

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

March 1, 2013

School readies for visit from Japan (Cabot Star-Herald)

Superintendent Tony Thurman said it is coming time for Cabot School District to reciprocate an agreement that sent a group of students to Japan last year.

Assistant high school principal Michael Byrd said that last year a group of Cabot students went to Japan for a two-week visit.

The group was sponsored under Kizuna (Friendship) Project of the Laurasian Institution, The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership, Japan International Cooperation Center and the Japan-U.S. Educational Commission.

Byrd said that under the agreement for the trip, Cabot School District agreed to host a similar group of students from Japan.

The group will be here March 9–12, Byrd said. Nineteen students and a teacher will be spending three nights at Cabot; 17 families have agreed to be hosts, he said.

Visits to the Clinton Library, state Capitol, Petit Jean Park and other area sites have been planned, Byrd said. There will a day on campus with a Cabot High School student, the visiting student will also be making presentations to students and community members, he said.

There will be a catfish fry for local flavor, Byrd said. Overall, it is going to be a “whirlwind visit,” he said.

In July 2012, Cabot High School Japanese language teacher Yaeko McNeil and fellow teacher Helen Goodman chaperoned Cabot students Grant Reed, Mark Kingan Jr., Wylie Holitik, Timothy DeNomie, Will Gambill, Waylon Moses, Caeron Asselin, Drew Yates, Sandra Cookro, Roderick, Kristin Scott, Anna Applegate, Kelsey Miller, Nikki West, Melissa Mosqueda, Amber Roderick, Melenda Ros, Jessica Long, Codee Park, Margaret Abegglen, Morgan Gurke, Jessica Lawley and Jordan Lakin.

Deputy superintendent Harold Jeffcoat said the security meetings and drills held in January were a success. “We got a lot of positive feedback from local law enforcement and emergency responders,” he said.

Curriculum director Tammy Tucker reviewed the work in the district on the changeover to Common Core.

On Friday, the state Department of Education presented two interactive videos on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) Model Content Frameworks; PARCC is the assessment consortium of which Arkansas is a member, Tucker said. The assessments are to replace the currently used benchmarks and course assessments in 2015.

The model content framework is what schools use to apply the Common Core standards, for guidance on developing curriculum, Tucker said.

Most of the concepts in the presentation are already being applied at Cabot schools, she said. "It is affirming to know that our curriculum team has been on the right track all along," Tucker remarked.

Deputy superintendent Harold Jeffcoat said board members had been escorted on a tour of the new baseball/softball complex early on Tuesday. The complex was set for 'debut' on Monday, Feb. 18, but was postponed for weather, he said.

There remain some items to finish, but the complex is essentially complete, Jeffcoat said.

On other district construction, Jeffcoat said the Career and Technical building of the Freshman Academy is nearing completion with only some items of lighting and ventilation remaining to be done.

"There is a lot of progress being made," Jeffcoat said of the overall project.

The main Academy building will have the same "footprint" as the high school, and is divided into three areas, Jeffcoat said. Area 3 is well under way and the concrete has been poured for the library/media center in the central area, he said.

The electric transformer, which will power the main and career/tech building, has been placed, Jeffcoat said.

Say Go College Week to be observed at Pine Bluff High School (Pine Bluff Commercial)

March 4-8 has been designated "Say Go College Week" by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. It is a week-long event held at schools all over Arkansas to promote higher education awareness and is highlighted by events on high school and college campuses throughout the state.

Pine Bluff School District Superintendent Linda Watson and Pine Bluff High School Principal Michael Nellums have announced that PBHS will kick off Say Go College week to encourage its students to "plan for the future" and include college in such plans.

The week's activities will be facilitated by career coaches Dedric Jones and Michelle Heard. They will start with a huge yellow banner in the cafeteria where students are encouraged to sign their names as a commitment to go to college. Teachers and administrators will be given a "Say Go College" button to wear all week and students will be given a sticker and bookmark.

