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NEWS Pelahatchie

February
2022

Volume 11
Issue 2
Pelahatchie, MS

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Pelahatchie News
P.O. Box 771
Pelahatchie, MS 39145

2022 Legislative Session starts out with a bang passing historical legislation



*By Guest Columnist
Rep. Tom Miles, State
Representative from
House District #75*

Special to
Pelahatchie News

We gaveled in on January 3 to start the 2022 Legislative Session, and since then, the House passed two historic pieces of legislation.

If you've been following the issue of Mississippi losing about 3,000 teachers over the past couple of years due to low salaries and other issues, the House passed HB 530 on Tuesday, January 11, to help stop the exodus. In fact, under this plan, starting teachers will be paid more than both the national the South-eastern average for starting teachers.

The Strategically Accelerating the Recruitment and Retention of Teachers (START) Act of 2022 would raise the average starting salary of a Mississippi teacher to \$43,000 – a \$6,000 increase.

The measure would also give every teacher a pay raise between \$4,000 and \$6,000, effective at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, and give teacher's assistants a salary bump of \$2,000.

Included in the bill are step increases that are more than what teachers now receive for years served.

Significantly, the bill passed overwhelmingly 114 – 6. I am proud to have co-sponsored this much-needed help for our educators and their assistants. They deserve to be respected, and paying them appropriate to their value to

Mississippi shows our respect.

House Bill 531, the Mississippi Tax Freedom Act of 2022, was introduced on Wednesday. The bill would eventually eliminate the state income tax,

placing Mississippi as the tenth state in the United States to do so. Significantly, it would also eventually lower the sales tax on groceries to 4 percent. Other items will carry an 8.5 percent sales



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tax, up from 7 percent. Farmers will continue to have the same lower sales tax they have now. We've always had complaints about the high price of car tags, and this legislation will also cut car

tags in half by 50% if signed into law. Supporters believe that taking this action will help improve the state's economy going forward. It should eventually put about \$2 billion back into taxpayer pockets. HB 531 passed by a vote of 104-7.

With these two votes, my colleagues and I showed that we are absolutely determined to work together to make things better for our fellow Mississippians.

I expect we will take up the Medical Marijuana issue soon. The Senate passed their version last week 47-5. The medicinal properties of marijuana have been shown to help the pain of chronic conditions and significantly improve the quality of life of certain patients. I expect the House to pass this law out of respect for those who suffer and the 70+ percent of Mississippians who approved of the idea in the 2020 initiative vote.

The first measure I filed during this session
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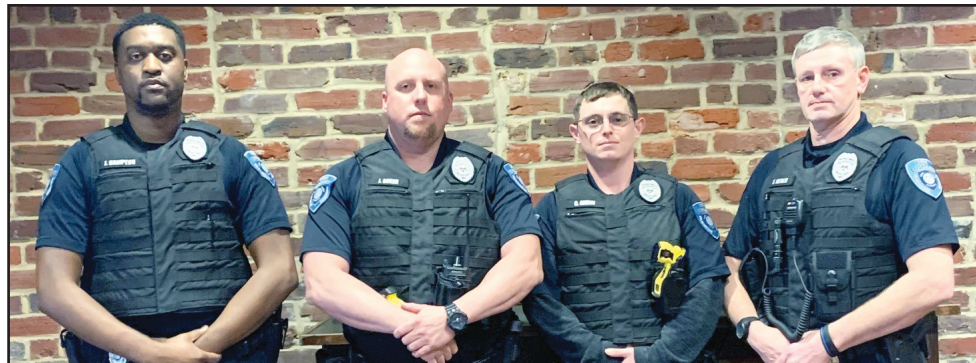
Pelahatchie gets snow on January 16



Photo by Pelahatchie News

Three to five inches of snow fell on Pelahatchie Sunday, January 16, 2022. It did not snow on the whole Metro Area but picked spots east of downtown Jackson. Brandon, only a few miles away, did not have any stick, while Leesburg northeast of Town had the largest amount in the Metro at 11 inches. Here is a sneak peek at photos from around Town plus snowmen crafted by children in the area. See more snow photos on page 9.

Pelahatchie PD receives equipment donations



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The Pelahatchie Police did not have the latest equipment needed to serve the Town. That's when the Madison/Rankin County DA stepped in. Pictured (l to r) are: Officer Joshua Hampton, Sgt. Jeremy Greer, Officer Garrett Irwin, and Officer Stephen Koerner.

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The Madison/Rankin District Attorney's Office recently purchased new ballistic vests, flashlights and holsters for the Pelahatchie Police Department. D.A. Bubba Bramlett reached out to Chief of Police Robert Mahaffey in re-

cent months to inquire about equipment needs for the officers. At the time, officers were wearing expired ballistic vests donated by another agency that were lacking some basic needs such as rechargeable flashlights, and modern holsters to accommodate weapon lights.

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