

# ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

March 5, 2013

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## **AGATE conference discusses 'uncommon gifts' (Log Cabin Democrat, Conway)**

Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education, AGATE, met for its 34th annual conference Feb. 20-22 at the Peabody Hotel in Little Rock.

“A Common Purpose For Uncommon Gifts” was the conference theme.

Kristi Chumley, facilitator of Gifted and Talented for Benton Schools, was the chairperson.

Preconference sessions included “Gifted and Talented and Common Core,” “technology” and administrator and parent institutes.

Featured presenters on Advanced Placement Day were Dr. Jim Delisle, Dr. Bob Seney, and Bob Iseminger.

Marilyn Larson of Conway, co-chairman of the Governors Advisory Council, presented Act 56 Awards to Outstanding Gifted and Talented Programs.

Dr. Alicia Cotabish, University of Central Arkansas, presented “Modifying Common Core Math for High Ability Learners.”

Dr. Charlotte Green, Director of Gifted and Talented Education in Conway Schools, was elected District Director for Arkansas Association Gifted Education Administrators, a branch of Arkansas Association Education Administrators.

Sally Stuart, GT Specialist at the Arch Ford Education Cooperative, was elected to the AGATE Board.

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## **PBSD superintendent continues to make case for Greenville closure (Pine Bluff Commercial)**

Pine Bluff School District Superintendent Linda Watson reiterated at a community meeting Monday evening that the recommended closure of Greenville Elementary School at the end of the current school year is not something that is being taken lightly and is only being done out of fiscal necessity.

The recommendation to close Greenville must be approved by the Pine Bluff School District Board of Directors before it is official.

“It’s not that we want to close schools; it’s that we need to be efficient and effective in the way that we use district funds,” Watson said at the meeting in the Pine Bluff High School Little Theater. “I like to compare it to a family that has two incomes that are reduced to one income. When that happens you have to make some adjustments and because this school district continues to lose students we are losing the income that each of those students represents.”

Watson said that under the current school closing plan no district staff will lose their jobs.

“We will reduce staff through natural attrition as staff members retire,” Watson said. “Most of the money the district receives goes towards staff salaries. We usually lose around 40 teachers every year through attrition. Greenville Elementary has 30 staff members so they should be accounted for under this plan.”

Watson said she has cut back on hiring at the administration level.

“When I made Suzette Anderson the assistant superintendent I did not fill the position she had,” Watson said. “Ms. Anderson is continuing to work with special education. I still don’t have the grant writer I need, even though the board approved the position. There are also school improvement specialist positions that are yet to be filled. This is all an effort to keep costs down.”

Watson said that the district will do everything that it can to work with the parents and students affected by plans to close Greenville Elementary.

“We are planning right now to split the Greenville students between Oak Park, Southwood and 34th and maybe a few going to Broadmoor,” Watson said. “Students will continue to receive bus transportation and siblings who are currently attending Greenville will be allowed to attend the same school when Greenville closes. If a parent does not want their child to go to the school that they are assigned to they can apply for a transfer.”

Watson said the original first steps to addressing the problem of dropping enrollment involved the closure of two schools and the shifting of students.

“We were really looking at closing two schools at the end of this year as well as shifting the ninth grade to Pine Bluff High School and splitting the sixth through the eighth grades between Bel Air and Southeast Middle Schools,” Watson said. “Under that plan we would keep the current Jack Robey building and close either Belair or Southeast. But due to the current academic status of the district we were advised to hold off on doing this for now.”

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### **Lake Hamilton boots boy in heels from school dance (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

PEARCY — Lake Hamilton school officials say they were attempting to shield a boy from harassment and bullying when they refused to let him attend a junior high dance wearing a dress and high heels.

Superintendent Steve Anderson released a statement Monday saying administrators didn’t believe the boy was dressed appropriately. According to The Sentinel-Record newspaper of Hot Springs, Anderson said the district would review its policies.

He said the district did not know the boy would arrive in a dress and that administrators made a “spur of the moment” decision to block him.

An Ohio organization started an online petition asking that action be taken against two administrators who worked the dance. The petition says the boy was told he could either leave or be removed from the dance.

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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 Monday 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](http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us)

### HOUSE

HB1588, E. Armstrong - An act to establish an Arkansas Disability History display month in October.

HB1590, Westerman - To require specific assessments to be successfully passed in order to obtain an elementary-level general teaching license or elementary-level special education teaching license.

HB1616, Nickels - Concerning band and music credits for public school students in middle school and high school.

