



Newsletter From Rep. Matthew J. Shepherd

District 97

February 15, 2019

Week 5 of 2019 Regular Session



More than 140 bills have been signed into law during this session.

There are hundreds of bills still to be heard in committee and we expect many more to be filed in the weeks ahead.

As we head into our 6th week of the session, we'd like to update you on the legislature's progress.

On Thursday, with a vote of 82-14 and 2 members voting present, the House passed SB211. This bill cuts the top tax rate from 6.9 to 6.6 percent on Jan. 1, 2020. It decreases to 5.9 percent in 2021.

The Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration estimates this legislation will impact 579,000 Arkansans.

Currently, Arkansas has the highest top marginal individual income tax rates among surrounding states.

In a vote of 93-0, the House passed SB151 which establishes a fund to assist the UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute in its ongoing efforts to gain a National Cancer Institute designation.

Having a National Cancer Institute-Designated Cancer Center in Arkansas will improve access to clinical trials, cancer treatment, and screenings in Arkansas.

Cancer is the second-leading cause of death in Arkansas. Over the past twenty-eight years, nationwide cancer-related deaths have decreased by 5%, but in Arkansas, the rate of cancer-related deaths has increased by nine percent 9%.

Other legislation passing the House this week include:

SB149-This bill would prohibit abortion in the event Roe v. Wade is overturned by Supreme Court or if a constitutional

amendment is adopted giving authority to the states to regulate abortion.

SB168-This bill adds 24-hour manned fire stations to the locations where a parent can relinquish an infant. This bill also allows for the use of a Safe Haven Baby Box at Safe Haven locations if it includes a dual alarm system to notify authorities.

HB1014-This bill requires that bleeding control training be taught as part of high school health courses.

HB1302-This bill creates a process by which similar agencies could submit rules and regulations collectively to expedite process. It would help ensure that agencies needing to respond to new legislation for occupational licensing do so in a timely manner.

SB113 -This legislation would transfer the responsibilities and duties of the Arkansas Health Insurance Marketplace to the Arkansas Insurance Department.

HB1231-This legislation ensures journalism students at public higher education institutions have freedom of expression. This legislation states a student media advisor is not to be disciplined or dismissed for protecting the rights of a student journalist.

The deadline to file proposed constitutional amendments was February 13. A total of 31 amendments were filed. The topics addressed vary from term limits to highway funding. The legislature can refer up to 3 amendments to voters on the November 2020 ballot. You can review the proposed amendments on our website www.arkansashouse.org.

On our website, we've also posted details on the Governor's proposal for highway funding. We expect to be addressing highways in the days ahead. We will continue to keep you updated.