



# Newsletter From Rep. Matthew J. Shepherd

## District 97

January 17, 2025

### Week 1 of the 2025 Regular Session

With committees ready to hear bills and legislative priorities taking shape, the 2025 Regular Session is off to a productive start. Several House committees held their organizational meetings this week. These committees are now prepared to begin reviewing and debating the over 170 bills that have been filed in the House so far.

Among the early legislative actions, the House passed HB1056, a bill to establish a Joint Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs. This new committee will consist of 12 House members and 8 Senate members from the Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee. It will focus on ongoing studies related to military and veterans' issues, a critical area currently handled by the House Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs Committee. A resolution is expected soon to rename that committee to reflect its shifting responsibilities.

Earlier in the week, the Governor addressed the 95th General Assembly and outlined her legislative agenda. A centerpiece of her plan is the Arkansas ACCESS initiative, which aims to expand access to higher education and non-degree credentials for Arkansans. She also proposed eliminating the state grocery tax, using revenue from medical marijuana sales to fund free school breakfasts for all Arkansas students, and enacting legislation to ban cell phone use in schools.

The week began with House members sworn into office on Monday and the election of Representative Brian S. Evans of Cabot as Speaker of the House for the 95th General Assembly. Following his election, Speaker Evans announced his committee chairmanships and leadership appointments, which are now available on the House website at [arkansashouse.org](https://arkansashouse.org).