HB1618, Baine - To require wholesalers to report certain information to the Arkansas Tobacco Control Board and to protect information in the required report from disclosure.

HB1619, Baine - Concerning the regulation of tobacco products, to amend the Arkansas Tobacco Products Tax Act of 1977 and to make technical changes.

HB1620, Gossage - Concerning a criminal background check in cases of child custody and visitation.

HB1629, Clemmer - To amend the eligibility provisions for the Arkansas Governor's Scholars Program, to ensure home-schooled students have an equal opportunity for the Arkansas Governor's Scholars Program, and to declare an emergency.

HB1631, Wardlaw - To amend the concealed handgun license statutes regarding active-duty military personnel and their spouses.

HB1632, Perry - To amend provisions of the Arkansas Code concerning creation of a school district by detaching territory from an existing school district.

HB1633, J. Edwards - To amend the Digital Product and Motion Picture Industry Development Act of 2009.

HB1635, Richey - To amend the Amusement Ride and Amusement Attraction Safety Insurance Act.

HB1638, Williams - To establish the Comprehensive Criminal Record Sealing Act of 2013 and to amend, consolidate, clarify and simplify the process for sealing a person's criminal record under certain circumstances.

HB1653, Lea - Concerning the ownership, administration and regulation of islands, submerged lands and property located on the islands of submerged lands.

HB1654, Lea - To clarify the forms of payment accepted for the redemption of tax-delinquent land or to set aside a sale of tax-delinquent land.

HB1665, Lea - To regulate the maintenance and preservation of records of the commissioner of state lands; to establish the Adopt a Document Program.

#### SENATE

SB656, J. Woods - An act to abolish the Arkansas Cyberinfrastructure Task Force.

SB660, B. Pierce - To clarify the authority of the board of trustees of Southern Arkansas University to charge tuition to students enrolled in the SUA-Tech-Arkansas Environmental Training Academy.

SB665, Rapert - To amend various state securities laws and to regulate securities transactions and clarify the rights and duties of parties to securities transactions.

SB670, B. Pierce - To exempt small water systems and small sewage systems from regulation by and petitions concerning regulation by the Public Service Commission.

SB688, Teague - To amend the tax applicable to long-term rentals of vehicles, to require that the long term rental vehicle tax be paid on each rental and to lower the threshold for the expiration of the long term rental vehicle tax.

SB691, Holland - To amend various provisions of the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program Act.

SB694, U. Lindsey - Regarding the ballot form for a judicial election. SB698, Holland - To amend various provisions of Title 6 of the Arkansas Code concerning licensure of public elementary and secondary school personnel.

SB699, Holland - To amend public school funding amounts, to provide resources for educational adequacy and to declare an emergency.

SB700, Holland - To amend various provisions of Title 6 of the Arkansas Code concerning public education generally.

SB705, Irvin - To require the coroner to notify the Arkansas Child Death Review Panel of the Arkansas Child Abuse/Rape/Domestic Violence Commission of an infant death or death of a minor child.

SB712, J. Hendren - To reduce the limitations on state-funded student financial aid available to higher education students and increase accessibility to higher education for members of the armed forces receiving student financial aid.

SB718, Files - To create criminal and civil penalties for certain activities relating to software and other devices and mechanisms that modify or falsify electronic records for the purpose of evading taxes.

SB719, B. King - To create the Voter Integrity Unit with the secretary of state, to ensure effective and thorough investigations of purported election misconduct and to protect the integrity of elections.

SB720, B. King - To promote honesty and integrity in county boards of election commissioners; to create a procedure for the removal of a member of a county board of election commissioners upon public complaint.

SB721, B. King - To revise the membership and terms of the State Board of Election Commissioners, to amend the law concerning the State Board of Election Commissioners and to declare an emergency.

SB722, B. King - To transfer the State Board of Election Commissioners to the office of the secretary of state, to amend the law concerning certain duties in elections and to declare an emergency.

SB731, J. Key - To amend provisions of law concerning school board meetings and school board members.

SB732, J. Key - To amend the requirements for meetings of a public school district board of directors. SB736, S. Flowers - To amend Arkansas law concerning the powers and duties of the State Board of Examiners of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors and to declare an emergency.

SB740, J. English - To provide K-12 scholarships to economically disadvantaged students by providing a tax credit for contributions to nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations and to declare an emergency.

SB750, Teague - To create the Arkansas Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention and Treatment Task Force.

SB752, J. Hendren - To clarify for parents the Public School Rating System on annual school report cards.

