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## **93rd General Assembly Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2021 – Session Day 2**

### **GOVERNOR ASA HUTCHINSON'S STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS**

Governor Asa Hutchinson gave his final State of the State address to the House and Senate this morning from the House Chamber with the Senate watching remotely from their Chamber.

The Governor said the first responsibility is to act on the state's health care emergency. He said the Legislature has been a good partner and the current emergency rules are in effect until February 27. He told the legislators that they need to act, and he hopes they will continue the emergency to provide use of telemedicine, provide necessary immunity and other things from prior orders.

Hutchinson also asked for money to allow federal COVID-19 relief funds to be spent on getting the vaccine more quickly and into the arms of more Arkansans. Help is also needed to provide the Health Department critical infrastructure to deliver the vaccine and provide help for schools. He supports another round of increased pay for teachers. His goal is to raise every teacher's salary by \$2,000 over the next two years.

The Governor asked to be heard and fair consideration given to passing hate crime legislation. He said Arkansas is one of only three states that have not passed hate crime legislation. He read letters of support from an individual, a Rabbi, IBM and the 50 for Future President. He said he has many more letters asking for a hate crime bill to be adopted. He said the most common objection is that it protects some people but not others. But he said, this applies to everyone equally; it enhances the penalty for targeting people. He added that many asked that there not be a special session to consider hate crimes and he agreed, so now is the time to act. Polls support it. Let's do the right thing.

Hutchinson reviewed some of the tax-related accomplishments of his administration. He said \$800 million has been moved from the government to the people. Teacher pay has been increased. There are over 1,000 fewer state employees from 2015 creating a savings of \$77 million. He added that the state is in its best budget position in more than a decade. His budget has over \$200 million in unallocated dollars and state income is currently over forecast by \$300 million. Our budget is strong, Hutchinson concluded. He added there are over 200 new jobs and over \$800 million in related investments. There are 53,000 more people employed now than 2015 even with the pandemic. He has also supported Arkansas farmers.

He said some warned that his tax cut plans would cause Arkansas to become like Kansas. But a measured approach has allowed tax reductions, maintained important services and a savings fund has been created. His budget has \$100 million to add to the savings account and \$50 million for an income tax reduction for low income earners. He also asked for reduction in the used car sales tax.

Hutchinson said we must continue to grow the state's economy to pay for tax cuts. He would like to lower the top income tax rate to 4.9% for new residents over the next five years. By lowering the rate now to 5.9%, people have returned. Arkansas is #10 for new

people moving in. He wants to lower the top rate the same for all Arkansas citizens.

Finally, Hutchinson asked for support to expand rural broadband across the state; his budget has \$30 million for this project. He said we've seen success in computer science education and asked for a requirement that computer science be required for graduation.

### **LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES**

Speaker of the House Matthew Shepherd announced his selection of committee chairs and co-chairs in yesterday's opening session of the House. You can view the full roster of all House committees by clicking [here](#).

### **BILL TRACKING**

Sixty-five bills were filed yesterday bringing the total bills filed to 97 in the Senate and 147 in the House. We added 10 to our tracking list making our total of tracked bills 70. You can view a list of the 10 new bills added to our tracking by clicking [here](#).

All bills we are tracking are posted on our website in one or more of 20 categories. To view the list of categories, click [here](#).

### **CAPITOL ACCESS AND COMMITTEES**

A joint statement from the House, Senate and Secretary of State was released late last week outlining plans to provide a safe environment during the session. To review the entire joint statement, click [here](#).

### **NO STATE CHAMBER/AIA LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION**

Legislative leadership has requested that all planned meetings be suspended until further notice. Therefore, we will not host our Legislative Reception next week.

### **STATE CHAMBER/AIA 2021 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA and BILL SCORING**

You can view the State Chamber/AIA's legislative agenda by clicking [here](#).

We plan to score floor votes on key bills again this session. Bills subject to scoring will be those that address issues in our Legislative Agenda and/or are discussed in a Daily Legislative Update.

### **LEGISLATIVE SESSION INFORMATION**

To view schedules, calendars, bill information and legislator information, click [www.arkleg.state.ar.us](http://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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