

DAILY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Business matters.

Daily Legislative Update

94th Arkansas General Assembly
Tuesday, February 21, 2023 | Day 44

TODAY AT THE CAPITOL

A full schedule of committees met this morning. The Senate will convene at 1:00 p.m., and the House will convene at 1:30 p.m. After adjournment of both chambers, there will be a joint meeting of the House and Senate Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committees.

NEW TRACKED BILLS

We added [7 bills](#) to our tracking. In addition to the Governor's education bill described below, these newly tracked bills address elections, teacher tests, sales tax exemptions, land recordings, waste permit fees and solar net-metering.

TODAY - STATE CHAMBER/AIA PRIORITY BILLS

[Elimination of Phantom Damages -](#)

HB 1418 by Rep. Marcus Richmond with seventeen House co-sponsors and Sen. Missy Irvin with nine Senate co-sponsors.

This State Chamber/AIA priority bill failed on a voice vote in the House Judiciary Committee this morning.

[Unemployment Insurance](#)

[HB 1430](#) by Rep. Robin Lundstrum and Sen. Kim Hammer

This State Chamber/AIA priority bill received a Do Pass recommendation this morning from the House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee. The bill makes multiple changes to unemployment insurance (UI) law, which are part of the State Chamber/AIA's Priority Legislative Agenda. Three sections of the bill lower employers' unemployment insurance taxes and one section reduces the weeks of benefits from 16 to 12.

The employers' tax cuts:

- Amend indexing of the wage base (amount of wages that are subject to the tax) to protect against large increases. The wage base has been reduced from \$10,000 to \$7,000 for 2023. This bill prevents increases in the wage base as long as the Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund has a minimum balance of \$600 million. The current balance is over \$900 million.
- Reduce the new employer UI tax rate from 2.9% to 1.9% effective January 1, 2024.

- Repeal the Stabilization Tax and replace it with an administrative assessment that is below the current 0.2% available in the Stabilization Tax for administration. The administrative assessment will be 0.125%, effective from July 1, 2023, until June 30, 2024. Effective July 1, 2024, the administrative assessment will reduce to 0.1%. Excess funds generated by the administrative assessment can be credited to a fund for modernization of the state's UI computer system, subject to a maximum of \$35 million, and up to \$2.5 million can be deposited to the Training Trust Fund for worker training. Any excess training fund dollars will go into the Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund.
- Reduce the maximum UI tax rate from 14% to 10%.

Unemployment Insurance

HB 1433 by Rep. Robin Lundstrum and Sen. Kim Hammer

This is a Department of Workforce Services clean-up bill. The bill was given a Do Pass recommendation this morning by the House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee.

EDUCATION

Arkansas LEARNS Act

SB 294 by Sen. Breanne Davis and 24 Senators and Rep. Keith Brooks and 55 Representatives

This bill is Governor Sanders' Arkansas LEARNS Act. The bill is scheduled to be heard as a special order of business tomorrow morning at 10:00 a.m. in the Senate Education Committee, which will meet in Big MAC A instead of its normal committee room. Some of the bill's provisions:

- Create personal accounts for students to use in attending eligible schools and making various other changes to education law.
- Set a minimum base teacher salary of \$50,000 and guarantees at least \$2,000 pay increase over current salary.
- Provide for schools or school districts in D, F, or Level 5 Categories to be operated by charter school or other entity that is approved by the State Board of Education.
- Require school districts to develop and offer at least one career-ready pathway.
- Allow payment for vo-tech school services to course providers, including businesses that provide training.
- Repeal the Teacher Fair Dismissal Act and Fair Hearing Act.
- Define prohibited indoctrination.
- Create school safety provisions for school architecture and personnel training policies.
- Create a revolving loan program for charter schools.
- Create transportation grants to schools and local governments for improvements.
- Require literacy screening and math intervention plans.

BILL TRACKING

764 Bills Filed | Senate: 10 new – 295 filed | House: 13 new – 469 filed
State Chamber Tracking: 290 - 7 added today

To view all tracked bills by category, click [State Chamber AIA Bill Tracking Categories](#)

2023 STATE CHAMBER AIA LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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/>

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