

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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Legislative summary (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — This is a summary list of bills (by bill number, lead sponsor and title) introduced through Thursday in the 89th General Assembly, except for appropriation bills, which, along with other bills and resolutions, may be found at the legislative website: www.arkleg.state.ar.us

HOUSE

HB1215, Westerman - An act to reduce the maximum amount of money in the Solid Waste Management and Recycling Fund that the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality may use for administrative purposes.

HB1216, Linck - To amend Arkansas law concerning the distribution of state agency publications.

HB1217, Linck - To establish the Arkansas Paddlesport Activities Act.

HB1218, Jean - To reduce the sales and use tax on natural gas and electricity used by manufacturers and to declare an emergency.

HB1225, J. Burris - To require county judges to notify and compensate private property owners for use of the private property by the county in a natural disaster under certain circumstances.

HB1226, Jett - To increase the membership options for the state Parks, Recreation, and Travel Commission.

HB1227, Gossage - To recognize private school service as eligible for benefits in the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System under certain circumstances.

HB1228, Branscum - Concerning the purchase of refunded service from the Arkansas State Highway Employees' Retirement System.

HB1229, Love - To create a microenterprise development program; and to regulate loans and grants awarded under a microenterprise development program.

HB1230, Ratliff - To amend the requirements for reporting school district course offerings.

HB1231, Lenderman - Concerning school security and school crisis response training; to declare an emergency.

HB1232, Copenhaver - To require all passenger vehicles not operated for hire to comply with child safety restraint laws.

HB1233, Hickerson - To allow a city manager form of government to approve new ward boundaries.

HB1234, Williams - To reduce the state sales and use tax on food and food ingredients if certain fund balances exist; and to declare an emergency.

Notable Resolutions

HR1004, Barnett - To recognize the many contributions made by citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan and that it is in the best interest of the State of Arkansas to promote relationships with the Azerbaijani people.

SENATE

SB215, Irvin - An act concerning the filing for a municipal office.

SB216, Irvin - Concerning the nonpartisan election of sheriffs.

SB217, Irvin - Concerning the salary of a municipal official whose professional license or registration is suspended.

SB218, Irvin - To create a uniform prior authorization form; to require health-care insurers to use a uniform prior authorization form.

SB219, R. Thompson - To amend Article 9 of the Uniform Commercial Code and to declare an emergency.

SB220, Teague - To address various issues with the Arkansas Local Police and Fire Retirement System.

SB223, B. Sample - To extend the duration of participation in the local police and fire deferred retirement option plan; and for other purposes.

SB224, B. Sample - Concerning deputy sheriffs and the Arkansas Local Police and Fire Retirement System.

SB225, E. Williams - To protect the identities of children from being disclosed to the public in motor-vehicle accident and investigation reports.

SB227, Files - To permit a wholesaler of alcohol to store alcohol in a dry territory.

SB228, Elliott - To protect the health and safety of public school students with diabetes by providing for certain school personnel to be trained in the administration of glucagon.

SB229, J. Hutchinson - To amend provisions of the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System Act concerning investments.

SB230, J. Hutchinson - To amend general provisions for the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System in Title 24 of the Arkansas Code.

SB231, J. Hutchinson - To permit a retired participant in a state group health insurance plan to pay premiums by a bank account draft and to make technical corrections.

SB232, J. Key - To require automatic enrollment of a new state employee in a deferred compensation plan; and to provide opt-out provisions for a new state employee.

Fort Smith seeks school plans (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

FORT SMITH — The Fort Smith School Board voted to seek conceptual plans for the development of a third high school and a large events building to address the need for more space for its growing student population.

The slow but steady growth of the district has resulted in a student population-increase of 1,200 over the past 10 years, School Board President David Hunton said Tuesday. The district's total enrollment is just more than 14,000.

