**News**

**Governor Reflects on End of 2012 Legislative Session**

*Bryant: ‘The 2012 legislative session produced the most business-friendly legislation in Mississippi’s history’*

**JACKSON** – The 2012 session of the Mississippi Legislature officially closed today, with Gov. Phil Bryant calling it “the most business-friendly in Mississippi’s history.” Bryant also said he was pleased to see the conservative leadership of Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves and Speaker Philip Gunn.

“These two young leaders have certainly surpassed my expectations for their first legislative session,” Bryant said.

Lawmakers adopted a $5.5 billion state budget for fiscal year 2013 and approved several key measures aimed at promoting economic development initiatives. Bryant believes the session has produced results.

“The 2012 legislative session will be remembered as one of the most business-friendly sessions in Mississippi’s history,” Bryant said. “By creating a pro-growth climate for health care jobs and patient care through the passage of the Health Care Industry Zone Act, providing job creators with inventory tax relief and bringing balance to workers compensation, we are boldly on the path to showing the world that ‘Mississippi Works’ and is serious about creating a strong environment for job creation and growth.”

In his inaugural State of the State address, Bryant outlined 31 new initiatives that would shape his administration. Many of those initiatives will soon become law.

“I announced 31 new initiatives my inaugural State of the State address, some of which required legislative action, and I am proud to report many of those items have been approved by the legislature and are on their way to becoming law.”

“Overall this session has been a great start for the new Republican-led House and Senate and provided a model of good governance.”

Bryant says the state’s budget for the upcoming fiscal year is an example of prudent spending. The budget also includes a cushion for fiscal year 2014.
“Overall, this is an acceptable budget, and I will be reviewing it further in the coming days. When I came into office in January, we faced some real financial challenges. We continue to face a struggling national economy, and the Legislature has heeded my call for prudence, setting aside two percent of our resources for the state’s rainy day fund. We have dedicated spending to priority areas, and we’ll also start the next fiscal year with a cushion to insulate us against unforeseen budget challenges.”

“While I am disappointed the Legislature is not moving fully to a performance based budgeting model, I am encouraged that we will be using the Department of Revenue as a test model in the coming fiscal year.”

Items from Bryant’s legislative agenda that passed this session:

**Mississippi Works**
- House Bill 1537, **Mississippi Health Care Industry Zone Act**: economic development initiative designed to spur access and jobs in health care – Mississippi’s “industry of necessity”.
- Senate Bill 2398, **Small Business Regulatory Flexibility Act**: ensures that state regulations are not overly-burdensome to small businesses.
- Senate Bill 2792, **Dual Enrollment**: allows high school drop outs and potential dropouts to earn work skills certification and community and junior colleges while completing their high school education.
- Senate Bill 2576, **Workers Compensation Law**: brings balance to workers compensation law.
- Senate Bill 2604, **Unemployment Fraud Reform**: aims to reduce instances of unemployment fraud and creates an entrepreneurial mentoring program for some unemployed Mississarians.
- House Bill 317 establishes the Office of Mississippi Physician Workforce at the University of Mississippi Medical Center and will increase the number of medical residency programs offered throughout the state.

**Protecting Children**
- House Bill 16, **Child Protection Act**: establishes reporting requirements for suspected instances of child sexual abuse and provides lawmakers with the tools to prosecute sexual crimes against children when abortions on children under 14 are used to hide sexual abuse.

**Education Reform**
- House Bill 1031, **Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship for Students with Dyslexia Program**: establishes dyslexia screening guidelines and creates school choice for students who struggle with dyslexia.

- House Bill 1032, **Mississippi Dyslexia Education Scholarship Program**: establishes a scholarship program for college students who wish to pursue a master’s degree as a dyslexia therapist. Recipients are required to serve as dyslexia therapists in Mississippi public schools.

- House Bill 707, **School Start Date Act of 2012**: Public schools will begin on or after the third Monday in August.

- House Bill 696, **Student Grades**: prohibits grade inflation by school administrators.

**IT Efficiency**

- House Bill 1450, **Technology Efficiency**: optimizes state technology resources and establishes cost savings through consolidating technology purchasing.

**Sunshine Act**

- House Bill 211, **Sunshine Act**: regulates the hiring of outside counsel for litigating state business.

**Honoring Veterans**

- Senate Bill 2461, Highway Patrol: authorizes veteran designation on state IDs.

**Voter ID**

- House Bill 921, **Voter Identification**: identification required for all elections in order to prevent voter fraud.

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