#### Notable Resolutions

SR17, D. Sanders - To designate Stars of Life Day and recognize the accomplishments of certain emergency medical services professionals.

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### Calendar (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — This is a calendar of public events of the 89th General Assembly for today, the 51st day of the 2013 legislative session.

#### HOUSE

10 a.m. Education, Room 138 10 a.m. Judiciary, Room 149 10 a.m. Public Health, Welfare and Labor, Room 130  
10 a.m. Public Transportation, Multi-Agency Complex, Room B 1:30 p.m. House convenes.

#### SENATE

10 a.m. State Agencies and Governmental Affairs, Old Supreme Court chambers 10 a.m. City, County and Local Affairs, Room 272 10 a.m. Insurance and Commerce, Room 171 1:30 p.m. Senate convenes.

After adjournment State Agencies and Governmental Affairs, Old Supreme Court chambers After adjournment Rules, Resolutions and Memorials, Room 207 After adjournment Agriculture, Forestry and Economic Development, Room 309

#### ALSO

7 a.m. Minority Health Commission, Room 138 7:30 a.m. Joint Budget Committee (Personnel), Multi-Agency Complex, Room B 9 a.m. Joint Budget Committee, Multi-Agency Complex, Room A Upon adjournment of both chambers Joint Budget Committee (Claims), Multi-Agency Complex, Room B

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## **Finalist: Can lift test scores (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

LITTLE ROCK — Walter Milton Jr., a candidate for Little Rock School District superintendent, said Monday that he has a record of improving student test scores and promoting community involvement in his 10 years as a superintendent in three districts.

Speaking to a superintendent-search advisory committee, a parent group and the general public, Milton, 46, who will leave the superintendent's job in Springfield, Ill., at the end of the month, also defended his record against what he said were false, inaccurate reports about aspects of that work in Springfield, Flint, Mich., and Fallsburg, N.Y.

"Some of you have begun to attempt to define me through social media," Milton told about 50 people, including the news media, at a public session Monday afternoon before his private interview with the Little Rock School Board later Monday night.

"I'm here to introduce you to the real me," Milton said. "I'm here to talk to you of my proven track record, a track record of raising student achievement."

Milton was the fourth and final finalist to be interviewed by the Little Rock School Board, which is to meet at 5:30 p.m. today to possibly select a new superintendent and to identify an interim superintendent to succeed Superintendent Morris Holmes, who plans to resign later this month.

The other three finalists interviewed and also under consideration for the chief executive position are Connie Hathorn, superintendent of the Youngstown school system in Ohio; Stefanie Phillips, former deputy superintendent of the Clayton County, Ga., public schools, and Dexter Suggs Sr., the chief of staff of the Indianapolis school system.

Of the four finalists, Milton has the most experience as a superintendent. During his nearly six years in the 15,100-student Springfield district, he said, the system has grown in enrollment and made gains in the percentages of students meeting Illinois learning standards between 2006-07 and last year - although the results remained below state averages.

Milton also described the establishment of schools with special programs during his tenure, the use of training to improve teacher instruction, the formation of community partnerships to benefit students, and efforts to engage parents that include holding monthly nighttime office hours and hosting an annual conference for parents of children with disabilities.

But Milton's work history has raised questions among some Little Rock residents about his personnel decisions, including Milton's hiring of a man in two of his districts who - a background check showed - was accused of molesting a child years earlier. In Springfield, three of Milton's top administrators - a chief financial officer, the human resources director and the communications director - all left the district after problems developed with their work or in their divisions, according to reports in the State Journal-Register newspaper.

Milton said each of the individuals was hired after a rigorous interview process and not because they had ties to him. In a district of 2,300 employees, he said, problems arise, they are brought to him and he deals with them.

The superintendent's record prompted one Little Rock parent to establish a Facebook posted petition asking the Little Rock board to remove Milton as a candidate and sever its relationship with the McPherson & Jacobson search firm that recommended Milton as a finalist.

Milton distributed a tall stack of documents Monday to support his application and explain some of the past issues.

Those documents included a packet titled "Setting the Record Straight," in which Milton says he was unaware of the 1996 sexual-molestation charge against a man he hired first in Fallsburg and then in Flint. A criminal-background check in Flint turned up the charge.

Milton elaborated Monday, saying he had met the man in 2002. In response to questions, he said the two were not friends and he didn't consider them to be business partners but said he did conduct a workshop at one point at the man's request.