The board voted Monday to seek conceptual plans and cost estimates from architects for a high school at Chaffee Crossing with a capacity for about 1,500 students. Plans and cost estimates also will be sought for a new events/convocation center that Hunton said could accommodate graduation ceremonies, state basketball and volleyball tournaments, and community events. He said such a building would likely be near the center of town.

Chaffee Crossing is on the southeast edge of Fort Smith.

The Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority voted in January 2011 to donate 80 acres of land at Chaffee Crossing to the school district for a future high school. School board member Rick Wade said Tuesday that it would be unreasonable for the board not to accept the gift of prime land in one of the city's hottest growth areas.

Now, Hunton said, the city's two high schools have gyms and halls but the facilities are too small. Not all students can attend pep rallies at Southside High School, he said, and graduations and basketball games are held in the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith's arena. Even that is becoming too small to meet the district's space needs, he said.

Hunton estimated that the new structures could require the board to seek a 5-mill property tax increase, which district Superintendent Benny Gooden said would be the first millage increase request since 1987.

County records show the Fort Smith School District levies 36.5 mills, which last year generated nearly \$38 million in revenue. Of the total, 25 mills are used for operating expenses and 11.5 mills are used for debt service.

At that rate, a 5-mill tax increase would raise about \$5.2 million a year.

While the School Board has been talking about the need for more space for its schools for the past four years, Gooden said Tuesday, he estimated the start of construction was probably one to two years away.

With the time it takes to plan and design new facilities, he said, school officials would be foolish not to begin the process now. The conceptual plans will provide the starting point for the board, he said.

District spokesman Zena Featherston said both high schools are at capacity. Official enrollment figures as of Oct. 1 were 1,459 for Northside High School and 1,599 for Southside High School.

Southside Principal Wayne Haver said his school has expanded as much as possible. It is surrounded by football fields, parking lots and residential development that won't allow it to grow any further.

Hunton and Gooden said a new high school alone will not solve the district's overcrowding. They said if a new high school is built, assignment to schools will be realigned to give all of the schools more space. The ninth grade would move into the high schools, the sixth grade would move to the junior high schools and the kindergarten students would move into the elementary schools.

Bill would authorize armed staff at schools (Pine Bluff Commercial)

LITTLE ROCK — The boards of public schools in Arkansas could pay existing school employees extra to provide armed security during school hours in addition to their regular jobs under legislation filed Thursday.

House Bill 1231 by Rep. Homer Lenderman, D-Brookland, would establish a training and evaluation regimen for school employees with permits to carry a concealed handgun to undergo to qualify for the additional security duties.

Lenderman said the measure is intended to enable districts to supplement their existing security staff or to enable districts that cannot afford full-time security to have armed, trained staff to provide it.

"We need to have people on campus that are competent and have quality training, and we need to allow them to carry," said Lenderman, who taught high school agriculture for 30 years.

"We've had a lot of people saying we need to do something, and we have. We've put in safeguards, security locks. But, especially for our rural schools, we have several minutes before an armed police officer can be there and not all schools have security officers," he said. "This bill allows a school, if they choose, to select certain individuals that they feel are competent to complete these duties."

The employees could be teachers, custodians, bus drivers or others, he said, "but as soon as they hear a certain signal or shots fired, they go into the mode of defending students."

Under the bill, the worker must be licensed to carry a concealed handgun and would be required to complete a 40-hour training course at an accredited law enforcement training academy that teaches fundamental use of firearms, trauma care and defensive tactics.

The employee also must complete an annual accredited eight-hour training course to include on-site tactical drills, school safety drills and firearms qualification on an approved course of fire. The worker would be required to pass a physical and renew the security contract annually.

The employee would be required to undergo standard physical and psychological evaluations for law enforcement personnel and be subject to a background check. The security contract would be voided if the person is convicted of a felony or a misdemeanor involving violence.

Also filed Thursday, Senate Bill 225 by Sen. Eddie Joe Williams, R-Cabot, would exempt the names and address of minors in motor vehicle accident and investigative reports from the state Freedom of Information Act.
