



STATE OF ARKANSAS

House of Representatives



NEWSLETTER FROM REP. Deborah Ferguson DISTRICT 63

March 3, 2023

WEEK 8 OF THE 2023 REGULAR SESSION

In the 8th week of the 2023 Regular Session, the House passed [SB294](#). This bill creates the LEARNS Act and outlines several educational reforms.

[SB294](#) raises the minimum teacher salary to \$50,000 a year and raises current teacher salaries by \$2,000.

It 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.

This bill now goes back to the Senate to concur in a House amendment.

The House also passed [HB1458](#). This bill creates the Vincent Parks Law. Vincent Parks was a Jonesboro police officer who died last summer during law enforcement training. [HB1458](#) would require instructors to complete training on the recognition and management of certain health conditions and establish procedures in the event a cadet or officer has symptoms of cardiac arrest while receiving training.

On Wednesday, the House passed [HB1486](#). This bill amends the law concerning distracted driving. It states if a distracted driver causes an accident that results in serious physical injury or death of another person, the driver upon conviction is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor and could face a fine of up to \$2,500 and imprisonment for up to one year.

The House also passed [HB1365](#) and [SB265](#).

[HB1365](#) classifies the theft of a catalytic converter as a Class C felony. It states a person commits unauthorized possession of a catalytic converter if the person knowingly possesses a catalytic converter that has been removed from a motor vehicle and is not permanently marked.

[SB265](#) allows a hospital pharmacy to dispense up to a 31-day supply of medication to emergency room patients or patients who are being discharged from the hospital. Currently, hospitals can dispense a 2-day supply.

You can watch all House committee meetings and House floor sessions at arkansashouse.org.