

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

MARCH 20, 2026

The Mississippi Legislature has adjourned for the week and will reconvene Monday for the remaining two weeks of the 2026 Legislative Session. Next week is an important week for appropriators as they negotiate the final pieces of the 2027 state budget. Conference reports on appropriations and revenue bills are due to be filed next Saturday, March 28, but the House has consistently indicated they intend to complete their budget work ahead of the “conference weekend” deadline, meaning we could see budget bills mostly done by this time next week. Several large ticket budget items such as a teacher pay raise, Medicaid funding, and supplemental PERS funding remain in limbo and will have a big impact on how the final budget shakes out. Outside of money matters, general legislation is being actively negotiated, debated, or sent to the Governor. Conference reports on general bills are due to be filed Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>.

House Bill 1665, addressing Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM) reform, continues to be a hot topic in the Capitol and is now before the House for concurrence or non-concurrence with Senate amendments, setting up a key decision point in the debate. Independent pharmacists are urging House members to concur and send the bill to the Governor, arguing that PBM practices have created unsustainable financial pressures that are driving local pharmacies out of business and limiting access to care in communities across the state. On the other hand, the business community, led by the Mississippi Business Alliance, is asking House members to send the bill to conference to strike the Senate’s amendment that added provisions mandating a drug dispensing fee that they believe will significantly increase healthcare costs for employers and their employees. This week, the White House weighed in on this matter and is urging the legislature to remove the amendment and not risk undermining key priorities of the Trump administration. This issue has been debated in the Legislature for several years, and policymakers are eager to find a resolution.

This week, the Senate made significant changes to HB 1944 concerning tax credits for eligible charitable organizations under the Children’s Promise Act. The Senate amendments remove the House’s proposed changes and instead establish a new category of eligible recipients, special-purpose schools as defined by the State Department of Education.

These schools serve students with physical, intellectual, developmental or emotional disabilities. Under the revised language, \$6 million in new tax credits would be allocated to this category, with a per-school cap of \$400,000, unless that school already receives a line-item appropriation which would be a cap of \$150,000. Furthermore, Senator David Blount tried to amend the bill even further to eliminate all tax credits to private schools. That vote failed on a narrow 24-26 vote. The House has made multiple attempts in recent years to expand funding for the program, and differences between the chambers will now be worked out in conference committee as lawmakers negotiate a final version of the legislation.

Also this week, the State Board of Education approved an updated [Strategic Plan](#) for Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> aimed at building on the state's recent academic progress while introducing new priorities. Developed with input from a diverse group of stakeholders, the plan maintains its original five goals, focused on early childhood access, literacy and math achievement, college and career readiness, school performance, and effective educators, while adding a sixth goal centered on supporting the "whole child" through safe, engaging, and supportive school environments. The updated plan also emphasizes improving student attendance, integrating technology and career learning across all grade levels, strengthening leadership development, and providing targeted support for low-performing schools and districts. This will go into effect July 1<sup>st</sup>.

## UPCOMING LEGISLATIVE DEADLINES:

- Thursday, March 26 - Deadline to concur or not concur in amendments from other chamber to general bills and constitutional amendments
- Saturday, March 28 - Deadline for conference reports on appropriation and revenue bills to be filed
- Monday, March 30 - Deadline for final adoption of conference reports on appropriation and revenue bills; and deadline for conference reports on general bills and constitutional amendments to be filed.
- Wednesday, April 1 - Deadline for first consideration of conference reports on general bills and constitutional amendments
- Sunday, April 5 - SINE DIE