



STATE OF ARKANSAS

House of Representatives



NEWSLETTER FROM REP. Danny Watson DISTRICT 88

January 25, 2019

WEEK 2 OF 2019 REGULAR SESSION

The House has now wrapped up its second week of the Regular Session. More than 250 bills have been filed in the House so far. And more than 150 have been filed in the Senate. Committees heard proposals on everything from restructuring our state government to rules about sunscreen in schools.

STATE AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

The House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee started reviewing the government transformation legislation.

HB1070 contains the general provisions for the transformation. It creates 15 departments.

If passed, a secretary will serve as the executive head of each department. The secretaries will be appointed by the Governor. Currently, there are 42 agencies reporting directly to the Governor.

Ultimately, 16 pieces of legislation will be filed. After each proposal is vetted by the committee, the sponsor will consolidate all the changes to one comprehensive bill for a vote. We've posted a chart of the proposed changes on our website www.arkansashouse.org.

Meanwhile, the State Agencies Committee advanced legislation concerning how contracts and purchases are made by the state.

In 2017, the Arkansas Legislative Council began a review of the state's procurement laws and practices. As

a result of that study, 62 recommendations were identified as opportunities to make government purchasing more efficient. After numerous hearings, the recommendations were ultimately drafted into 6 bills. 5 of those bills were advanced to the House this week. Changes include setting a standard review threshold for all service contracts over \$100,000, requiring contracts over \$350,000 to include a coversheet with relevant information for members to review, and empowering the Office of State Procurement to make participation in contracts mandatory for state agencies. This legislation will be considered on the House floor next week.

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

The House Judiciary Committee advanced legislation to reduce the costs of a concealed carry license. HB1036 reduces the costs of the initial application from \$100 to \$50. It reduces the costs of the renewal fee from \$35 to \$25.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Education Committee passed HB1167 which allows students to apply their own sunscreen at school or on field trips. Currently, sunscreen can only be applied in school by a school nurse since the FDA considers it an over the counter medication.

REVENUE AND TAXATION

The House Revenue and Tax Committee advanced HB1005. This bill seeks to clear up confusion for retailers regarding the sales tax on candy and soft drinks. The legislation requires DF&A to either provide a list of products to be taxed or not subject a retailer to penalties if the retailer demonstrates a good faith effort to collect and remit the tax payments.



On Thursday, the House passed legislation aimed at protecting employees when it comes to microchip technology. HB1177 provides rights for employees including the right to refuse an implant, have it removed, and access to the data collected. The bill also ensures that the employer is responsible for costs incurred. The bill passed with a vote of 84-4.

In a vote of 97-0, the House passed HB1016. This legislation reduces the amount of time that a petition to seal a criminal record can be open before a court can act upon it. It reduces the time from 90 days to 30

days. The sponsor of the legislation explained this reduction could be beneficial to offenders who have served their sentence and are attempting to reintegrate into society.

The House also passed HB1076 which amends the Achieving a Better Life Experience Program. This program allows Arkansans with disabilities to save up to \$15,000 in an account without impacting eligibility for many public benefits. HB1076 ensures that in the event of a death, the money in that savings account cannot be seized by Medicaid but can instead be transferred to a designated beneficiary.

The House convenes Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 1:30pm. We convene on Thursday at 10am.

Remember you can watch all committees and House floor proceedings at arkansashouse.org.