Other planned events include:

- Tuesday: Homeroom faculty can discuss their own college experiences with their students and how to obtain financial resources for colleges.
- Wednesday: "Future School Spirit Day." Seniors can wear T-shirts or sweatshirts bearing the logo of the college or university they plan to attend.
- Thursday: "Business and Professional Day," A college and career fair will be held in McFadden Gym from 8 a.m. to noon. Students will be allowed to wear business/professional attire and meet with area college, business, industry and civic representatives to discuss and showcase careers. Also, a parent component will be provided by the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Adult Education Center, so PBHS parents also are invited to attend.

- Friday - A "Go College" rally will be held in McFadden Gym at 8:50a.m. with the student body, band, cheerleaders, the UAPB Vesper Choir, and motivational speaker Volney 'VP' Parker of Little Rock.

All activities will lead up to "College Goal Sunday, March 10th", a one-day, statewide event created to help students and parents complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Student Aid). Visit SayGoCollege.com for the nearest location.

Update on Legislative Activity (Clay Co. Times, Commentary by State Senator Robert Thompson)

The Senate passed legislation to require voters to present a photo ID in order to get a ballot, and to set up a process by which voters can get a free identity card at their local county clerks' office.

Senate Bill 2 takes effect January 1, 2014. Acceptable forms of photo ID include a driver's license, a passport, a student ID issued by an accredited college or university in Arkansas, a permit to carry a concealed handgun, a military identification document, an employee badge and a public assistance identification card.

SB 2 directs the Secretary of State to issue free voter identification cards, through local county clerks' offices. To get a free voter ID card from the county clerk, a person would have to swear under oath that he or she does not have any proof of identity.

The bill only become effective after the legislature approves funding for the Secretary of State to issue free voter ID cards. The bill's sponsor told reporters he estimated that it would take an appropriation of about \$300,000 to set up the process.

When voting by absentee ballot, the voter must submit with the ballot a copy of his or her photo ID. Residents of nursing homes and long term care facilities would not have to show a photo ID, but they would have to show documentation from the facility administrator that they are residents. If the identity card has an expiration date, the voter can use it if it has not been expired for more than four years.

Lottery Scholarships

The Senate Education Committee advanced HB 1295 to restructure lottery scholarship amounts, to preserve the long-term financial stability of the Academic Challenge Scholarship program. If enacted, the bill would be the second change in scholarship amounts since Arkansas voters approved a state lottery. The first scholarships were for \$5,000 a year for students at four-year universities and \$2,500 for students at two-year colleges. Those amounts were later reduced to \$4,500 and \$2,225.

Under HB 1295, students already in the system would continue to get the same amounts that they first qualified for, but scholarships would be lower for students who enroll in college in the fall of 2013. Freshman would get \$2,000 and if they maintain their eligibility they would get \$3,000 as sophomores, \$4,000 as juniors and \$5,000 as seniors.

Students at two-year colleges, nursing schools and branch campuses of four-year institutions would get \$2,000 each year.

Concealed Carry on Campus

The Senate Judiciary Committee advanced HB 1243 to allow employees of colleges and universities to carry a concealed handgun on campus, if they have a concealed carry permit. Also, the institution would have to have a policy that allows staff to carry concealed firearms.

The governing board of the institution would have to vote on a policy every year to prohibit staff from carrying concealed weapons. The board could adopt differing policies for different areas or buildings of the campus, or for different campuses within its supervision.

Privacy for Concealed Carry Permit Holders

SB 131, to prevent the names and zip codes of concealed carry permit holders from being made public under the state Freedom of Information Act, has passed both chambers. The governor said he would allow it to become law without his signature. It passed the House by a vote of 64-to-3 and the Senate by a vote of 24-to-9.

Legislative consultant to take crack at Big River (KATV, Channel 7)

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) - Arkansas lawmakers have 18 working days to get information they want about a \$1.1 billion steel plant proposed for Osceola that they're being asked to borrow \$125 million to help finance.

