



A CLOSE EYE ON THE MS LEGISLATURE

These are a few of the House and Senate bills we're watching

HB 176 – Gender dysphoria; require school personnel to notify parents of student who request to be referred to as different gender or nonhuman. This bill aims to **force** personnel to potentially out LGBTQIA+ children to their parents – which could very well put those children **in harm's way**. It also states that teachers must have permission of the parents to use a child's preferred pronouns.

HB 193 – Statewide testing program; require tests to be translated and print into primary spoken language of ELL students. This bill is pretty self-explanatory and has an enormous potential to raise the state test scores of ELL students who know subjects like algebra or biology or US history (in high school, for example), but who struggle to communicate that knowledge in English. The bill requires for any non-ELA state test to be translated and administered in the student's primary language.

H 460 – Charter schools; require MAEP funds to be transferred to student's home school district when student disenrolls. This bill requires charter schools to return any funding back to the school district when a student leaves a charter school after 3 months and returns to his home school (the school where the student resides).

H 534 – African-American Studies and Racial Diversity; require SDE to develop curriculum for implementation in public high school. This bill requires MDE to create a high-school elective course that teaches African-American studies. The bill requires the course to cover content beginning before the Civil War and running into the modern day.

H 537 – Civics; require State Board of Education to develop curriculum for public middle and high school students. This bill requires MDE to create a civics course for middle and high school students. It's one for us to revisit because some of the wording looks tricky.

H 557 – "Mississippi Promise Scholarship Act of 2024"; establish to provide tuition assistance for tuition-free community college attendance. This bill establishes a scholarship to cover the costs of tuition to community colleges for students who qualify. The scholarship will be paid for by funds from the Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Trust Fund as well as a percentage of monies coming from the Alyce G. Clarke Mississippi Lottery Law.

H 561 – Retirement; school bus drivers shall be eligible to be members of PERS and vest after 15 years.

H815 – This is the text of the bill: The liberty of parents to direct the upbringing, education and care of their children is a fundamental right. **(That's it)**. This is dangerously broad and could have parents demanding specific curricula in the classroom.

H 897 – Appropriation; Jackson Public School District for increased mental health services for students throughout district. This bill appropriates \$5 million to JPS for increased mental health services for its students.

SB 2007 –Mississippi Student Absentee Voter Act; enact. This bill would allow college students absentee ballots.

SB 2062 – Artificial Intelligence in Education Task Force Act; enact. This bill creates a task force to establish within the state to evaluate the potential applications of AI in K-12 and higher education and to develop policy recommendations for responsible and effective uses by students and educators.

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JFT BYTES - FEBRUARY 2024

MDE has proposed some clarifying changes to Appendix F of the State Accountability Standards regarding state testing procedures, and those changes are out for public comment. You can [review the proposed changes to Appendix F](#) and provide your comments to the MDE **no later than 5:00 PM, Tuesday, February 20, 2024.**

Comments may be emailed to Dr. Jackie Sampsell at accreditation@mdek12.org or mailed to
Dr. Jackie Sampsell, State Assessment Director
Mississippi Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771.

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JFT Talks - A new informational series

From your Executive Vice President: I am in the process of developing a new series of informational union meetings centered around topics that aren't usually covered in PDs: things like contract do's and don't's, how plans of improvement work, effective communication with parents, how to implement language service plans (LSPs), etc, and I want to hear from you. Please complete my JFT Talks survey so that I know what topics are important to you as a union member. The [survey](#) should take you no more than 15 minutes to take, and if you complete the survey, I will put your name into a drawing to receive a small gift from the Jackson Federation of Teachers that will include some union happies as well as a gift card! -- Joshua

Take the JFT Talks Survey Here



MS Supreme Court Hears Arguments

Last week, the Mississippi Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a lawsuit challenging a \$10-million appropriation to private schools for infrastructure improvements. State Attorney General Lynn Fitch had appealed a lower court's ruling that the 2022 appropriation by the Mississippi Legislature was unconstitutional. Section 208 of the Mississippi Constitution states that "no funds shall be appropriated toward the support of...any school that at the time of the appropriation is not conducted as a free school."

