

Bills We're Watching

Last Updated Thursday, 05 March 2009

Legislative Action Alert!
Act Now

Bills We're Watching

- HB 1052: Rep. Greenberg - An Act To Prevent Retaliation Against Public Employees For Requesting Records Under The Freedom Of Information Act Of 1967.PDF

FOR — Whistleblower protection for state employees filing FOIA requests. STATUS: Still in committee STATE AGENCIES & GOV'T'L AFFAIRS- HOUSE.

- HB 1091: Rep. Sample - To Allow A School District Board Of Directors To Meet In Executive Session On An Appeal Of The Suspension Or Expulsion Of A Student.PDF

We were AGAINST; now, NEUTRAL — The initial bill allowed school boards to hold student expulsion hearings in closed session (not in public) without the permission of the student or parent. Amended and fixed. STATUS: Still in committee EDUCATION COMMITTEE- HOUSE.

- HB 1093: Rep. Sample - An Act Concerning Illegal Immigration.PDF

AGAINST — Omnibus immigration bill containing almost every anti-immigrant piece of legislation filed around the country: attacking employers, potential employees, those who feed and shelter people in need regardless of their immigrant status; vastly increasing the likelihood of racial and ethnic profiling. Required the use of federal databases that have proven expensive, unreliable and fraught with error. STATUS: Still in committee JUDICIARY COMMITTEE- HOUSE.

- HB 1113: Rep. Creekmore - The Partial-Birth Abortion Ban.PDF

AGAINST — Bans a rarely if ever used abortion technique (the term "partial birth abortion" is fictitious, however). Does not contain an exception for a woman's health. The Bill started out worse; although it will hopefully never be prosecuted

in Arkansas, it was amended to do little more than the federal law that was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court does. STATUS: Now Act 196

- HB 1246: Rep. Carroll - An Act To Amend Various Provisions Of The Arkansas Code Regarding Certification Of New Political Parties And Independent Candidates.PDF

FOR — Increases the number of days from 60 to 90 for new and independent candidates to collect signatures needed to get on the ballot: ballot access.

So far, despite several federal court opinions finding the ballot access scheme unconstitutional (including two ACLU cases on behalf of the Green Party of Arkansas), the Legislature has refused to revamp its ballot access system; this system makes it prohibitively hard for new or “third” parties to get and stay on the ballot, thereby ensuring a two-party state. STATUS: Now ACT 188.

- HB 1247: Rep. Carroll - An Act To Extend The Threshold For A Political Party To Maintain Its Certified Political Party Status To Include Receiving A Percentage Of Votes For Any Position Subject To A Statewide Election.PDF

FOR — See explanation of HB 1246 above for history. The Bill would make it easier for new and minority parties to get and stay on the ballot. Arkansas has one of the toughest ballot access schemes in the country, and it has been struck down in federal courts several times.. STATUS: Still in committee STATE AGENCIES & GOV'TL AFFAIRS- HOUSE.

- HB 1281: Rep. Carter - An Act To Require All Persons Receiving Benefits Through The Department Of Human Services To Undergo Random Testing For Illegal Drugs.PDF

AGAINST — Would require all recipients of DHS services, including those in nurseries and nursing homes, to undergo drug testing. STATUS: Still in committee PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE AND LABOR COMMITTEE- HOUSE.

- HB 1383: Rep. Nickels - An Act To Allow The Contractors Licensing Board To Take Action Against A Contractor For Knowingly Employing Workers Without Legal Status.PDF

AGAINST — Allows for the Contractors Licensing Board to revoke a contractor's license, without the contractor ever having been convicted of a crime. STATUS: Still in committee STATE AGENCIES & GOVT'L AFFAIRS- HOUSE.

- HB 1401: Rep. Harrelson - An Act Concerning The Campaign Practice Of Judges; And To Repeal 7-6-103.PDF

FOR — Repeals the law prohibiting judges from campaigning for other people seeking office. STATUS: Still in committee JUDICIARY COMMITTEE- HOUSE.

- HB 1404: Rep. Webb - Concerning The Ballot Presentation Of Initiative Or Referred Amendments Or Acts.PDF

FOR — Makes it easier for the voter to understand ballot initiatives on ballot, especially when there are multiple items as there were last time. STATUS: Passed the HOUSE; in the SENATE.

- HB 1637: Rep. Blount - An Act Regarding Prerequisites For A Convicted Felon To Regain His Or Her Right To Vote.PDF

FOR — Allows for the reintegration of people who have committed felonies (many of which are drug charges) into society after they have served their terms, and makes it easier for them to get back their right to vote. Most people, including ex-felons, realize that they can register to vote again after they serve their sentence. STATUS: Still in committee JUDICIARY COMMITTEE- HOUSE.

- HJR 1009: Rep. Carroll - Amending The Arkansas Constitution To Repeal The Prohibition Against An Atheist Holding Any Office In The Civil Departments Of The State Of Arkansas Or Testifying As A Witness In Any Court.PDF

FOR — Repeals an old, unprosecuted and unconstitutional section of the Arkansas Constitution prohibiting atheists from holding public office. If it were ever used to keep someone from serving in public office, the ACLU would file suit. . STATUS: Still in committee STATE AGENCIES & GOVT'L AFFAIRS- HOUSE.

- HJR 1010: Rep. J. Burris - To Amend Article 2, Section 3 Of The Constitution Of Arkansas Concerning Equality Before The Law.PDF

WATCHING — We are not sure what the intent of this bill really is. STATUS:
Still in committee STATE AGENCIES & GOVT'L AFFAIRS- HOUSE.

- SB 23: Sen. Altes - An Act To Establish A Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.PDF

AGAINST — Creates a huge, statewide government database with information on certain prescriptions of ALL Arkansans, including some common painkillers, Ritalin (for ADHD), and other drugs not used for illicit purposes. The police could have access to it without a warrant, and the Pharmacists, Medical Board, Health Department, Nurses, and others, could have access at any time. We helped kill a similar bill last session. STATUS:
Still in committee SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE AND LABOR.

- SB 299: Sen. H. Wilkins - An Act To Reestablish A Task Force On Racial Profiling And Concerning The Collection Of Information By Law Enforcement Stops Of Drivers For Failing To Wear A Seat Belt

FOR — This bill restores the Racial Profiling Task Force we helped create in _____. It also allows makes not wearing a seat belt a primary offense; however it requires the police to collect data on the stop on the race and age of the driver, regardless of whether a ticket is issued. Our concern with this kind of bill is that the law would give the police another reason to make a pretextual stop, where the real aim is to find illegal activity. These stops are sometimes based on racial profiles. Collecting data on the stops would help prevent that from happening. .PDF STATUS:
Still in committee STATE AGENCIES & GOVT'L AFFAIRS- SENATE.