their first year of medical training, that student may receive \$30,000 to be applied toward the completion of their medical degree.

HB1224 establishes the State Crime Laboratory Student Loan Forgiveness Program. This would allow a pathologist to enter a probationary period with the State Crime Lab. After that probationary period, the lab could reimburse the pathologist \$25,000 for outstanding student loans for a 2-year contract up and renew the contract for up to \$100,000 per pathologist.

This week the House passed SB24. Commonly known as the Stand Your Ground bill, it removes the duty to retreat before using physical or deadly force.

Other bills passing the House this week include:

- HB1426-This bill establishes the Arkansas Fair Food Delivery Act. It states that a food delivery platform shall not arrange for the delivery of a food order from a food facility without first entering into an agreement with the food facility expressly authorizing the food delivery platform to take orders and deliver food.
- SB136-This bill allows public utilities to recognize renewable natural gas and allow gas utilities to remove barriers to purchase the alternative fuel.
- SB165-This bill brings Arkansas law into alignment with federal law to allow termination or cancellation of a residential lease when a soldier or airman is assigned to a permanent change of duty station that is located more than 50 miles from his or her primary residence or when he or she is discharged or released under honorable conditions from active military service.
- HB1317-This bill makes it a Class D felony to steal a postal package from the porch or premises of a residence. Currently, the offense is a misdemeanor.

Close to 1,000 bills have been filed so far this session and more than 150 bills have been signed into law.

We will continue to update you as the session continues. Agendas and links to live streams are posted on our website at www.arkansashouse.org.