

Arkansas lawmakers today (Tues) formally opened a special session focused on cutting state income taxes. Gov. Asa Hutchinson called the session with the main goal of lowering the state's top individual tax rate from 5.9% to 4.9% over the next four years. While neither chamber heard debate on the governor's plan, senators argued over two bills that would give income tax credits to law enforcement officers. Lieutenant Governor Tim Griffin said the bills should not be excluded because of rules prohibiting legislation not included in the governor's call.

News01

0:24

"...to do whatever."

Lawmakers ultimately did overrule Griffin's decision on both bills, meaning they likely won't be considered during the session. Independent Sen. Jim Hendren of Gravette said it's clear the bills are not relevant to the session's stated purpose of cutting income tax rates.

News02

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"...germane to that."

Aside from Hutchinson's tax cut proposal, lawmakers will consider bills the governor has described as technical corrections or clean up bills. They relate to state funding, pharmaceutical rebates and a bill that would allow legislators to employ security personnel. **OPTIONAL:** **If passed by committees** the governor's tax cut plan could face votes from the full House and Senate tomorrow (Wed).

Members of the Arkansas House and Senate today (Tues) kicked off a special session to consider Gov. Asa Hutchinson's proposal to cut state income tax rates. If approved, the top individual income tax rate would drop from 5.9% to 4.9% over a four-year span. As was the case earlier this year, lawmakers debated whether to consider outside bills, since they're not included in the governor's call for the session. Through an analogy, Lieutenant Governor Tim Griffin said the legislature is given some leeway in what can be considered.

News03 0:23 "...there's some flexibility."

At issue were two bills sponsored by Republican Sen. Jason Rapert of Conway that would give income tax credits to law enforcement. He argued officials have delayed hearing the bills since another session earlier this year.

News04 0:22 "...law enforcement officer."

While Griffin sided with Rapert that the bills could be heard, lawmakers overruled the lieutenant governor's opinion and the bills will likely not be heard during the session. At a press conference later in the day, Governor Asa Hutchinson said a tax break wouldn't do much for law enforcement officers, but said pay raises were needed. Lawmakers will convene again tomorrow (Wed) to possibly advance the governor's tax cut proposal as well as other related bills.