

2020 Alabama Legislative Session: Week One

On Tuesday, 4 February, the Alabama Legislature began the 2020 Legislative Session. While last year began immediately with a special session, this year was a more typical start to the process. On Tuesday, the legislators welcomed each other back and began to file bills before attending Governor Ivey's State of the State address.

On Wednesday, committees began the process of reviewing and discussing legislation. On Thursday, due to weather, both Houses gavelled in and promptly adjourned to head back to their districts. During the first week, 163 bills were introduced in the Senate, and 195 bills were introduced in the House of Representatives.

Numerous bills were introduced this week to begin the process of addressing the systemic problems with our prisons. Federal lawsuits and a Department of Justice takeover are pushing this issue to the forefront of the legislative agenda. More than 20 bills relating to this issue were filed this week, and we expect more to come. The bills relating to prison reform are included in the criminal tracking sheets provided by the Alabama State Bar.

Other bills introduced this week include changes to the eviction process, a revision to the Open Meetings Act, and several bills addressing adoption, foster parents, family leave and child support. Every year there are amendments and changes to the DUI law and ignition interlock. We also saw several bills addressing tax issues including more exemptions for seniors, the ad valorem tax, estate tax, occupational tax, privilege tax and the tax on groceries. A civil asset forfeiture and deferred presentments bill was introduced along with several bills dealing with election issues. In addition, there was legislation relative to the requirements of public legal notices, mortgage recording, administrative procedures and a bill that would prevent state agencies from selling personal information. Lastly, a few bills prohibiting the suspension of drivers licenses for failure to pay were introduced as well as bills addressing expungement.

The General Fund and Education budgets were filed on Thursday by their respective chairs upon receipt from the Governor, and that process will soon get underway.

In committee this week, several bills addressing bail were debated as well as a public hearing on the occupational tax bill and bills addressing foster children, adoption and family leave.