Additionally, the "Setting the Record Straight" packet deals with a financial audit of Milton's expenses in Fallsburg, the source of another criticism of him. The packet includes letters from an attorney hired by Milton that says "an amicable settlement" was reached with respect to the results from the audit of superintendent expenditures in Fallsburg. The letter from H. Todd Bullard of Pittsford, N.Y., also says, "In our opinion, there is not substantiated wrong doing or any other legal violations engaged in by you."

The other documents distributed by Milton on Monday were:

An inch-thick book of community and district newspaper articles, photographs, state laws, and reports from or about the districts in which he worked, dating back to 2003.

A packet of letters of recommendations including one from U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin of Illinois, Springfield Mayor J. Michael Houston and Springfield School Board members Scott McFarland and Judith Ann Johnson - all of whom were enthusiastic in their endorsements of Milton.

A report titled "A Presentation to the Little Rock School District" on the reading level and racial/ethnic achievement gaps at each Little Rock school and a first-year work plan for Milton should he be selected superintendent.

Milton is the chief executive officer of From the Heart International Education Services, an educational consulting and training company that has worked in school districts across the country. Milton, who calls on a cousin - former professional football player Donovan McNabb - to assist, is currently working with students and assisting the Little Rock district with a student survey. His four contracts with the district total \$90,000.

He said Monday that he would discontinue serving any Arkansas schools if hired by the Little Rock district. He will also give up consulting in other states if requested by the Little Rock board, but would like to continue national speaking engagements so as to promote initiatives undertaken in Little Rock.

Reactions generated by Milton on Monday ran the gamut.

Rep. John Walker, D-Little Rock, a civil-rights lawyer and a member of the superintendent-search committee, questioned whether Milton could overcome the divisiveness that his candidacy has created.

"In listening to you, it causes me to conclude that the opposition is not sufficiently informed to put you in a singularly separate position from the other candidates," Walker said. "Do you think that if selected as superintendent you will be able to work with the philosophies that underpin the objections to your candidacy?"

Milton responded, "Absolutely, because it is not about me. It's about the children."

James Ross, the Little Rock parent who established the Facebook page "Working To Make Better Schools in the Little Rock School District," later told Milton he seemed "sincere." Still, Ross said he questioned the quality of top administrators with which Milton surrounds himself.

Ross also questioned Milton about the content of letters that will be removed from his personnel file as a result of his separation agreement with the Springfield board. Milton said that he was not in jeopardy of being fired by the board and he didn't know the content of the letters.

"This smacks of no transparency," Ross told him.

Gary Newton, a district parent and the executive director of Arkansas Learns, a new education-advocacy organization, said: "Unfortunately, your candidacy is not something that unites the community, but it divides the community. It doesn't feel like that is the fresh start that we so desperately need."

Milton told Newton: "I guarantee you that given the opportunity, I can really close the gaps in terms of that divide and build good relationships. I've done that. I've had major, major goals and audacious plans. That's why I've had success in Springfield with restructuring and with designing schools."

In response to questions, Milton said he would likely take the Little Rock job even if the board is split over his hiring. He also said he is familiar with the Little Rock public school system. He was a candidate for the Little Rock superintendent's job in 2011, and he said he met Little Rock School Board member and Pine Bluff High Principal Michael Nellums at a conference a few years ago. The two are members of the same fraternity.

Milton is a native of Rochester, N.Y., and has a doctorate from the University at Buffalo in New York. He is married and has children.

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### **Funding fight is revived (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

LITTLE ROCK — The Deer/Mount Judea School District is asking the Arkansas Supreme Court to take up a school-funding case that was previously thrown out by a lower court.

In a motion filed Monday with the state's top court, an attorney for the 360-student district in Newton County argues that the current school-funding system "denies [the district's] students a substantially equal opportunity for an adequate education in violation of the Arkansas Constitution."

Pulaski County Circuit Judge Chris Piazza dismissed the case on April 12, 2011, and rejected a motion to reconsider Jan. 22, 2012, saying the points raised in the claim had been previously addressed in the Lake View School District case.

The Deer/Mount Judea School District requests that "special masters" be taken in to review the school district's claims and provide recommendations to the Supreme Court.

The court appointed masters in 2004 to evaluate the state's progress in the Lake View school-funding case. In that case, the court established a checklist for the masters to use to determine how the state was moving toward providing an adequate and equitable education across the state.

Clay Fendley, an attorney for the district, argues in the motion that the claims raised in the lawsuit occurred after the Lake View case and that the state has not done what it said it would do in response to that case.

