

DAILY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Business matters.

Daily Legislative Update

94th Arkansas General Assembly
Thursday, February 9, 2023 | Day 32

TODAY AT THE CAPITOL

Committee Meetings:

The Joint Budget Committee will meet at 9:00 a.m.

Senate State Agencies and Gov't Affairs Committee, Senate Insurance and Commerce Committee, and Senate agriculture committees will meet at 10:00 a.m.

House Public Health Committee, House Judiciary Committee, and House Public Transportation Committee will also meet at 10 a.m.

Floor Meetings:

The Senate will convene at 11:00 a.m., and the House will convene at 1:00 p.m.

Visit www.arkleg.state.ar.us to view today's meeting schedules, floor calendar, agendas and video links to watch any of the meetings.

NEW TRACKED BILLS

We added [32 bills and joint resolutions](#) to our tracking today.

Of the new bills filed yesterday, at least two are new tax credit/filing bills and five are election and ethics bills. Two additional bills of interested were also filed yesterday.

Employers - Paid Leave for Early Voting

SB 230 by Sen. Bryan King

This bill requires employers to provide eight hours of paid leave to each employee registered to vote for early voting prior to a primary election and prohibits employers from penalizing employees for using this paid leave. (Senate State Agencies and Gov't Affairs Committee)

Solar Net-Metering - Rate Paid to Generators Decreased

HB 1370 by Rep. Lanny Fite and Sen. Jonathan Dismang

This bill changes the method used to calculate the rate that electric utilities pay to net-metering customers who generate excess solar power. The bill amends the definition of avoided cost as used to calculate rates. It requires the Public Service Commission (PSC) to ensure that each net-metering customer pays the costs of an electric utility's facilities and associated expenses required to (1) provide service to the net-metering customer and (2) enable the net-metering customer's use of the electric utility's facilities. It also requires the PSC to allow an electric utility to modify the rates, terms, and conditions, rate

structure, and any individual rate components for net-metering customers, subject to approval by the commission, without filing an application for a general change. Finally, it makes various other changes to the authority of a utility with regard to rate structure determination, monthly grid charges, etc. (House Insurance and Commerce Committee)

Joint Resolutions Proposing Constitutional Amendments

Yesterday was the deadline to file constitutional amendment proposals. Senators filed 16 new joint resolutions, and Representatives filed seven new joint resolutions, bringing the total number of proposed joint resolutions this session to 33. View a full list of these proposals [HERE](#).

Nine of the newly filed Senate joint resolutions are "shell bills," which means that the text of these bills will be added later.

The Senate joint resolutions address several issues, such as: creating a water system customer assistance program, making public entities defendants in constitutional legal actions, amending governance of the highway commission, creating a taxpayer bill of rights, addressing boards and commissions that govern state institutions, addressing victims rights, creating a board of pardons, creating tenant protections, legalizing recreational marijuana, financing fire equipment, addressing membership of the state highway commission, creating an independent citizens commission, amending ethics requirements for certain elected officials, repealing the office of the Lieutenant Governor, and proposing voter approval of ballot measures and judicial elections. Senator Bryan King filed six of these proposals.

The House joint resolutions address an excise tax homestead credit offset, reproductive rights, partisan judicial elections, boards and commissions, property tax exemption, and a prohibition of slavery.

YESTERDAY AT THE CAPITOL

Education

Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders presented her Arkansas LEARNS plan yesterday supported by a large group of Republican legislators.

During the presentation of her proposal, Governor Sanders said, "Despite spending half of our state's budget on education, our kids are falling behind. Only 35 percent of Arkansas third graders can read at grade level, and nearly half don't meet our state's math readiness benchmark. This is unacceptable."

The key points of Governor Sanders' plan include:

- Increasing the minimum teacher salary from \$36,000 to \$50,000, which would move Arkansas from 48th to 5th in the nation.
- Implementing a bonus program providing up to \$10,000 for teachers achieving best results and an unspecified salary increase for all teachers.
- Creating "Education Freedom Accounts" that would provide 90 percent of funding per student for school choice via a voucher program that would provide families state funds for private school tuition or other allowable education expenses. This would be phased in over three years.
- Providing student loan forgiveness for new teachers in high-need areas.
- Deploying 120 reading coaches to schools most in need.
- Providing \$500 grants for K-3 students that need tutoring.
- Establishing a dual diploma program in all high schools to allow students to choose the pathway that better prepares them for a career.
- Repealing the Teacher Fair Dismissal Act.

- Providing funding for crisis response and mental health awareness training for teachers.
- Providing twelve weeks of paid maternity leave.

Governor Sanders said the cost of this plan would be about \$300 million, of which \$150 million would be new money.

Rep. Brian Evans (R-Cabot) chairman of the House Education Committee, told *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* that in the first year of the program, students in schools rated "F" by the state, children of active duty military, low-income students, those in foster care, and students with special needs would be given "the first priority" for school vouchers. In the second year of the program, students who attend "D" rated schools would be phased in. The plan would apply to all students in the state by the program's third year.

Senate Education Committee Chairman Jane English (R-North Little Rock) told *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, "I like it, because I always say we have to go from kindergarten through career, and this starts early to get kids better prepared to be part of that talent pipeline for the future. I like the pre-K. I like more emphasis on literacy, and obviously I like career education, giving people an opportunity to have some skills when they leave high school. That's big in my mind."

BILL TRACKING

619 Bills Filed | Senate: 20 new – 235 filed | House: 15 new – 384 filed
State Chamber Tracking: 201 - 14 added today
Joint Resolutions are not counted in these totals.

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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