

# *2024 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE*

*Overview and Insights into Active Bills in the Current  
Term of the Legislature.*

*Second of the 2-year , 152<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly,  
convening 1/9/2024 and ending 6/30/2024.*

*Legislative Awareness Working (LAW) Group – February 2024*

# *Highlight Issues*

## **Permanent Absentee Legal Case**

- Jane Brady won in court to eliminate “permanent absentee” voting.
- Expands “day of election”, documentation was not required.

## **Legislative Issue 5X7 Cards**

- Template developed by Joyce Hoover for neighborhood communication.

## **Local School Board Referenda**

- Appoquinimink 2023 election FAILED, Second election 4/23
- Brandywine – 2/13 election Operating Ref PASSED
- Red Clay – 2/28 election Operating & Capital Ref
- Colonial - 2/29 election Operating & Capital Ref
- Delaware schools: Reading 41%, Math 31% 4<sup>th</sup> Worst in US, 13<sup>th</sup> in Spending

## **2025 State Budget Proposal is \$6.1 Billion**

- Decreasing revenue curve, will begin to draw on “smoothing fund”.
  - No pull-back from Federally-funded COVID spending, as funding ends.
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# Budget & Tax

- **HB29-HA1** "\$750 Senior Property Tax Credit"
  - Submitted by Rep. Hensley. Assigned to Appropriations in Apr. '23.
  - **HB234**, introduced by Rep. Ramone increases allowance to \$1000 for property <\$500K.
- **HB36** "Reduces real estate transfer tax from 4% back down to 3% ."
  - Submitted by Rep. Bush (superseding **HB71**, previously submitted by Rep. Ramone).
  - Assigned to Appropriations in Jan. '23.
- **HB89** "Increase Standard Deduction for DE Taxes"
  - Passed House 39-0, released from Senate committee. On Ready List.
  - Amended in Senate and provisions to INCREASE the Standard Deduction were STRIPPED, leaving only an increase in "refundable" earned income tax credit to 7.5%.
- **HB128** "Revision to State Tax Brackets"
  - Establishing new brackets between \$60K-100K and above \$100K. Reported out of committee. On House Ready List since May '23.
- **HB149** "Indexing Tax Brackets for DE Taxes"
  - Prevent tax rate increases due to cost-of-living increases.
  - Introduced 5/11/23 by Rep. Collins.
- **HB233** "Revise/Collapse Tax Brackets"
  - Introduced by Rep. Ramone.
  - Motion to release failed.
- **HB259/HB262** "Direct Purchase and Shipment of Beer, Wine & Spirits"
  - Modernize DE law to enjoy services already widely available elsewhere.
  - Introduced by Reps. Spiegelman & Smith.
- **SB201** "Increase Military Pension Exclusion"
  - Introduced by Sen. Buckson.

# Voting

- **HB43** "Allow Independent Voters to Vote in Primary"
  - 170K Independent voters. Would not allow crossover voting. No Action (mirrors NH voting policy).
- **HB291** "Identifying Information on Campaign Contributions"
  - Include primary employer and job title of each person contributing.
  - FOIA protection for informants on alleged campaign finance violations.
  - Introduced by Rep. Morrison and assigned to House Administration Comm.
- **SB3** "Constitutional Amendment to Eliminate Limitations on Absentee Ballots"
  - Allows for no-excuse absentee voting. Passed Senate (15-5-1), sent to House and released from committee. **On House Ready List.**
- **SB79** "Term Limits for Legislators, AG, Insurance Commissioner, Auditor & State Treasurer."
  - No Action.
- **SB180** "Constitutional Amendment to Restore Voting Rights to Felons Upon Completion of Imprisonment" – 1<sup>st</sup> Leg
  - Released from Senate Judiciary committee. **On Senate Ready List.**