Fendley said the special masters would be appropriate because the "General Assembly has reneged on its legislative commitments and failed to comply with Act 57 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003."

Aaron Sadler, a spokesman for the attorney general's office, said the office did not have any comment on the case.

The points raised in the lawsuit include allegations that the state has failed to act on issues raised in adequacy reports in 2008, 2010 and 2012 and that when cost of living adjustments were made, they were based on available funds and not what was needed.

The district also argues that there is "obvious inequity" in teacher salaries in the district compared with salaries in other parts of the state.

"The inequity is staggering. In 2012-13, a first year teacher with a bachelor's degree at the Springdale School District will make more than the most experienced and educated teacher at [Deer/Mount Judea] will ever make," Fendley wrote in the filing.

Fendley also argues that the funding formula for isolated schools and pupil transportation must be re-evaluated.

In filings with the circuit court, Fendley said transportation costs at the district's two K-12 schools, which are situated in a mountainous and sparsely populated portion of Northwest Arkansas, are higher than other schools. But there is no evidence-based study to justify the current funding formula, according to the filing.

"The funding amounts ... are not rationally related to the needs of small, remote schools," Fendley wrote.

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## **Education notebook (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

LITTLE ROCK — Improvement plan focus of NLR forum

The North Little Rock School District will hold a forum to update the public on the district's capital-improvement program at 6 p.m. Monday in the auditorium of Lakewood Middle School/ NLR High School Freshman Campus.

The forum - at 2400 Lakeview Road in North Little Rock - is happening a little more than a year after the Feb. 14, 2012, election in which North Little Rock district residents overwhelmingly approved a 7.4-mill tax increase to help support a \$265.6 million school building construction and renovation program.

The district plan calls for reducing the number of campuses from 21 to 13 and either building anew or extensively renovating each of the remaining schools.

In addition to the forum, the district has recently added a link on its website - nlr.org - to a new "micro website" devoted to providing information and developments about the building plan.

Hopson kin oppose effort to end suit

The estate of the late Charles Hopson, superintendent of the Pulaski County Special School District in 2010-11, is opposing efforts by the state and the Pulaski County Special School District to end Hopson's lawsuit against them that challenged the loss of his job.

Although he had two years remaining on his contract, Hopson was dismissed from the superintendent's job when the state took over the district.

He sued in court over state statutes that granted the Education Department the authority to disavow superintendent contracts in the event of a state takeover.

He said he was dismissed without a fair hearing or due process and without just compensation.

Hopson, who had become an administrator in the Houston, Texas, school system, died in October at age 54 - before the conclusion of his lawsuit.

Attorneys for the state and district notified U.S. District Judge D. Price Marshall that a notice of Hopson's death was filed and no replacement for the plaintiff had come forward.

On Friday, attorneys Rickey Hicks and David Bowden told Marshall that Hopson's wife, Patricia, had run into delays in becoming the administrator of his estate, which includes property in Nevada County.

The attorneys asked Marshall to extend the time Patricia Hopson has to respond to the "suggestion of death" notice filed by the state.

Rule change lets 2 get scholarship

Two El Dorado High School seniors were made eligible Friday for El Dorado Promise scholarship dollars thanks to a residency requirement change announced Thursday, said Sylvia Thompson, director of the program.

The \$50 million scholarship commitment pledge by Murphy Oil in 2007 to give El Dorado High School graduates a full ride to college no longer requires students to live in the El Dorado district to receive the funds, Promise officials announced Thursday.

Murphy's funds will ensure that students can obtain scholarship money for at least the next 20 years, Thompson said.

The scholarship program had required continuous residency inside the El Dorado district and continuous attendance from grades nine-12.

Now, the change means students who live in neighboring districts can be eligible for Promise dollars if they apply for a transfer to El Dorado as a nonresident and enroll under any form of school-choice transfer.

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## State revenue beats forecast by 8.1 percent (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — Fewer Arkansans than expected filed state tax returns in February, meaning fewer state income tax refunds were issued, causing general revenue collection to exceed the forecast amount for the month, the state finance department announced Monday.

Revenue was 8.1 percent - or \$15.7 million - above projections.

State Finance Director Richard Weiss called the unpaid refunds a holdover from federal budget discussions about the “fiscal cliff” in January.

The Internal Revenue Service delayed the release of tax returns for one week in January because of uncertainty about how the tax code might change as Congress wrangled over tax increases and spending cuts.

The federal delay ended up holding up Arkansas tax returns, too.

Weiss said some Arkansans have been slow to file since the delay.