Republican House Speaker Davy Carter says tens of thousands of dollars are expected to be spent on a consultant to analyze the Big River Steel proposal. GOP Senate President Pro Tem Michael Lamoureux said Friday that a consultant has not been chosen.

Democratic Gov. Mike Beebe and state economic officials support the plan and the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System board has voted to invest \$60 million in the project.

Carter says it will be difficult not to support the plan - unless "glaring red flags" appear.

The mill promises 2,000 employees during construction and more than 500 when it's operating.

Commentary: Graduation Rates Increasingly Important In Funding (Southwest Times Record (Steve Brawner))

Arkansas has the nation's second lowest percentage of adults ages 25 to 64 with college degrees, its 19 percent beating only West Virginia. And while college is not for everyone and there are lots of honorable ways to make a decent living, statistically, the average person with a college degree makes more money than the average person without one.

How can Arkansas move up the ranks? A seemingly obvious solution is enrolling more students in college. That's been happening, thanks to a variety of policies and programs, particularly the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship, funded mostly by the lottery.

The problem is, just getting an 18-year-old to college doesn't accomplish much if he or she stays only a year. In fact, it wastes their time and money, the college's resources and the dollars paid by taxpayers and lottery ticket purchasers.

More of an emphasis now is being placed on college completion — the latest example being a restructuring of the lottery scholarship so that it rewards students for advancing toward a degree.

Under a law passed by the Legislature and about to be signed by the governor, four-year students now will receive \$2,000 their freshman year and an additional \$1,000 each year, so that by their fourth year they are receiving \$5,000. Students at two-year schools will get \$2,000 each year for two years.

That's a significant change. The scholarship had been granting awards of \$4,500 for all students attending four-year schools and \$2,250 for students attending two-year schools.

Unfortunately, it couldn't afford to continue to do that. The program handed out about \$16 million more this year than it collected and has been giving out about \$20 million a year to college freshmen who either quit school or are ineligible before they are sophomores. It's been surviving thanks to an \$80 million surplus the lottery collected when it was first created, before it started funding scholarships. But that surplus is almost gone.

The tiered approach makes sense. It closes the program's deficit by reducing the total scholarship payout from \$18,000 to \$14,000. Meanwhile, it rewards students for advancing through college. If the state only has limited funds, it's better to invest \$5,000 in students who are almost ready to graduate than \$4,500 in 18-year-olds who haven't proven serious about their education.

How students qualify for the scholarship, unfortunately, has not yet been addressed. Students are awarded the money if they score a 19 on their ACT test or have a 2.5 grade point average. However, to keep the scholarship, they must maintain a 2.5 in college.

In other words, we take the scholarships away from upperclassmen enrolled in difficult and much-needed majors like engineering if they don't keep a 2.5. But we open up our wallets for good ACT test-takers who, for whatever reason, couldn't maintain a 2.5 in high school. We expect they'll do better in a more demanding environment. Then we take the scholarships away when they don't.

The state is taking other steps to encourage college completion. It's been trying to improve public schools so that students are more prepared for college when they arrive. In the past, funding for colleges and universities largely has been tied to how many students an institution enrolls — how many rear ends it puts in the seats, in other words. Starting this next fiscal year, five percent of colleges' state funds will be tied to how many graduates they produce, and that number will increase by five percent a year until it hits 25 percent in 2017. Meanwhile, the state has enacted a number of policies to help students graduate. One example: Because college algebra has proven to be such a stumbling block, a new, practical math course has been created for students in nonmath-related fields.

Will all this add up to Arkansas producing more college graduates? I don't know. I was one of those students in a nonmath-related field.

Steve Brawner is a freelance journalist, a former newspaper editor, and a former aide to former Gov. Mike Huckabee and Lt. Gov. Win Rockefeller. Email: brawnersteve@mac.com

Fallen choir director honored by students (KAIT, Channel 8, Jonesboro)

HARRISBURG, AR (KAIT) - Students at Harrisburg High School are honoring their choir director who passed away.

