

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

April 22, 2013

Arkansas Legislature: Lawmakers Expect Short Week To End Session (Southwest Times Record)

LITTLE ROCK — As he is wont to do, House Speaker Davy Carter used a sports metaphor to describe what is left to do this week in the legislative session.

“We’re just kicking the extra point now,” said Carter, R-Cabot.

Lawmakers are expected to meet just two days this week to approve final budget bills and address any last-minute issues before going home. Carter and Senate President Pro Tem Michael Lamoureux, R-Russellville, issued a proclamation Friday declaring that the session, originally scheduled to wrap up business that day, would be extended through Tuesday.

In a flurry of activity last week, at times meeting late into the night, lawmakers gave final approval to \$140 million in tax cuts and a plan to subsidize private health insurance for about 250,000 of Arkansas’ working poor.

On Monday, the House and Senate are expected to consider and approve the General Improvement Fund bill, which details how the governor and Legislature will allocate about \$170 million in surplus money, as well as the Revenue Stabilization Act, generally the last piece of legislation passed, which prioritizes spending in the \$4.9 billion budget for the next fiscal year.

Lamoureux said that’s about all that should happen today and Tuesday.

“I don’t think there is much else,” he said, adding there might be some concurrences on House amendments that need to be done.

On Tuesday, Lamoureux said, the House will consider the Senate’s RSA and GIF bills and the House will take up the Senate’s identical bills before lawmakers go home.

The Legislature is to return May 17 to make any needed technical corrections, consider overriding any gubernatorial vetoes and then formally adjourn.

“I think it’s been a good session,” said Sen. Johnny Key, R-Mountain Home, who is chairman of the Senate Education Committee.

Carter recalled that when the session began in January, he identified his three top goals of the session as resolving the question of health-care expansion, passing tax cuts and approving incentives for a proposed \$1.1 billion steel mill in Mississippi County.

“Sitting here today and being able to read that adjournment resolution, and the membership having done those things, I’m pretty proud. I think it’s been a good session,” he said.

When asked if his “extra point” metaphor meant that the finish line had been crossed, Carter smiled.

“I think a touchdown was scored,” he said.

Awards for the Arts (North Little Rock Times)

Christen Pitts, Theatre Dance teacher at North Little Rock High School, center, was named the Arkansas Communication and Theatre Arts Association (ACTAA) Teacher of the Year. ACTAA recognized Christen Burke Pitts as Teacher of the Year for her educational and community leadership in the development of the arts in Arkansas. Madison Ellis, senior at North Little Rock High School, received a \$500 Scholarship from the Arkansas Communication and Theatre Arts Scholarship recently at the Tournament of Champions. She was nominated for her outstanding efforts in Forensics. Brandon Hidgem, Drama/Competitive Speech teacher at North Little Rock High School, won the Don Dancer Award for being an Outstanding Forensics Coach.

Rison Campus Comes Up Clean In Drug Search (Cleveland County Herald)

Cleveland County Sheriff Deputy Josh Bolland (left), Rison High School Principal Kent Baggett (center) and Vice Principal Davy King (right) watch as one of five canine handlers from the Arkansas Department of Correction sweeps through a classroom looking for drugs and tobacco products last Friday morning. Rison High School has conducted at least one unannounced drug sweep using the specially trained dogs each of the past three years. The entire school campus was put under lockdown when the canine team arrived shortly after 9 a.m. Friday. The teams searched through all the parking lots and lockers on the high school campus as well as the gym and the fieldhouse. Randomly selected classrooms, like the one above, were also searched. The sweep turned up no drugs during this search, though the dogs did hit on an empty folding chair inside gym. After three dogs indicated some sort of substance on the chair, one of the handlers discovered that someone had disposed of a small packet of dipping tobacco under the lip of the chair.

LR students, teachers to be honored at Stephens Awards (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Eight Little Rock high school seniors and four teachers will be honored at the 2013 Stephens Awards on Monday afternoon.

The reception will be held at 4 p.m. in the AT&T Auditorium at the Regional Chamber of Commerce office in Little Rock.

Each student will receive a \$5,000 scholarship while each teacher will receive a \$7,500 cash award.

The awards and scholarships are provided by The City Education Trust, founded by Jackson T. Stephens and W.R. "Witt" Stephens in 1985.

Arkansas Education Association elects new president (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

The Arkansas Education Association has named Brenda Robinson as its new president, the organization announced in a Monday afternoon news release.

Robinson, a sixth grade math and English teacher at Fuller Middle School, will assume the position effective July 15. Her duties will include overseeing meetings and serving as the association's spokesperson.

"I am very gratified that the members of the AEA have placed their confidence in me to lead the association for the next two years," Robinson said in the release. "I am excited about the opportunities that public education creates for all children, and I look forward to working with others to share our vision of a great public school for every student."

Robinson replaces Donna Morey, who has served as the organization's president since 2009. The Arkansas Education Association represents over 14,000 members throughout Arkansas.

Arkansas lawmakers advance \$4.9 billion budget bill (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Arkansas lawmakers have advanced legislation outlining the state's \$4.9 billion budget for the coming year.

The Senate voted 28-6 on Monday and approved the proposed Revenue Stabilization Act. The House later on Monday voted 80-15 for an identical measure that sets the state's spending priorities based on expected revenues.

Both chambers are scheduled to vote once more on the budget legislation Tuesday before wrapping up this year's session.

The proposal calls for increased spending for Arkansas' Medicaid program and public schools. It also includes funding for a 2 percent cost-of-living raise for state employees.

The budget won approval days after lawmakers passed a plan to use federal Medicaid dollars to purchase private insurance for thousands of low-income residents.