



Daily Legislative Update

90th General Assembly

Thursday, April 9, 2015

MONDAY AT THE CAPITOL

Gov. Asa Hutchinson signed into law three state Senate bills that establish his workforce training initiative. The bills signed were:

SB 891, now **Act 1131**, sponsored by Sen. Jane English, R-North Little Rock, which creates a grant program through the Department of Higher Education that workforce training programs will be able to apply for to use for equipment and start-up costs.

SB368, now **Act 893**, also sponsored by Sen. Jane English and Rep. Charlotte Douglas, which creates the Office of Skills Development. It also provides funding for the initiative and restructures the board that oversees the office for a more statewide emphasis.

SB791, now **Act 907**, sponsored by Sen. Jeremy Hutchinson, R-Little Rock, which creates regional boards for the initiative and sets legislative language that will allow the state to maximize opportunities for federal grants.

"This is a fairly dramatic change," Gov. Hutchinson said of the workforce initiative. "It's more than a course correction; it's a shift in direction for Arkansas."

Funding for the program will flow through the Office of Workforce Services within career education, Hutchinson told reporters after signing the bills. An additional \$2 million in discretionary money will be put into the Department of Higher Education to help implement systems within two-year colleges and schools to help start these programs.

Hutchinson called the passage of the workforce initiative bills "one of the greatest accomplishments of this [legislative] session. There's been a crying need in the state to drive economic development and compete with other national partners and other states and to support the existing industry we have," Hutchinson said. The success of the program will be measured by a task force chaired by the governor that will look at how many schools participate, the number of graduates from programs, and if industries have their workforce needs met, Hutchinson added.

ACT NUMBERS FOR STATE CHAMBER/AIA PRIORITY ISSUES

TAXPAYER FAIRNESS

SB 490 by Sen. Bill Sample and Rep. Ken Bragg is now **Act 896**.

This Act strengthens the standing of taxpayers in Arkansas. It stops pay to play, extends the tax rebate period from six months to one year, creates transparency in guidance and rulings, reduces the taxpayer's burden of proof from clear and convincing to a preponderance of evidence, and pushes the state corporate income tax filing deadline back one month effective in tax year 2017.

SALES TAX REDUCTION FOR MANUFACTURES ON REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT PARTS

SB 332 by Sen. Jake Files and Rep. Joe Jett is now **Act 1107**.

This Act expands the number of companies that can take advantage of a reduction in the sales taxes on their repair and replacement of machinery and equipment used directly in manufacturing that was adopted in the 2013 session. This will be accomplished by the availability of a Limited Direct Pay Sales Tax Permit.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

SB 368 by Sen. Jane English and Rep. Charlotte Douglass is now **Act 893**.

In addition to the impact described above, this Act replaces the State Board of Career Education with the Career Education and Workforce Development Board. Members will be appointed by the Governor to three-year terms and each voting member will represent specific industry sectors. Non-voting members will represent Education, Higher Education, Career Education and Economic Development. The Board's duties will be to create and monitor a comprehensive, statewide career and workforce education program focused on educational and career opportunities. The Act also creates the Office of Skills Development to administer and award grants to public and private organizations for the development and implementation of workforce training programs for new and incumbent workers.

SB 371 by Sens. Jane English and Bobby Pierce is now **Act 994**.

This Act expands the opportunity for higher education institutions to provide concurrent and technical courses to students in grades 8-12.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ISSUES

HB 1540 by Rep. Lane Jean, Sen. Jim Hendren and Sen. Bart Hester is now **Act 412**.

This Act reduces the expenses of the Arkansas Unemployment Insurance (UI) Trust Fund \$46-\$56 million per year by changing the calculation of the weekly UI benefit amount from the highest quarter of earnings to the average of the last four quarters of earnings. It also reduces the weeks of coverage from 25 to 20.

CAPITAL GAINS INCOME TAX EXEMPTION

HB 1402 by Rep. Matthew Shepherd and Sen. Jake Files is now **Act 1173**.

This Act restores the 2013 capital gains tax reductions that were eliminated early in the 2015 session.

CIVIL JUSTICE REFORM

TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC ATTORNEY CONTRACTS (TIPAC)

SB 204 by Sen. Jane English and Rep. Karilyn Brown is now **Act 851**.

This Act ensures that contingency fee contracts in the office of the Attorney General will be awarded openly and that citizens will receive the maximum practicable amount of any settlement or award. TIPAC also promotes competitive bidding and transparent contracting by requiring the Attorney General and ensures that government attorneys retain control of litigation and that consumers, victims and taxpayers receive their fair share of any recovery.

LAWSUITS LENDING

SB 882 by Sen. Jason Rapert is now **Act 915**.

This Act prohibits consumer lawsuit lending or purchasing of a contingent right to a share of a settlement. It would also make violations of this Act a deceptive and unconscionable trade practice and subject to its penalties.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM CORRECTION

In our summary of the RFRA bill's legislative action, we incorrectly reported that President Barack Obama voted "yes" on the 1993 federal RFRA law that was signed by President Bill Clinton. Obama actually voted "yes" on the Illinois RFRA law while serving in the Illinois legislature.

BILL FILING AND TRACKING

This session, the House filed 1007 bills and the Senate filed 1055. The State Chamber/AIA tracked 535 bills and resolutions. A *complete, searchable list of the bills we tracked can be reviewed in our [tracking site](#)*.

General Assembly Bill filings since 1997:

Bill Type	^2015	2013	2011	2009	2007	2005	2003	2001	*1999	1997
House Bills	1007	1300	1231	1275	1813	1981	1906	1655	1291	1284
Senate Bills	1055	1192	1005	1010	1004	1195	979	988	967	756
House Joint Resolutions	27	19	13	14	21	28	30	22	21	15
Senate Joint Resolutions	16	19	12	12	14	17	21	18	13	9
Totals	2105	2530	2261	2311	2852	3221	2936	2683	2292	2064

*1999 was the first session impacted by term limits law in the House

^2015 first session after adoption of term limits extension but no impact on General Assembly

LEGISLATIVE SESSION INFORMATION

To view schedules, calendars, bill information and legislator information, visit:

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