They are remembering her in a special way, through an event she was helping to prepare her students for.

"They loved her. She was always about fun, always about laughter, always about making things as great as they could be," said colleague Amy Wallace.

When Amy Jarrett died in a car accident earlier this month, the students and teachers of Harrisburg High School decided to dedicate the talent show to their beloved choir director.

"The students are why we're doing this. They wanted to do something to show how much they cared about Amy," said Wallace.

Many of her own students will be performing in her honor.

"This will give everybody a moment to celebrate what Amy did and what she taught her kids and celebrate her memory, not just mourning her loss," said Wallace.

For those who worked closely with her every day, this show is all about honoring a dear friend.

"Well for me, Amy was such a wonderful person she had such a huge heart, she was full of love and full of laughter," said Wallace.

The benefit also gives back to another colleague who happens to be Jarrett's husband.

"He teaches in east lab and to be able to do this for him, I think allows the kids to have some outreach for him and show him in a way that's tangible what Amy meant to them," said Wallace.

All the money raised from the talent show will go straight to a fund set up for the Jarrett family.

The entry deadline has been extended to March 4. For information on donations or how to sign up, contact Amy Wallace at (870) 930-4627 or Pamela Sain at (870) 783-0060.

LR school chief sets faster exit (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — Morris Holmes, the superintendent of the Little Rock School District since January 2011, is resigning his position effective no later than March 22, Holmes and School Board members said Thursday.

"Some business issues have arisen and I am submitting my resignation," Holmes wrote in a letter addressed to School Board President Dianne Curry and copied to the other board members and to Chris Heller, an attorney for the district.

A March resignation was unexpected by the board, but it only accelerates Holmes' already anticipated departure from the state's largest school district.

Holmes' two-year contract with the district was due to expire June 30, and the School Board is in the midst of interviewing four finalists for the chief executive's job.

The board, which has one more finalist interview Monday, could make a decision on a new superintendent as soon as a special meeting set for 5:30 p.m. Tuesday.

However, none of the four finalists is currently an Arkansas resident and so therefore not likely to be able to take on the job immediately. That will make a School Board appointment of an interim superintendent necessary.

Curry said that could happen as soon as Tuesday's meeting.

In his letter, Holmes asked that his resignation be placed on the agenda for Thursday night's regular School Board meeting.

Board members did not publicly announce the resignation at the meeting, although several took the opportunity during a part of the meeting reserved for board remarks to thank Holmes, now 73, for coming out of retirement in 2011 to head the district.

"He is a true leader with an unmatched skill set," board member Leslie Fisk said, adding that Holmes "the whole time kept his eye on the prize - the students."

Board members voted 4-3 to go into executive session to consider the employment of the superintendent. Board members met in the private session for about 20 minutes before reconvening in public. They took no action and adjourned.

Questioned after the meeting about the comments regarding Holmes, Curry said she had received a resignation letter dated Feb. 22, in which Holmes said he would resign March 18. She said an amended letter with a March 22 resignation date was sent later, but that letter was not immediately available Thursday night.

Holmes, in a telephone interview late Thursday, said either date is possible - that he was giving the board "some elasticity."

He said he preferred to keep the business issues to which he referred in the letter confidential.

"I had some business interests when I went to work," he said. "I've neglected a whole lot of business interests, in state and out of state, that at this point in time I need to get back to."

The resignation letter was brief.

"As you know, I have given a good deal of energy to the job of Superintendent and that I have appreciated the work and relationships," he wrote.

Board members voiced regret about Holmes' resignation.

"It's amicable," board member Greg Adams said. "There's no hard feelings. No pressure."

Board member Jody Carreiro said, "Personally, I would ask him if there was any way he could stay until June 30."

