



Arkansas House Newsletter

February 28, 2020

Budget Hearings to Begin March 4



By law, Fiscal Sessions can only last 30 days (45 days with a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote to extend), so members work weeks in advance drafting appropriation measures in order to ensure our sessions are brief.

That preparation begins in budget hearings. Beginning Wednesday, March 4, 2020, the Joint Budget Committee will hold a series of meetings designed to begin the process of outlining a budget for the next fiscal year. The Fiscal Session begins Wednesday, April 8, 2020, at 12:00 noon.

Budget hearings will begin with the Department of Finance and Administration presenting its annual forecast and recommendations for a balanced budget by the Governor.

Over the course of the next several days, the committee will hear budget requests for Higher Education Institutions, Department of Education, the Department of Human Services, Department of Health, Department of Corrections and the Department of Public Safety, commonly referred to as the “Big 6”.

In the following weeks, members will review budgets for all state boards, commissions, and agencies.

Seven months into this fiscal year, general revenue is now \$149.7 million or 4.4% above this time last year. The most recent general revenue report showed net available revenue is above forecast by \$94.2 million or 2.7 percent. This report and revenue forecast from economists will help us guide our decision making process in the months ahead.

Although legislation during the Regular Sessions typically attracts more attention, it is important to remember the impact our budget making process has on our day to day lives.

The decisions we will be making show the priorities we make as a state. Appropriations fund everything from classrooms to health care.

Members can begin filing appropriation bills and identical resolutions on Monday, March 9, 2020. As a reminder, the legislature cannot take up any non-appropriation bills during the Fiscal Session unless 2/3 of the body votes in favor of a resolution.

You can watch the meetings live at www.arkansashouse.org.

We will keep you updated on this process as it continues.