Attorneys arguing on behalf of private schools asserted:

- that the appropriation was not unconstitutional because, rather than being appropriated directly to private schools, it was run through the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration with instructions to send it to private schools - a ridiculous suggestion that the Legislature could avoid complying with the Constitution by laundering appropriations through state agencies; and
- *(Continued on page 3)*

IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION ACCURATE?

Let us know if your name, address, or other info has changed. Scan the code or click the link below.



[Update your info here](#)

PROTECTING YOUR RIGHTS

Recently, a member was named in a civil suit along with JPS for an incident that occurred during the work day. JPS **refused** to represent their employee until the Jackson Federation of Teachers stepped in.

As a result of the union's swift work, the union got JPS to represent the employee, like they were supposed to do, and ultimately the lawsuit was thrown out of court.

UNION MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

MS Supreme Court Hears Arguments

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- that the lawsuit should be tossed out, alleging that the members of the group bringing the suit, Parents for Public Schools (unrelated to The Parents' Campaign), were not harmed by the appropriation. One needn't drive far to witness the absurdity of this argument. Children of parents bringing the suit attend public schools on campuses with massive infrastructure deficiencies and severely dilapidated facilities that have fallen into disrepair because of insufficient funding. Legislators have claimed for decades that they cannot afford to fully fund our public schools, let alone provide funding for infrastructure.

If public money is to be appropriated to any school for any reason, it should go to public schools, which operate for the public good. Our State Constitution demands it. The Supreme Court is expected to announce its decision in the case no later than the end of June 2024.

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CALLING ALL RETIREES

Join us for a monthly retiree meeting

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Location to be announced

We will call retirees with more information.

This is a come-and-go meeting, but we will be talking about how retirees can still be active in the union, as well as highlighting Union Plus benefits.

JFTP&SRP will provide you with coffee, and you're welcome to purchase breakfast if you'd like!

Webinars from Share My Lesson

AFT's Share My Lesson has several webinar series to increase your professional knowledge and improve your craft.

Check these out:

Special Education Essentials

Newcomer Immigrant Students

Survival Guide for New Teachers

Media Literacy in the Age of AI and TikTok

... and more!

In addition, Share My Lesson can send you regular emails with pre-made lessons on relevant topics.

Share My Lesson should be available in JPS through Clever.

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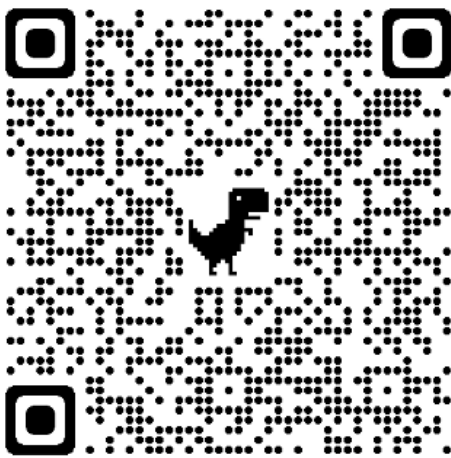
How has the union helped you?

Your testimonials demonstrate the importance of the union to prospective members

Share
your
stories
with us



Work Site Issues Form



UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



In-Person PD Sessions

March 23 - Differentiating Instruction (.6 CEUs)

March 30 - Managing Behavior in School Communities (.6 CEUs)

April 20 - Students with Challenges (.6 CEUs)

May 4 - Reading Comprehension Instruction (.6 CEUs)

May 25 - Engaging Students' Long-Term Memory (.6 CEUs)

Virtual PD Sessions

February 24 & March 2 - Foundations for Effective Teaching, Part II (1.2 CEUs**)

March 23 - Navigating the Bridge Between Stress and SEL (.6 CEUs)

April 6, 20, & 27 - Foundations for Effective Teaching, Part III (1.8 CEUs**)

*** Must attend all sessions to receive CEU certificates*

To sign up, visit

www.jftpsrp.com/professional-development.html

For questions, email pd@jftpsrp.com, or call the union office

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