



Arkansas House Newsletter

October 20, 2023

Updates from Arkansas Legislative Council



The Arkansas Legislative Council and its subcommittees convened this week. In these meetings, the council received an update regarding the implementation of LEARNS, an update regarding a study of our state's firearms laws, and approved funding to expand nurse training programs in the state.

Education Secretary Jacob Oliva updated the committee on the use of Education Freedom Accounts. Education Freedom Accounts (EFA) is a school choice initiative that provides funding for eligible students to attend participating private schools. Secretary Oliva told the council that 4,795 students and 94 schools are currently participating.

For this school year, EFA's are limited to first-time kindergartners, students coming from "F" rated schools, students with a disability, foster care children, or children of active-duty military.

Students with a disability identified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act represent the largest share of participating students, amounting to 44% of total participants. First-time kindergarteners likewise represent a sizable share of the total participants, making up 31% of the participants' population.

Upon request, the council the disbursement of federal American Rescue Plan funds including a request from the Department of Commerce for \$25 million to educate more nurses in Arkansas. The department says the funding will be used for a grant program to expand nursing apprenticeships, increase nursing program capacity, and tuition reimbursement. A portion of the funds will also be used for career center licensed practical nurse pathway development. These centers provide high school seniors and juniors college credit while in school.

The Council was also informed that the Game and Fish and State Police Subcommittee will meet on Monday, November 13 at 1 pm in the MAC building behind the Capitol to begin hearing information presentations regarding federal laws related to firearms.

This is the beginning of the Arkansas Firearms and Concealed Carry Laws Study. The public will have an opportunity to provide comments at the meeting. There will be a link on the General Assembly website for public comment, and there will be a signup sheet at the committee meeting. Only those members of the public who have signed up in one of those two ways will be allowed to come forward and present their comments to the Subcommittee.

You can watch all ALC meetings and subcommittee meetings at www.arkansashouse.org.