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92nd General Assembly

March 26, 2020 – Day 1 First Extraordinary Session

Daily Legislative Update

March 26, 2020 Day 1 First Extraordinary Session of the 92nd General Assembly

TODAY AT THE CAPITOL

Yesterday, Governor Hutchinson issued a Proclamation calling the General Assembly into a Special Session at 1 p.m. today. To follow the social distancing guidelines, the House will meet at the Jack Stephens Center on the campus of UALR. The Senate will meet in its chamber, but will scatter about 20 senators on the senate floor and the balance will be dispersed in the senate galleries.

Currently, the only items on the Legislative Calendars are the House and Senate meetings at 1 p.m. The Capitol is closed to visitors.

The Governor's Proclamation can be found [here](#).

NEW BILLS

COVID-19 RAINY DAY FUND

HB 1001 by House Speaker Matthew Shepherd and 36 others and **SB 1** by Senate President Jim Hendren and 19 others are identical bills that create the COVID-19 Rainy Day Fund. It provides for the transfer of \$173,610,632 to the new Fund from the General Revenue Reserve Allotment Fund. It also authorizes transfers from the Fund to offset related funding needs, with approval from legislative leaders. The legislative leaders will be a panel of three House and three Senate members that include the House Speaker, Senate President, and the majority and minority leaders of both chambers. **SB 2** was filed today and is identical to **SB 1** but has 21 co-sponsors.

Our observations of the Governor's daily press conferences indicate that Sections B and C of the Revenue Stabilization Act will be cut immediately. Then about \$215 million will be reduced from Category A, which will be distributed evenly. Then they'll work with agencies about holes that need to be filled with surplus money. The Governor said they would like to carry some funds forward but want to make everyone whole. Available money is: \$150 million in reserves, \$173 million in carryover reserve and \$43 million in restricted reserve. It appears the \$173 million in carryover reserves is the money that is going into the new COVID-19 Rainy Day Fund. The total budget shortfall is projected to be \$353 million.

The full text of each bill can be accessed at the links below.

HB 1001 [here](#).

SB 2 [here](#).

PROXY VOTING IN THE HOUSE

HR 1001 by House Speaker Matthew Shepherd creates a procedure for members of the

House of Representatives to vote by proxy if they are unable or unwilling to be physically present due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The full text of **HR 1001** is [here](#).

This Special Session is expected to be completed very efficiently.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

We have been providing daily updates on COVID-19 related issues. But to address the most recent legislative action more specifically, around 11 p.m. last night the U.S. Senate approved **H.R. 748**, the CARES Act, by a vote of 96 to 0. Arkansas Senior Senator John Boozman presided over the vote.

The Senate is now in recess until April 20. The U.S. House of Representatives is scheduled to convene at 9 a.m. (EDT) tomorrow to consider **H.R. 748**. The President has said he will sign it “immediately” after receiving it from Congress.

Over the last few days, the Senate had been debating the CARES Act in **S. 3548**. But because the bill had tax provisions, it needed to originate in the House. So the Senate stripped **H.R. 748**, which was an unadopted bill from July 2019, and added the final negotiated CARES Act language into **H.R. 748**.

The text of **H.R. 748** can be found [here](#).

The House Ways and Means Committee blog that provides reviews of **H.R. 748** by section can be found [here](#).

Please follow our Daily COVID-19 Updates for more details about the CARES Act.

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/>

State Chamber/AIA Governmental Affairs Team

- Randy Zook, President/CEO
rzook@arkansasstatechamber.com
- Kenny Hall, Executive Vice President
khall@arkansasstatechamber.com
- Andrew Parker, Director of Governmental Affairs
aparker@arkansasstatechamber.com
- Toni Lindsey, Director of Governmental Affairs
tlindsey@arkansasstatechamber.com

State Chamber/AIA phone: (501) 372-2222

State Chamber/AIA web site: www.arkansasstatechamber.com

The Daily Legislative Update is written by Kenny Hall, reviewed by Randy Zook, then edited and distributed by Jeff Thatcher.



1200 W. Capitol Ave., P.O. Box 3645
Little Rock, AR 72203-3645

501-372-2222
FAX 372-2722

STAY CONNECTED



Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce/Associated Industries of Arkansas
1200 W. Capitol Ave., Little Rock, AR 72201
P.O. Box 3645, Little Rock, AR 72203
501-372-2222 | arkansasstatechamber.com