



# THE CLAY FIRM

## NEWSLETTER

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### CAPITOL REPORT

The House and Senate convened at Noon on Tuesday, officially kicking off the 2022 Legislative Session. The first deadline, which is the deadline to request introduction of general bills and constitutional amendments, is next Wednesday. Monday, January 17 is the deadline to introduce those bills.

The Omicron variant wreaked some havoc on Senate operations this week, as Lt. Governor Delbert Hosemann tested positive as did several other members. Therefore, the Senate didn't do much this week. The House moved forward with the passage of House Bill 384, the Congressional Redistricting Plan named Magnolia 1,



76-42. The Magnolia 1 plan stretches Congressional District 2, currently held by Congressman Bennie Thompson, down to the Southwestern border of the state.

Rep. Robert Johnson offered an alternative plan that he argued would be more compact and manageable by instead placing all of Hinds County and parts of Southern Madison County into District 2. However, this amendment was defeated 76-43. The bill was held on a motion to reconsider this morning, so there may be more debate on Monday.

The House and Senate have adjourned for the weekend and will convene at 4 P.M. on Monday. As of print time, the House has referred 522 bills to committee, and the Senate has referred 72 bills to committee.

### MEDICAL MARIJUANA DEBATE EXPECTED SOON

Omicron may have slowed the timing of the medical marijuana debate, but Senators are expecting to see the medical marijuana bill referred to committee as early as next week, and then the debate will begin. The expectation is that the Senate Public Health Committee will take up

the bill quickly after the Lt. Governor refers the bill.

Senator Blackwell and Representative Lee Yancey have led the negotiation during the Fall and believe they have a good working product. Governor Reeves still wants to see the level of THC

reduced as well as the level of dosage unit reduced from the 3.5g. As of now, legislative leadership wants to keep the level that they agreed on in the Fall. The next couple of weeks promises to be very interesting.



**T H E C L A Y F I R M**

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**Q U I C K H I T T E R S**

1) Governor Tate Reeves announced the appointment of Jeffrey Belk of Jackson County to serve as the Chairman of the State Parole Board.

2) Public Safety Commissioner, Sean Tindell, announced two appointments this week: Baxter Kruger is the new Director of the Mississippi Office of Homeland Security and Mary Dukes is the new Director of the Mississippi Forensics Laboratory.

3) State Auditor Shad White announced that his office has established the Mississippi Public Innovations and Efficiencies (PIE) Award to recognize government offices for the ways they cut costs, reduce waste and improve efficiency in the workplace.

4) State Health Officer, Dr. Thomas Dobbs, gave Y'all Politics an update this week on COVID in Mississippi. "Dobbs said there is currently a predominance of the Omicron variant in the state, but that we are still dealing with more severe illness related to Delta. The new variant is more contagious than the Delta variant, but the severity of illness is not the same as what the state health care system saw last summer. More people are being infected with usually less impact.

In addition, not all monoclonal antibody treatments are effective in helping those with COVID, but those treatments that are effective are in short supply in Mississippi. Since the distributions of these treatments have in essence been federalized, they are allocated to states. Dobbs estimated that there is 10x the demand for these treatments than there is currently sup-

ply."

5) Excellent commodity prices propelled Mississippi agriculture to its highest level: an estimated \$8.33 billion value in 2021.

This figure is a 19% increase over 2020. Poultry, soybeans and forestry continue to rank first, second and third, respectively, in the state's agricultural economy.