STATE OF ARKANSAS
House of Representatives

Newsletter From Rep. Tara Shephard

District 79

November 21, 2025

Arkansas Legislative Council Week

The Arkansas Legislative Council convened this week to review key updates affecting state revenues, public assistance programs, healthcare initiatives, and workforce development. State fiscal officials reported that general revenue continues to remain steady. Arkansas has collected about $2.65 billion in Gross General Revenues so far this fiscal year, slightly above the same point last year by about $14 million. Net General Revenue available for state use now totals roughly $2.27 billion, reflecting an increase of nearly $41 million compared to October 2024.

Council members also examined proposed changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program prompted by the federal One Big Beautiful Act. The new federal requirements would expand the age range of able-bodied adults without dependents who must meet work requirements, raising the upper limit from 54 to 64. The exemption for parents is also being narrowed. Under the updated rules, only parents with children younger than 14 would qualify for an exemption, whereas previously parents of minors under 18 were exempt.

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences received approval for $2.9 million from the state's restricted reserve fund. The funding will support the High Risk Pregnancy Program, which connects rural healthcare providers to specialists through obstetrical telemedicine; the Stroke Program, which offers around-the-clock virtual access to neurologists for rural emergency departments; and the Following Baby Back Home Program, which provides guidance and support to families caring for premature infants. In other business, the Game and Fish/State Police Subcommittee discussed upcoming duck season regulations and heard clarification from the Attorney General's Office regarding firearm carry laws. The Attorney General confirmed that Arkansans may carry handguns openly or concealed in state parks except for areas that fall under federal jurisdiction. Finally, the Hospital, Medicaid, and Developmental Disabilities Study Subcommittee visited the Arkansas Workforce Center in Little Rock. Members toured the facility, learned about training and job placement services, and heard firsthand accounts from Arkansans who have benefited from the programs offered there.