STATE OF ARKANSAS
House of Representatives

Newsletter From Rep. Nick Burkes

District 14

July 11, 2025

Legislative Update

This week at the Capitol, legislative committees continued their interim work, focusing on public health, judicial reform, and corrections oversight.

On Monday, the House and Senate Public Health, Welfare, and Labor Committees convened to review interim study proposals aimed at improving the health and safety of Arkansans. The committees adopted a proposal to explore requiring pediatricians to screen for type 1 diabetes, as well as a proposal to study expanding mental health resources for first responders. Committee members met again on Wednesday for a tour of the Arkansas State Hospital, continuing their efforts to better understand the state's behavioral health infrastructure.

Also on Wednesday, the House Rules Committee held a meeting to examine the impact of a recent U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit ruling on legislation passed in 2023. Act 629 prohibits the growth, processing, sale, transfer, or possession of industrial hemp containing certain delta tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) substances, including Delta-8 and Delta-9. Although the ban has been tied up in legal challenges and remained unenforced, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit recently upheld the law. The Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration informed the committee that it anticipates an additional court order that will clear the way for enforcement. In the meantime, the agency has begun notifying smoke shops and convenience stores across the state that enforcement efforts are expected to begin soon.

The House Judiciary Committee met Thursday to consider an interim study on potential amendments to the Domestic Abuse Act of 1991. Meanwhile, the Charitable, Penal, and Correctional Institutions Subcommittee of the Arkansas Legislative Council also met Thursday to review the Department of Corrections' response to a May 25 prisoner escape from the Calico Rock facility. Officials reported that two employees were terminated for violating security protocols. As the interim session continues, House members remain focused on oversight, policy review, and long-term planning to better serve the people of Arkansas.