

DAILY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Business matters.

Daily Legislative Update

94th Arkansas General Assembly
Thursday, February 23, 2023 | Day 46

TODAY'S MEETINGS

After a few committees meetings this morning, both chambers convened at 11:00 a.m.

NEW TRACKED BILLS

We began tracking [2 additional bills](#) today. One would determine when banks can be closed, and the other would repeal the Electronic Waste Collection, Recycling and Refuse Act.

STATE CHAMBER/AIA PRIORITY BILLS

Unemployment Insurance

[HB 1430](#) by Rep. Robin Lundstrum and Sen. Kim Hammer

This State Chamber/AIA priority bill passed the House this morning by a vote of 79-15. It seeks to reduce employers' unemployment taxes by limiting wage base increases; eliminating the Stabilization Tax and reducing its administrative funding; reducing the new employer unemployment insurance (UI) tax rate; and lowering the top UI tax rate. It also reduces the maximum weeks of benefits from 16 to 12 weeks.

YESTERDAY'S BILL ACTIVITY

Education - Arkansas [LEARNS Act](#)

[SB 294](#) by Sen. Breanne Davis and 24 Senators and Rep. Keith Brooks and 55 Representatives

The bill was presented and debated in the Senate Education Committee for approximately five hours. The Senate Education Committee gave the bill a Do Pass recommendation yesterday, and the Senate passed the bill by a vote of 25-7 this afternoon. The sponsor promised to add an amendment that addresses some technical corrections, a fiscal analysis, financial impacts to the retirement system and more when the bill gets to the House.

Testimony about the bill's fiscal impact revealed the bill would cost \$297.5 million its first year, with \$150 million of that amount being new money. In the second year, the cost would be \$343.3 million--\$250 million of which would be new money. The teacher salary increases would be the most expensive piece of the legislation, costing an estimated \$180 million each year. Education Freedom Accounts would cost \$46.7 million in the first year and \$97.5 million in the second year. The Arkansas Department of Education anticipates 7,000 students will participate in the program in the first year, and 14,000 students will participate in the second year.

Steve Brawner of *Talk Business & Politics* sat through the entire hearing, and you can read his comprehensive report here: [TB&P report](#).

Abortion Policy – Paid Maternity Leave

HB 1006 by Rep. Aaron Pilkington and Sen. Kim Hammer

This pre-filed bill sought to require that employers provide 12 weeks of paid maternity leave to employees who are residents of Arkansas if that employer covers the cost of an employee's abortion or travel expenses related to an employee's abortion. The bill was amended twice and received a Do Pass from the House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee on February 9. It passed the House with a vote of 80-12 on February 13.

Arkansas Business reports that **HB 1006** failed in the Senate Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee yesterday. According to the article, Sen. Dan Sullivan spoke against the bill due to his concern that the bill sets a bad precedent for the future by allowing the government to target businesses because it disagrees with how businesses spend their money. The sponsor indicated that he plans to discuss the concerns and reintroduce the bill.

BILLS OF CONCERN

Repeat of Certificates to Hire Under 16 Years of Age

HB 1410 by Rep. Rebecca Burkes and Sen. Clint Penzo

This bill repeals the requirement that an employer of a child under the age of 16 must procure an employment certificate. This bill received a Do Pass from the House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee on Monday and passed the House yesterday by a vote of 54-32. It has been assigned to the Senate Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee.

Supporters of this bill believe that the government should be removed from an employers' hiring decisions. However, these employment certificates are designed to ensure that an employer knows a prospective employee's correct age, make parents aware of their child's employment, and alert the employer, prospective employee, and his or her parents about applicable state and federal child labor laws. The bill makes no changes to the existing labor laws. State Chamber/AIA members have expressed concerns about this bill and the unintended consequences it could have on employers. For example, what would happen if an employer hires a 13-year-old child without the parents' knowledge under the presumption that he or she is 14 years or older, and the child gets injured?

BILL TRACKING

799 Bills Filed | Senate: 3 new – 310 filed | House: 8 new – 489 filed
State Chamber Tracking: 305 - 2 added today

To view all tracked bills by category, click [State Chamber AIA Bill Tracking Categories](#)

2023 STATE CHAMBER AIA LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

LEGISLATIVE SESSION INFORMATION

To view schedules, calendars, bill information, and legislator information, click www.arkleg.state.ar.us.

LEGISLATIVE MESSAGE CENTER

House of Representatives: 501-682-6211

Senate: 501-682-2902

LIVE STREAMING FROM THE CAPITOL

The House and Senate have links to live streaming of their committee meetings and floor session online.

- House: <https://www.arkansashouse.org/>
- Senate: <http://www.arkansas.gov/senate/>

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