



CONNECTED to Public Policy



Integrating State Policy with Local Solutions

Jan. 23, 2018

Senate Passes Adoption Reform Bill

Winter weather interfered slightly with the legislative schedule last week. After holding joint budget hearings on Monday, a second day of hearings was canceled. Legislators convened on Thursday and Friday as planned, completing six of their 40 legislative days. The House is expected to begin work this week on the Amended FY18 budget.

Adoption Reform

On Thursday, the Senate passed [HB 159](#) (Rep. Bert Reeves, 34th), the comprehensive adoption reform legislation that was filed during the 2017 session. Sen. Jesse Stone (Dist. 23) carried the bill in the Senate, and it was passed by a vote of 40 – 13.

The version of the bill passed by the Senate also includes language from [HB 359](#) (Rep. Barry Fleming, 121st), allowing a parent to temporarily delegate caregiving authority to an individual through power of attorney. Gov. Nathan Deal [vetoed](#) that bill last year. After last week's vote, Deal commended the Senate for taking action on the bill but expressed "[serious concerns](#)" regarding the additional language.

Schedule

Legislators passed an [adjournment resolution](#) setting the calendar for the first 11 legislative days.

They were in session for two days last week. They reconvened on Jan. 22, their seventh legislative day, and are scheduled to be in session through Thursday this week.

Legislation

The following bills related to children and families were introduced during the first week of this session.



HEALTHY CHILDREN

HB 655 (Rep. Rick Williams, 145th) requires every public school to post a sign containing the toll-free number operated by the Division of Family and Children Services for reporting child abuse or neglect.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee.

HB 669 (Rep. Robert Trammell, 132nd), the “Expand Medicaid Now Act,” requires the appropriation of state dollars to draw down additional federal dollars for Medicaid.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Appropriations Committee.

SB 326 (Sen. Donzella James, 35th) creates the “Sheltering Adolescent from Destructive Environments (Sade’s) Law” that requires law enforcement personnel, hospitals, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and others to verify that a person is an adult blood relative, stepparent, or has legal custody when releasing a child to their custody.

Status: The bill is assigned to the Senate Judiciary Committee.



STABLE, SELF-SUFFICIENT, PRODUCTIVE FAMILIES

HB 668 (Rep. Betty Price, 48th) allows a petition for guardianship to be filed for a proposed ward who is 17 years old if the petitioner has a good faith reason to believe that the child will need a guardian upon turning 18.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Committee.



THRIVING COMMUNITIES

HB 672 (Rep. Erica Thomas, 39th) permits the use of speed detection devices by law enforcement personnel employed to patrol public schools.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Motor Vehicles Committee.

HB 673 (Rep. John Carson, 46th) requires drivers to use hands-free technology with wireless communication devices while operating a motor vehicle.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.