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Am'dm't & Justice

- **SS1 for SB2** "Permit to Purchase Handguns"
  - Recurrent training (500 vouchers for low-income), fingerprinting & SBI background check. Valid for only one year. Passed Senate (15-6).
  - Assigned Appropriations committee in the House.
  - HA2 attached 1/04, extending validity to 2 years (requires eventual return to Senate for approval).
- **HB155** "Safe Vehicular Storage of Firearms"
  - Requires unattended storage in a locked container, locked glove compartment or locked trunk.
  - Passed Senate (15-6), moves to House (previously approved 24-13) to address Senate Amendment 1 (which removed the exemption for CCDW holders).
- **HS1 for HB167** "Funding for School Resource Officers"
  - Up to \$21 Million for 219 public schools in Delaware, providing for at least 1 school resource officer in every school.
  - Assigned to Appropriations Committee, requiring Budget authorization.
- **HS1 for HB224** "Narrow Delaware Definition of Firearm"
  - Aligns with federal criminal background check law. Passed unanimously in House, sent to Senate Judiciary committee.
- **HB251** "Prohibiting Bail for Possession of a Firearm During a Felony"
  - 1<sup>st</sup> session proposal of a Constitutional Amendment.
  - Assigned to the House Administration Comm.
- **HB276** "Amendment to Prohibiting Carry in 'Recreation Zones'"
  - Technical follow-up to HB201 from last session
  - Passed House 35-3, Senate 15-6. Awaiting Gov.
- **HB290** "SEED Scholarship Eligibility for Violent Felons"
  - Proposed by Rep. Morrison. Assigned to the House Education Comm.
- **Previous Legislation Passed in 2022 has Ongoing Court Challenges**
  - HB450 (Semi-auto/"Assault Weapons" ban), HB451 (Minimum age 21) and SS1 for SB6 (limiting capacity to 17 rounds/so called "High Capacity" magazines).

# *Parental Rights & Family*

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- **SB59/SB58** “Government Control of Childcare Reimbursement Rates”
  - Establishes statewide wage for childcare rate for providers in Kent & Sussex that mirrors New Castle County rates. Eliminates childcare co-pay for 200% of the poverty level (as was done during COVID-19 emergency).
  - Both assigned to Finance committee
- **HB216** “Police Entry to Enforce Custody”
  - Requires (vs. Allows) police entry under court orders.
- **HB240** “Parental Rights on Counsel/Refuse Entry/Withhold Consent for Medical Exam”
  - Provides offsetting parental rights in custody cases.
- **HB230** “Advancing Medical Experimentation and Sterilization of Minor Children”
  - Allows Delaware to take emergency jurisdiction of a child that isn’t able to obtain (for whatever reason) “**gender affirming care.**”
  - Shields medical professionals from consequences of experimentation on children who want “**gender transition.**”
  - Makes Delaware a sanctuary state for medical experimentation on children.
  - Assigned to Health & Human Development committee.

# *Life & Health*

- **HS1 for HB110** "Taxpayer-Funded Abortion"
  - Provides for insurance and Medicaid coverage for abortions – without deductible or co-pay.
  - Assigned to the House Appropriations committee.
- **HB140** "Assisted Suicide"
  - Assumes correct medical diagnosis and does not require the signing physician to even know the patient! Mailing suicide drugs to residence for self-administration.
  - Reported out of committee (1 "unfavorable" vote) and placed on House Ready List.
- **HB150** "Universal Child Health Coverage"
  - Extend Medicaid coverage to children who are not otherwise covered, including those who are not documented.
  - Assigned House Appropriations committee
- **HS1 for HB242** "No Patient Left Alone"
  - Prevent the situation of denied visitation that occurred during COVID shutdown.
  - Passed House 28-13, assigned Senate Health & Social Services Comm..

# *Equal Rights*

- **HB275** “Expand Sexual Orientation Definitions Throughout Delaware Code”
  - Adds asexuality and pansexuality to the definition in all cases.
  - Proposed by Rep. Morrison and assigned to House Administration Comm.
- **SB44** “Creation of the Office of New Americans”
  - Creates a bureaucratic “office” to promote “attraction, retention and inclusion of immigrants and refugees.” Increase immigrant access to English language instruction, connect them to legal services to assist with naturalization and reduce exploitation and fraud against immigrants.
  - Voted out of Elections & Government Affairs and sent to Senate Finance.

