



Newsletter From Rep. Stephen Meeks District 42

March 29, 2019

Week 11 of 2019 Regular Session



Legislation passing the House this week addressed everything from robocalls to property taxes.

While illegal robocalls are frustrating for most, they are also costly and dangerous for far too many Arkansans.

An alarming number of illegal robocalls originate from scammers using automatic telephone dialing systems to send out thousands of phone calls per minute with fictitious or misleading names or telephone numbers displaying on unsuspecting consumers' telephone caller identification.

SB514 addresses this in a few ways. It makes

“spoofing”, or displaying fictitious names or numbers, a crime. It makes robocalling a Class D felony and holds telecommunication providers accountable with the Public Service Commission.

The House also passed legislation this week ensuring that firefighters who have completed 5 or more years of employment are granted at least 1,456 hours of paid leave for treatment of any cancer caused by his or her job.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, firefighters face a 9 percent increase in cancer diagnoses, and a 14 percent increase in cancer-related deaths, compared to the general population in the U.S.

HB1773 is title Crump’s Law. It is named in honor of Little Rock firefighter Nathaniel Crump who was forced to go back to work after exhausting his sick leave while being treated for occupationally caused cancer.

The House also passed legislation providing tax relief to property owners across the state.

SB447 increases the homestead credit from \$350 to \$375. It also diverts \$8.2 million from the property tax relief fund to the county voting systems grant fund. It also directs excess funds to the state’s long-term reserve fund.

Other legislation passing the House chamber this week includes:

SB493-This bill states that if a person's driving privileges are suspended solely as a result of outstanding driver's license reinstatement fees, the office of Driver's Services shall permit the person to pay only one reinstatement fee of \$100 to cover all administrative orders. The driver must have paid all costs associated with the criminal offense that led to the suspension and graduate from a specialty court program.

HB1634-This bill includes acts committed by a victim of human trafficking under the state's rape shield law. Arkansas's rape shield law prohibits an accuser's previous sexual conduct from being presented in court.

HB1695-This bill directs prosecutors to ensure children were not victims of human trafficking before they can be charged for prostitution.

HB1786-This bill requires a public school to create and publish an online report that provides the number of students who have an exemption from the requirement to obtain vaccinations.

HB1708-This bill raises the minimum age for girls to get married. The current minimum, with parental consent, is 17 years old for boys and 16 years old for girls. This bill raises that age to 17 for girls.

HB1868-This bill allows voters to present their identification in a digital format at polling precincts.

HB1824-This bill allows recipients of the Arkansas Academic Challenge and the Governor's Distinguished Scholarship to continue to receive a scholarship if they are enrolled part-time in their senior year of college.

HB1623-This bill requires anyone who sells a dog or a cat to provide documentation to the buyer regarding whether the dog or cat has been properly vaccinated.

SB383-This bill allows school districts to hire certified law enforcement officers as school resource officers.

HB1775-This bill requires an able-bodied adult under 60 years of age who receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits to participate in employment and training programs. Those with dependent children under 6 years old would be exempt from the requirement.

HB1856-This bill prohibits state agencies from consenting or approving the termination of a pregnancy for an individual in the custody of the state and from spending state funds for the purpose of terminating a pregnancy.

We are expected to complete our work this session by April 12. We will continue to keep you updated. And remember you can watch all House proceedings at www.arkansashouse.org.