

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

JANUARY 16, 2026

The Legislature has adjourned the second week of the session and will reconvene Monday afternoon. We continue to see bills introduced and referred to committees and this will continue over the next few weeks. Monday, January 19, is the introduction deadline for general bills, but it often takes a couple of weeks or more to get all bills referred to committee at which point they become visible to the public online.

As we previewed in last week's summary, [HB 2](#), Speaker Jason White's "Mississippi Educational Freedom Act of 2026" dominated the activity in the Capitol. The House Education Committee brought the bill forward on Wednesday morning and after nearly two hours of debate passed the bill by a vote of 14-11. The vote broke largely along party lines with two Republicans voting against the bill in committee and no Democrats supporting, surprising some proponents of the bill. This closer than normal committee vote set up a highly anticipated floor debate Thursday morning.

Representative Celeste Hurst (R-Rankin), a mother of five plus two foster children, kicked off the debate with a moving speech on why she is in support of the legislation, having educated her children in public schools. Rep. Jansen Owen (R-Pearl River), who has spent countless hours helping draft the legislation, introduced the measure to the chamber and explained the bill in detail. House Education Chairman Rob Roberson (R-Starkville) took the brunt of the questions from members. The debate unfolded as anticipated with opponents asking questions and attempting numerous amendments to weaken the bill or significantly change the outcome.

After nearly five hours of floor debate, the bill was narrowly approved by a vote of 61-59. The bill is currently held on a motion to reconsider and once that is dispensed of it will cross over to be considered by the Senate. No Democrats voted in support of the legislation and 17 Republicans broke rank with leadership and joined the other party in opposition to the measure. We anticipate that HB 2 will sit on the sidelines for quite some time as the deadline for it to be considered by the Senate in committee is not until March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

In other news, the Senate quickly passed a priority bill, [SB 2016](#), which creates a standalone Tourism agency. This measure is sponsored by Tourism Chair Lydia Chassaniol with strong support from Lt. Governor Delbert Hosemann. The same bill was vetoed by Governor Reeves during the 2025 regular session due to the legislature adjourning without a state budget and without funding this new department.

As a reminder, the following deadlines are on the horizon:

- Monday, January 19 – Deadline for introduction of general bills and constitutional amendments
- Tuesday, February 3 – Deadline for committees to report bills originating in their own chamber
- Tuesday, February 12 – Deadline for original floor action on bills originating in their own chamber