Individual income taxes are made up of payroll withholdings, estimated payments and payments from income tax returns and extensions.

With the issue resolved at the federal level, the state expected a “much bigger bang than we got” in February from increased filings, Weiss said.

Individual income tax refunds totaled \$148.7 million, which was \$11.6 million (7.2 percent) below forecast, the state Department of Finance and Administration reported Monday in its monthly revenue report.

Weiss said the state should see an uptick in refunds between March and May.

“It’s just a slowdown of the whole process,” Weiss said.

Total state general revenue - called gross general revenue - collected in February was \$411.3 million, or \$17.7 million (4.5 percent) more than the same month a year earlier.

Gross general-revenue collections are reduced by refunds and about a dozen other reductions, leaving a “net” revenue that agencies can spend. The net amount collected in February was \$210.1 million, which was \$15.7 million (8.1 percent) greater than forecast.

Gov. Mike Beebe said net revenue for the month is up because of timing.

“The [federal government] didn’t do what they were supposed to do on time, so people couldn’t file their tax returns, so we saw in January that refunds were down, and that’s continued in February,” Beebe said.

Last month’s overall collections of \$411.3 million exceeded the state’s forecast by \$2.1 million and set a record for the month of February.

The previous record of \$396 million was collected in February 2009.

February also was the first month of the fiscal year when sales tax collections met or exceeded the predicted amount. Arkansas' fiscal year ends June 30.

The improvement is a "very marginal glimmer," Weiss said.

Collections for February were \$174.6 million, besting the forecast amount of \$173 million.

Overall for the first eight months of the fiscal year, sales tax collections are still \$11.2 million below forecast at \$1.41 billion.

Beebe said higher-than forecast income tax revenue has made up for lower-than-expected sales tax revenue.

"I've always been concerned a little bit about sales tax performance," Beebe said. "It's nice to see that one month it met or exceeded forecast, but over the long haul it's still down and yes, it's a concern."

Weiss said he still doesn't have a reason for the consistently low sales tax collection this fiscal year.

While vehicle sales, as well as retail and business spending, seem to be picking up, volatility at the federal level continues to affect the state, Weiss said.

After the fiscal cliff discussions in January, across the board cuts - known as "sequestration" - went into effect Friday after Congress failed to agree on a plan to bring the budget closer to balance.

Sequestration shrinks federal spending authority by \$85 billion for the budget year through Sept. 30 and a total of \$1.2 trillion over nine years. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that actual spending in fiscal 2013 could decrease by just \$42 billion because of long-term contracts, which spread spending over several years.

"It's kind of difficult what to forecast next," Weiss said. "There's just the unknowns floating out there. It's just kept everything repressed at this point."

General revenue comes mainly from income and sales taxes.

It amounts to about 20 percent of the state's \$25 billion yearly budget, which includes federal funds, special revenue such as the gasoline tax, cash funds such as college tuition and fees, and other money.

In the first eight months of fiscal 2013, which began July 1, gross general revenue totaled \$3.8 billion, which was \$51.6 million (1.4 percent) above forecast.

That is \$138.5 million, or 3.8 percent, above the total general revenue collected in the first eight months of fiscal 2012.

In November, the department increased its forecast. It now estimates state government will collect a total of \$6 billion by the end of the fiscal year. After some ongoing obligations are paid the department estimates there will be \$4.827 billion left.

The fiscal 2013 budget, what the state is expected to spend, is \$4.727 billion. The estimated \$99.5 million excess would be added to the state's existing \$197 million surplus along with interest and other unused money.

According to the Finance Department, February's general revenue included:

A \$3.7 million (90.6 percent) increase in corporate income tax over the same month last year to \$7.7 million.

A \$500,000 (2.7 percent) increase in tobacco tax collections over February 2012. That is below forecast by \$700,000. Tobacco tax collection can vary by month depending on when wholesale purchasers buy tobacco stamps.

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### **Student Faces Disciplinary Action after Bringing Toy Gun to Pulaski County Elementary School (KARK, Channel 4)**

An elementary school student is facing disciplinary action after bringing a toy gun to school this morning.

That's according to officials with the Pulaski County Special School District (PCSSD).

It happened at Jacksonville Cato Elementary.

The Sherwood Police Department says it got the call shortly after 10 o'clock.

The PCSSD says a first grade boy brought the toy gun to school. After another student saw it, the teacher sent the boy to the office.

Sherwood Police say the school will handle the matter.

It's not yet known what disciplinary action will be taken against the student.