

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

The Mississippi Legislature adjourned its seventh week and will reconvene Monday at 4:00 p.m. We are now officially halfway through the 2026 Legislative Session, and with the February 25th appropriations and revenue deadline approaching, we anticipate increased activity surrounding budget negotiations and fiscal matters next week.

The House and Senate divide responsibility for appropriations bills to construct a complete state budget, so much of this week's activity centered on advancing these measures. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees met multiple times and passed bills addressing funding requests for various state agencies, boards, and commissions for the upcoming fiscal year. Most House bills and several Senate bills were reported out with funding numbers and without a reverse repealer. This indicates that those measures are in a form that could be transmitted to the Governor as passed, signaling an effort by leadership to move budget work forward ahead of the conference weekend deadline. Speaker White has repeatedly stated that the House does not intend to work through conference weekend. This position mirrors last session's approach, when budget negotiations ultimately required the Governor to call a special session to finalize and pass the state budget.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) HEARING

After much public backlash over the state's alcohol delivery system struggles over the last few months, the House State Affairs Committee held a public hearing to discuss these issues. Mississippi's alcohol industry has reached the point of a crisis due to operating changes and delays at the state-run Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) warehouse. Mississippi is one of 17 states which control their state's alcohol operation and for many years lawmakers have discussed privatizing alcohol distribution but have worried that the state would lose the hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes we collect annually. The ABC falls under the jurisdiction of the Mississippi Department of Revenue and in 2022, the legislature approved \$55 million to build a new warehouse in Madison County to provide more space in hopes of helping the process. While construction of the facility is on target, it will not be operational until 2027. Department of Revenue Commissioner Chris Graham spoke at the hearing, stating that in January the warehouse took a planned break to do inventory and had notified customers in advance. They had also implemented a new software management system and ran into issues during this transition which took multiple weeks to resolve. Currently there is a backlog of approximately 250,000 cases of liquor and wine that is not being properly distributed. Lawmakers are expected to propose new legislation over the next few weeks to try and address this ongoing problem.

EDUCATION REFORM UPDATE

On Wednesday, the House Education Committee met to take up two bills, [SB 2103](#) and [SB 2294](#). SB 2103 allows the department of education to create a code of ethics for school counselors to follow rather than a national ever-changing code. Chairman Rob Robertson (R-Starkville) did a “strike all” of SB 2294 and inserted House language that encompasses three major education reform initiatives: Adolescent Literacy, the Math Act, and expanding financial literacy requirements for middle and high school students. The bill builds on Mississippi’s successful third grade literacy policy and creates a framework to improve reading proficiency in grades 4-8 through evidence-based instruction aligned with the “science of reading.” The Math Act expands math coaches, implements a K-5 universal screener, establishes an Algebra Readiness Indicator, and requires high-quality instructional materials for districts. The legislation provides many additional math supports but does not create a retention requirement. The bill also requires financial literacy in grades 6-8 and requires high school students to have a half credit of personal finance to graduate. This bill was double referred to AET where it quickly advanced and hours later it passed the House floor by a vote of 122-0. It now goes back to the Senate for further consideration. Although Chairman Robertson made the announcement at the end of the meeting that the House Education committee wouldn’t meet again, we are a week and a half away from the March 3rd committee deadline and things change constantly in the legislature. There are still rumblings of the Governor potentially calling a special session to address school choice, which Speaker White alluded to in his remarks at a media luncheon earlier in the week.

UPCOMING DEADLINES

- Wednesday, February 25 is the deadline for original floor action on appropriation and revenue bills originating in their own chamber
- Tuesday, March 3 is the deadline for committees to report general bills originating from the other chamber
- Wednesday, March 11 is the deadline for original floor action on general bills originating in the other chamber