



Newsletter From Rep. Matthew J. Shepherd District 97

March 20, 2026

Arkansas Legislative Council Week

The Arkansas Legislative Council (ALC) and its subcommittees met this week at the Capitol, continuing their role of overseeing state agencies and reviewing key funding and policy decisions between legislative sessions.

State revenue collections remain strong. Gross General Revenues year-to-date total approximately \$5.36 billion—an increase of \$89 million, or 1.7%, compared to this time last year. Net General Revenue available for distribution has reached \$4.55 billion, up \$163.7 million, or 3.7%, from February 2025.

Among the items approved, ALC authorized the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to add three administrative positions following the transition of Blanchard Springs Caverns and Recreation Area into a state park. These roles will support daily operations, facility management, and visitor experience improvements.

Lawmakers also approved a \$12 million agreement to administer the Classic Learning Test in Arkansas high schools. This provides students with an additional testing option alongside the ACT and SAT, as required by recent legislation. Additionally, members supported a \$4.25 million allocation from the Restricted Reserve Fund to the Arkansas State Police to purchase 102 new vehicles, helping update and maintain the agency's fleet.

Economic development was also a key priority, highlighted by the approval of a \$90,000 contract to study Arkansas's role in the global lithium market—an industry driven by increasing demand for battery production. Under the agreement, the contractor will deliver a detailed analysis and strategic roadmap outlining how Arkansas can strengthen its position in the lithium supply chain. The contractor will also provide monthly updates tracking global trends in the lithium market, helping state leaders stay informed and better understand emerging opportunities for economic growth.

As this work continues, lawmakers are preparing for the 2026 Fiscal Session, which begins April 8. You can watch committee meetings and House proceedings at arkansashouse.org.