"I think all of us would wish otherwise," Adams added about Holmes' leaving early.

Holmes is an Arkansas native who, early in his career, was a district teacher and then principal at Little Rock Central High. He was an assistant director in the Arkansas Department of Education, then left the state to be an assistant superintendent in the Fort Worth schools and later superintendent of the New Orleans public school system.

He returned to Arkansas and semi-retirement and was called on to be an interim superintendent in the Little Rock School District in 2003-04. He was passed up for the full time position in 2004 in favor of Roy Brooks, who was removed from the position by the board in 2007.

Holmes became the district's interim superintendent in January 2011 after the board entered into an agreement with then-Superintendent Linda Watson to leave her job before her contract expired in June 2011. The board conducted a national search for a new superintendent and then asked Holmes, who was not a candidate for the job, to take on the position under a two-year contract. His annual base salary is \$215,000.

The search now for a new superintendent has proved to be a little rocky, as some community residents and board members have expressed strong concerns about one finalist, Walter Milton Jr., who is superintendent of the Springfield, Ill., school district but will leave the job later this month as a result of an agreement with the Springfield board. Milton has the most superintendent experience of the four finalists, having led districts in Springfield, Flint, Mich., and Fallsburg, N.Y., but also has generated the most debate because of news reports about audit findings in Fallsburg, and personnel decisions in the all the districts.

James Ross, a Little Rock district parent who started a Facebook petition asking the board not to consider Milton, on Thursday praised the other three finalists.

"I beg you to choose wisely. We are running out of time to heal our broke city," Ross told the board.

Adams told the audience that the board had been very united in its decisions on leadership in recent years and that he hoped that unanimity would continue in the selection of a new superintendent.

"Hang in there with us," Adams told the audience.

School concealed-carry bill rejected (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — A House Committee rejected a bill Thursday allowing some public-school employees to carry concealed weapons and voted to study the issue after the legislative session.

Also on the 46th day of the 2013 legislative session, lawmakers considered keeping youthful offenders closer to home and teaching sign language in schools.

House Bill 1231 by Rep. Homer Lenderman, D-Brookland, would allow school districts to select employees who would be allowed to carry concealed weapons after undergoing medical and psychological evaluations. They also would need to complete 40 hours of training on armed attacks and hostage situations from a law enforcement training academy.

The bill is one of a handful of bills dealing with school safety issues that have been filed this session after the shooting at a Connecticut elementary school in December.

Lenderman began by reading a list of school shootings over the past two decades, including the one in his district in March 1998 near Jonesboro.

"We do have a problem, there is no question about that," Lenderman said.

After nearly two hours of discussion - in which the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Education Association opposed the bill - members of the House Education Committee decided to look at the bill after the session ends.

Education Commissioner Tom Kimbrell said the state needs to take the topic seriously.

“If it’s that important that we have people with weapons in our schools, then I think it’s important for us as policymakers and agencies to step forward and say ‘OK, it’s time to do this in the right, responsible way,’” Kimbrell said.

Members raised questions about who would be liable if someone were injured, how districts would pay for the training and equipment and what protections there would be so first responders wouldn’t shoot at the armed school employees.

Committee Chairman James McLean, D-Batesville, said the topic needed more discussion.

“This is worthy of discussion, this is worthy of important, heavy debate,” McLean said.

Some school districts already employ school resource officers, who are trained police, and security guards. Only 125 of the state’s 239 school districts have school resource officers, according to the Criminal Justice Institute’s Safe Schools Initiative. There are 224 resource officers total, administrator Larance Johnson said.

TAX CUTS

Also at the Capitol, House Speaker Davy Carter stressed to reporters Thursday that the up to \$150 million in tax cuts he asked lawmakers to work on will not result in budget cuts for other programs.

“I do not envision any scenario where anybody gets any less money than what they got last year,” Carter said. “Two year colleges aren’t closing down, stop sending me e-mails, stop calling me, stop saying that higher [education] funding is going to be drastically in jeopardy because of the tax measures we are debating.”

