

DRAFT MINUTES
Senate Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs
House Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs
Meeting Jointly

Thursday, May 21, 2020
1:30 PM
Room A, MAC
Little Rock, Arkansas

Committee Members Present: Senators: Trent Garner, Vice Chair; Bob Ballinger, Breanne Davis, and Jimmy Hickey

Representatives: Dwight Tosh, Chair; Justin Gonzales, Vice Chair; Andrew Collins, Jim Dotson, Jon Eubanks, Jimmy Gazaway, Megan Godfrey, Jack Ladyman, Gayla McKenzie, John Payton, Jamie Scott, and Brandt Smith

Other Legislators Present: Senators Alan Clark, Jonathan Dismang, Kim Hammer, Mark Johnson, Mathew Pitsch, and Jason Rapert

Representatives: Fred Allen, Denise Ennett, Kenneth Ferguson, Vivian Flowers, Jack Fortner, Grant Hodges, Mark Lowery, Stephen Meeks, Austin McCollum, Aaron Pilkington, Dan Sullivan, Jeff Wardlaw, and Carlton Wing

Representative Tosh called the meeting to order. He recognized Senator Garner for comments.

Impact of COVID-19 and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Issues on Arkansas Small Businesses

Heather Houldridge Gilmore, Owner, Almost Blonde Salon & Boutique, El Dorado, Arkansas presented a timeline of the effects of COVID-19 on her business. Ms. Houldridge stated that she followed the guidance of the Governor and closed her business on March 23, 2020. On March 25, 2020 she applied for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and was denied. Ms. Houldridge applied for food stamps on March 26, 2020 and was awarded benefits on April 26, 2020. On May 6, 2020, she was allowed to reopen at 35% amongst other guidelines imposed by the Arkansas Dept. of Health. Overall, her business was closed from March 23, 2020 until May 6, 2020 with no financial assistance from the government.

Tatum Lee Evatt, Owner, Mina Rea's Antiques & Embroidery, El Dorado, Arkansas was recognized by the committee to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on her business. Ms. Evatt stated that she hadn't received any income for 11 weeks after applying for numerous loans, unemployment assistance, and grants. She cited several reasons for being denied help such as not having any employees, poor credit history, and being self-employed.

TempleLive Alcoholic Beverage License Suspension

Doralee Chandler, Director, Department of Finance & Administration, Alcoholic Beverage Control Division declined to appear at today's meeting. Exhibits C1A and C1B reflect letters sent to the committee in regards to her absence.

Mike Brown, Vice President of Operations, TempleLive Fort Smith and John Scott, Attorney of Record, TempleLive Fort Smith came before the committee to answer any questions in regards to the suspension of their alcohol beverage license. Issues included in the discussion:

- Timeline of events and discussions with Arkansas Health Department
- Newly planned protocol for hosting events
- Removal of license
- Cease and desist order
- Content specific concerns
- Pending litigation

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Statutes, Website Issues, and COVID-19 Accountability

Mike Preston, Secretary, Department of Commerce declined to appear at today's meeting. Exhibits D and D1 reflect letters sent to the committee in regards to his absence.

Senator Ballinger made a motion to subpoena Mike Preston and Doralee Chandler to attend the next State Agencies and Governmental Affairs meeting, subject to approval of the speaker and pro-tem. The motion was seconded by Senator Garner. The motion carried.

COVID-19 Update and Discussion of Issues Related to Contact Tracing, Privacy Concerns, Emergency Declaration and Regulations on Business

Dr. Jennifer Dillaha, State Epidemiologist, Arkansas Department of Health reported the current COVID-19 positive cases for Arkansas at 5,458 cases with approximately 1,500 active cases. Laura Shue, General Counsel (ADH); and Reginald Rogers, Deputy General Counsel, (ADH) were also recognized to join the discussion. Issues included in the discussion:

- Increased number of cases where congregate living situations are involved such as nursing homes and correctional facilities
- Increased number of cases in Arkansas counties that border other states
- Demographics of positive cases, deaths, and hospitalizations
- Positivity rate for healthcare workers and slowing the spread in efforts to reduce the impact on the healthcare system
- Overview of the contact tracing process
- Medical distinction between different types of gatherings
- Convenience and availability of COVID-19 screening
- Development of lasting immunity and antibody testing
- Reopening guidelines

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:20 pm