

March 2, 2018

It's The Final Countdown

Welcome to the month of March. For mental health purposes, the changing of the calendar to the month of March is an important threshold for statehouse regulars. It signals the changing season and an assurance that yes, the short session will end soon.

There are just 12 days left on the legislative calendar. By statute, session must end by March 14. Rumors of an early end may have been greatly exaggerated. With third reading deadlines looming, it's hard to see a path to an early sine die within the next week. An unspoken signal that session will go all the way to the 14th was the scheduling of Senator David Long's retirement party on March 12th.

It's also difficult to see how the remaining major issues are resolved in short order. In the first half of the session, the Senate passed far more bills than the House. Many of those bills were not heard in the House and as a result we've seen an increase in floor activity in the Senate where they're amending many of those now dead Senate bills into House bills before they send them back over. That could push a large number of bills into conference and the session right up to deadline.

In all, 891 bills were filed this session, with 302 moving out of either the house or senate in the first half of session. Second half committee deadlines passed this week, claiming another 52 bills that were not moved. In all, the House has about 130 bills still alive, the Senate has 120. That's a lot of work to do in a short amount of time.

Outstanding issues include just about every third-rail political issue you can imagine in an election year. There was an issue raised this week with the state's handling of DACA recipients at the professional licensing agency, forcing the House to act quickly to fix the issue but waded them unexpectedly into a larger immigration debate.

In the wake of the school shooting in Florida, House and Senate leaders tapped the brakes on pending gun legislation. The legislature was considering changes to state gun licensing laws to exempt lifetime gun permit holders from background checks for each gun purchase and instead check background every five years.

It should be an interesting finish.



Important Dates

March 5, 2018

Third Reading Deadline in the House

March 6, 2018

Third Reading Deadline in the Senate

March 14, 2018

Sine Die

Surveyor Bill Passes House

SB 197, a priority bill for the ISPLS, passed the House unanimously this week. The bill was heard in the House Judiciary Committee on Monday and was amended to remove two sections dealing with changes to adverse possession claims. The committee and chairman did not feel comfortable making substantive changes to adverse law during the short session and asked to move that discussion to the interim, for future consideration during the long session. The bill now returns to the Senate for one more vote before it heads to the governor's desk for his approval.

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