## **Various Legislation was anticipated in the following areas, but has not yet appeared:**

- Further re-definition of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Disability across Delaware Code.
- Extending existing language in the DE Constitution protecting immutable rights (sex, race, color and national origin) to include “sexual orientation, gender identity and disability” (fluid characteristics).
- Requiring student athletes to compete on teams/sports associated with their biological sex.



# Environmental Issues

- **“Zero-Emission Vehicle” Regulations**
  - Require a complete phase-out of combustion engine cars and light trucks, 2026-2035, as called for by an interstate compact tying Delaware to California’s regulatory model.
  - See identical regulations appearing in NJ and Federal regulations emerging from the EPA on a similar path (67% EV by 2032).
- **HB123** “Requires DNREC to Obtain Consent Before Promulgating Regulations Restricting Sale of Internal Combustion Powered Vehicles”
  - Passed 21-20 in a hard-fought legislative battle. It moves to Senate Committee.
  - Part of Republican initiative to give citizens a voice in the one-sided rulemaking process and place a check on unfettered use of emergency powers
    - Provide General Assembly with Regulatory Oversight
    - Give citizens a voice in State Regulations
- **HB9-HA1** “All State-Owned Passenger & Light-Duty Vehicles to be Zero-Emission by 2040”
  - Exemptions for law enforcement, Dept. of Education, school districts, charter schools and “take home” vehicles.
  - Assigned to House Appropriations committee.
- **HB220** “Constitutional Amendment Protecting Natural Resources”
  - “Inherent and inalienable right to a clean and healthy environment.”
  - State Branches, Agencies & political subdivisions designated as “trustees of the State’s natural resources.
  - On House Ready List.

# Education

- **HS1 for HB66** "School Performance Card"
  - Accessible performance reports on the Dept of Ed website for all schools, including proficiency rates.
  - Passed House 39-0, on Senate Ready List.
- **HB192** "Action of Single Digit Proficiency"
  - 25 schools across the state have Language Arts or Math scores below 10% proficiency. This requires action in coordination with the Dept. of Education for short-term plan to address.
  - Passed House 39-0, on Senate Ready List.
- **HB203** "Financial Literacy in High School"
  - Requires a ½ credit course beginning for students who enter 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2025-26. Department of Education to submit report by 5/1/26.
  - On House Ready List.
- **HS1 for HB244** "Full-Time Athletic Trainers in All High Schools"
  - Phased in funding through 2027.
  - Added HA-1, to Appropriations.
- **SB69** "Amend Childcare Law to Exempt Sectarian/Religious Institutions"
  - SB169 takes effect July 1, 2024 and expanded scope to be inclusive of religious early education programs.

# Admin

- **HB245** “General Assembly Role in a Protracted Emergency Response”
    - Address Governor’s unrestricted use of emergency powers, informed by the pandemic experience.
  - **HB261** “Office of Legal Ethics in the Legislature”
    - Mechanism to accept and investigate potential violations of the Delaware Constitution, statutes, regulations or alleged conflicts of interest by members of the General Assembly.
    - Introduced by Rep. Michael Smith.
  - **HB281** “Repeal Option of Medicare Advantage Plan for State Retirees”
    - Provides for continuation of Medicare Supplement Plan for State Retirees, closing out the battle from last year.
  - **HR26** “Recognizing the Genocide and Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza”
    - Calling for Biden and the Federal delegation from Delaware to support a permanent ceasefire and sustained humanitarian aid to Gaza.
    - Introduced by Rep. Wilson-Anton and “laid on the table”, 1/9/24.
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# *In Closing*

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- Note that this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 152<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly and all bills not acted upon in 2023 remain active.
- **Stay Informed and Stay Involved! Public involvement has an impact.**