Carter said lawmakers are working through the budgeting process and couldn’t say where the money for the tax cuts would come from. Carter said some agencies may not see budget increases that the governor had sought.

“We are debating this budget process in the context with... all of the other things that we have going on, we’re going to give some money back to taxpayers. We’re going to do it responsibly, we’re going to do it in a way where nobody gets any less money than they got last year,” Carter said.

The budgeting process will last until the end of the 2013 legislative session.

“I’m not going to spend the next two or three weeks, every day talking about how somebody’s going to be shut down or we’re closing this, we’re kicking somebody out of that,” Carter said. “I just want to stop it before it gets any worse.”

Gov. Mike Beebe has proposed a \$4.947 billion budget in fiscal 2014, including \$10 million in rainy-day funds, as well as a 2 percent cost-of-living increase for most state employees and a 2.5 percent increase for education. The increase from the state’s fiscal 2013 general revenue budget of \$4.727 billion, is largely due to increased funding for kindergarten-through-12 education and Medicaid. The fiscal year ends June 30.

Beebe also has proposed a \$5.13 billion budget in fiscal 2015, including \$10 million in rainy-day funds. He has said he wants to know where the money for proposed tax cuts would come from.

CLOSE TO HOME

A bill aimed at keeping more youthful offenders close to their homes by providing community services as an alternative to lockup failed to clear the Senate.

The 14-13 vote on Senate Bill 335 by Sen. Missy Irvin, R-Mountain View, fell four short of the 18 required for approval.

The bill also would allow juvenile-court judges or community-based providers under contract with the Department of Human Services to create boards to evaluate youth services in their judicial districts.

GOLF PROS

The Joint Budget Committee approved a request from the governor Thursday that golf pros working at the state's two public golf courses be allowed to provide lessons while not at work.

The language was added to Senate Bill 85, the operations appropriation bill for the Department of Parks and Tourism.

Department Executive Director Richard Davies told committee members that ethics rules prohibit most state employees from entering into another contract with the state.

Golf instructors who contract with the state would be required to teach outside of normal working hours and would be members or apprentices of the Professional Golfers Association of America or the Ladies Professional Golf Association. The state would receive a percentage of the fee for each lesson.

State Parks Director Greg Butts said three employees would be affected by the change.

"The issue is there aren't that many [pro golfers] in east Arkansas who are not already associated as a pro at a private course," Butts said. "They're not just hanging like apples from a tree in Cross and St. Francis county. The one's that are, are our employees."

The golf courses are the De-Gray Lake Resort Golf Course near Bismarck and the Ridges at Village Creek Golf Course near Wynne.

SIGN LANGUAGE

The House Education Committee also approved HB1410 sponsored by Rep. Andy Mayberry, R-Hensley, which allows schools to offer American Sign Language as a foreign language.

Mayberry said 22 states allow academic credit for learning sign language.

Morgan Asbill, 17, of Springdale asked Mayberry to carry the bill. She told the committee that her brother, who is deaf, could not graduate with honors because he wasn't able to learn a foreign language.

"I felt that wasn't very fair," Asbill told the committee.

MENTAL-HEALTH INFORMATION

The House voted 93-0 to approve House Bill 1440, which would allow law enforcement, court officials and prosecuting attorneys to access some mental-health information collected by the Arkansas Crime Information Center.

Rep. Matthew Shepherd, R-El Dorado, said state law makes it illegal for someone to possess a gun if he is a felon, has been involuntarily committed or was adjudicated as incompetent. Currently, law enforcement, court officials and prosecuting attorneys can't access the mental-health information, he said.

TRIAL-COURT ASSISTANTS

The House Judiciary Committee approved a bill that would send fees collected by cities to the state Administration of Justice Fund to pay for trial-court assistants.

