



More than 1,100 pieces of legislation were signed into law in the Regular Session earlier this year. Many of the pieces of legislation we pass have what is called an “emergency clause”. That clause allows the bill to become effective the moment it is signed by the Governor. As a result, it takes a 2/3 majority to pass the emergency clause.

Other pieces of legislation have an effective date written into the text. For example, tax measures typically take effect on January 1. But what about the bills that do not specify the effective date?

Acts that do not contain an emergency clause or specified effective date become effective on the 91<sup>st</sup> day following the day the General Assembly adjourns sine die. For 2017, that date fell on August 1. More than half of the legislation passed this year took effect this week.

These impact everything from highways to the classroom.

One of the changes you may notice is the new name for the state highway department. What was previously known as the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department is now called the Arkansas Department of Transportation or ArDOT.

And speaking of roads, Arkansas drivers should be aware of a penalty increase for texting and driving. One of the pieces of legislation that took effect this week allows a fine of up to \$250 for the first offense of texting and driving. The legislation passed this year also clarifies that reading or posting on social media while driving is prohibited.

Arkansans can also begin purchasing lottery tickets with a debit card. Act 876 allows, but does not require, retailers to accept a debit card for the purchase.

Another major change being implemented is called the Helping Our People Excel Act. This legislation allows Arkansas to opt out of a federal restriction which prohibits individuals with a felony drug conviction from receiving federal public benefits

including SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

During the session, it was explained that 90% of individuals released from prison do not have reliable access to food. Several states including Georgia and Texas have opted out of this restriction in hopes of reducing recidivism rates.

Since it is difficult to summarize hundreds of pieces of legislation at once, we have posted a summary of all legislation on our website. The summary is divided into categories such as education and criminal justice to make it easier to search.

Visit [www.arkansashouse.org](http://www.arkansashouse.org) to find out more.