

MINUTES**Senate Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs****House Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs****Meeting Jointly****Monday, September 27, 2021****1:00 PM****Room A, MAC****Little Rock, Arkansas**

Committee members present: Senators Jason Rapert, Chair; Trent Garner, Vice Chair; Bob Ballinger, Breanne Davis, and Jane English; Representatives Dwight Tosh, Chair; Justin Gonzales, Vice Chair; Gary Deffenbaugh, Jim Dotson, Michelle Gray, Spencer Hawks, Lane Jean, Lee Johnson, Jack Ladyman, Austin McCollum, Stephen Meeks, John Payton, Marcus E. Richmond, Nelda Speaks, Jeff Wardlaw, and David Whitaker

Other members present: Senators Alan Clark, Linda Chesterfield, Lance Eads, Joyce Elliott, Scott Flippo, Ben Gilmore, Kim Hammer, Jim Hendren, Jimmy Hickey Jr., Missy Irvin, Mark Johnson, Greg Leding, Matthew Pitsch, and Dan Sullivan; Representatives Howard Beaty Jr., Mark Berry, Keith Brooks, Joe Cloud, Cameron Cooper, Cindy Crawford, Denise Ennett, Kenneth B. Ferguson, Charlene Fite, Lanny Fite, Vivian Flowers, Jack Fortner, David Hillman, Steve Hollowell, Mark Lowery, Roger Lynch, Tippi McCullough, Mark McElroy, Aaron Pilkington, David Ray, Jamie Scott, Keith Slape, and Joy Springer

Representative Dwight Tosh called the meeting to order.

Discussion of Draft Congressional Redistricting

The following bills and maps were discussed: SB724, sponsored and presented by Senator Leding; HB1963, sponsored and presented by Senator Davis and Representative Dotson; HB1964, sponsored and presented by Representative Ray; SB725, sponsored and presented by Senator Davis and Representative Dotson; HB1965, sponsored and presented by Representative Flowers; SB727, sponsored Senator Tucker and presented by Senator Elliott; SB728, sponsored and presented by Senator Elliott; HB1966, sponsored and presented by Representative Meeks; and SB729, sponsored and presented by Senator M. Johnson.

Public Comments Draft Congressional Redistricting

In reference to SB724, Ms. Richelle Brittain, Pulaski County resident, spoke against dividing 12 counties into different Congressional Districts. Ms. Brittain also spoke against HB1964, SB725, HB1965, and SB729. Sebastian County Judge David Hudson spoke against HB1963 and expressed his preference that Sebastian County be wholly in the Third District. Senators Hammer and Pitsch presented two letters pertaining to HB1963 (one from the Ft. Smith Regional Council and the second from County Judge Jeff Arey) both expressing a preference to remain in the Third District. Mr. Ken Yang, Saline County Republican Chairman, spoke against HB1963, expressing a preference to make Saline County intact and remain in the Second District. Mr. Matthew Miles, row crop farmer in Desha County, spoke against SB727 and expressed a preference to keep row crop farmers in the same district. Mr. Donnie Scroggins, Poinsett County resident, spoke against SB727 and expressed a desire to keep District One intact. Ms. Scottie Keller, Faulkner County resident, spoke against SB728 and against moving Faulkner County from the Second District to the First.

Vaccine Requirements for Nursing Students

Mr. Chad Bond, Citizen, discussed vaccination requirements for nursing students at the University of Central Arkansas. Mr. Michael Keck, Institutional Relations Liaison, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), discussed vaccination requirements at UAMS and the process of accommodating students who have not received the COVID-19 vaccination.

Discussion Regarding Presidential Executive Orders on Vaccine Mandates

General Kendall Penn, Adjutant General, Arkansas National Guard; Mr. Scott Stanger, Chief of Staff, Arkansas Department of the Military; and Colonel Jeff Wood, Judge Advocate General, Arkansas National Guard; gave an overview of COVID-19 vaccination mandates for the Arkansas Air National Guard and the Arkansas Army National Guard. They provided an overview of potential exemptions for National Guardsmen as well as the potential for being discharged or facing punitive action for those who did not receive an exemption.

Mr. Matt Gilmore, Public Health Programs Policy Coordinator, Arkansas Department of Health; Mr. Jim Hudson, Deputy Director, Operations & General Counsel, Arkansas Economic Development Commission; and Ms. Courtney Traylor, Deputy Director of Operations, Department of Workforce Services; discussed the possibility of individuals receiving unemployment if they have left their job due to not receiving the COVID-19 vaccination.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 p.m.