Rep. John Vines, D-Hot Springs, said Senate Bill 307 would close loopholes on certain court fees and establish a new \$50 fee for expunging records. The money would be deposited into the Administration of Justice Fund, which is used to pay the salaries of trial-court assistants in the circuit courts.

Chief Justice Jim Hannah has said that fee collections through the courts, which are used to pay the employees, have dwindled and are insufficient to pay salaries.

The governor has made several emergency transfers to keep from furloughing employees since the fall of 2011.

CONCEALED HANDGUN EXEMPTIONS

In other business, the House Judiciary Committee passed a bill that would exempt former law-enforcement officers, court bailiffs, and county sheriffs from concealed-handgun licensing requirements, including mandatory training.

Rep. Justin Harris, R-West Fork, said he decided to sponsor House Bill 1417 after a deputy who lives in his district told him former law-enforcement officers were not included in the exemptions. Under current law, only current law-enforcement officers, police chiefs, sheriffs and certain auxiliary officers are exempt from the requirements.

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

HB1533, Kizzia - An act concerning salaries for county and municipal employees.

HB1534, Kizzia - To amend the Child Passenger Protection Act and to raise the age and weight requirements for child passenger safety seats and safety belts.

HB1535, Lampkin - To amend the Free Textbook Act of 1975.

HB1536, Alexander - To promote local milk products; to allow the incidental sale of whole milk that is not pasteurized; to allow the state Board of Health to make rules for the sales. HB1537, Rice - The Salvage Vehicle Consumer Safety and Disclosure Act.

HB1538, Linck - To exempt the Capitol Hill Apartment Building from the Elevator Safety Law.

HB1539, Lea - To require that agreements under the Economic Development Incentive Quick Action Closing Fund state specific and unambiguous goals and require a refund of a certain amount if the goals are not met.

HB1540, J. Burriss - To create a Rotary International license plate.

HB1541, Nickels - To amend Arkansas law concerning reporting by a political action committee and amending a portion of Arkansas law resulting from Initiated Act 1 of 1990 and Initiated Act 1 of 1996.

HB1542, Kizzia - To clarify the procedure for certain annexation matters.

Hb1551, Love - To amend the law concerning certified election monitors and to increase the number of election monitors for elections.

HB1552, Love - To amend the law concerning qualifications for certain persons conducting elections and to require training for all county election commissioners, poll workers and certified election monitors.

HB1553, Love - To create a procedure for criminal background checks for candidates and to require that a candidate having criminal history be given notice prior to the election that he or she is not qualified to hold office.

HB1554, Slinkard - To amend the law concerning statements of financial interest and to require district judges to file the statement of financial interest with the county clerk.

HB1555, Hickerson - To create a mechanism for transferring back to Arkansas any Arkansas citizen who has been admitted to a private hospital in another state for the treatment of mental illness.

HB1556, Nickels - To increase the workers' compensation premium tax and require that a portion be credited to the Death and Permanent Total Disability Trust Fund and to amend portions of the Arkansas Code that resulted from Initiated Act 4 of 1948.

HB1558, Steel - Concerning aggregating hot checks for the purpose of prosecuting a person under the Arkansas Hot Check Law.

HB1560, Wright - To amend the Unfair Cigarette Sales Act to simplify the application and administration of the act.

SENATE

SB598, B. King - An act to amend the law concerning regional solid waste management districts.

SB607, J. Hutchinson - To create the Electronic Payment Transaction Protection Act; to prohibit the collection of interchange fees on certain taxes and fees; to declare an emergency.

SB609, J. Dismang - To avoid unnecessary duplication of costs and services in the expansion of Medicaid day habilitation services for children; to declare an emergency.

SB630, Rapert - To provide for enhanced civil liability resulting from acts of terrorism.

SB634, S. Flowers - To amend Arkansas law concerning assistance to disabled voters.

SB640, D. Johnson - To authorize the establishment of energy improvement districts to fund loans for energy efficiency improvements, renewable energy projects and water conservation improvements.