



STATE OF ARKANSAS

House of Representatives



NEWSLETTER FROM REP. Matthew J. Shepherd DISTRICT 97

March 2, 2023

DAILY SUMMARY FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2023

With a vote of 78-21 and one member voting present, the House passed SB294.

This bill creates the LEARNS Act and outlines several educational reforms including raising the minimum teacher salary to \$50,000 a year. It would also raise current teacher salaries by \$2,000.

SB294 requires that students be reading at a 3rd-grade level before advancing to the 4th grade. It also calls for 120 reading coaches to be deployed statewide and supplemental educational services for students struggling to read.

The bill creates the Education Freedom Account. In a three-year phased-in approach, the account would offer universal school choice to all parents by the 2025-2026 school year.

It also offers high school students the option of a career-ready diploma and requires high school students to complete 75 hours of community service before graduation.

The House also passed HB1499. This bill directs the Arkansas Economic Development Commission to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of developing a spaceport in Arkansas should the funding for a study become available.

Spaceport is defined in the bill as an installation utilized for the takeoff, landing, retrieval, servicing, and monitoring of vehicles capable of entering space.

In addition, the House passed HB1441. This bill would restrict the use by a political subdivision of competitive bidding for medical, emergency medical, and ambulance services.

The House will reconvene on Monday at 1:30 p.m.