

Senate Monday 1

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The Arkansas Senate has advanced three proposals seeking to walk back parts of President Joe Biden's sweeping COVID-19 vaccine mandates for workplaces. The legislative session was intended to re-draw the state's four Congressional districts, but has instead largely focused on COVID-19 rules. One proposal, Senate Bill 732, would use federal funds for unemployment payments to people fired for not complying with vaccine mandates. But independent Sen. Jim Hendren of Gravette said there's no guarantee federal funds could be used for that purpose.

News01

0:23

"...this legislation does."

The bill's sponsor, Republican Sen. Blake Johnson of Corning, said it's unclear whether the state would be able to cover the cost of those unemployment payments if federal funds are not available.

News02

0:16

"...for the people."

The bill ultimately passed by a vote of 17-to-15. It now goes to a House committee for a vote. Senators also gave approval to a bill that would allow employees to get regular COVID testing instead of being vaccinated.

Arkansas lawmakers have advanced three proposals aimed at combating vaccine mandates in the state. The Arkansas Senate approved the bills in a meeting today (Mon). Two bills would provide some type of unemployment payments to people who are fired for not complying with a vaccine mandate, while one would allow employees to take regular COVID tests instead of being vaccinated. Republican Sen. Jonathan Dismang of Beebe took issue with any bills that would supersede the rights of businesses to choose whether their employees should be vaccinated or not.

News03

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“...comes to liberty.”

But Republican Sen. Jason Rapert of Conway said, while COVID-19 is a serious issue, people shouldn't be deprived of their livelihoods for not complying with a vaccine mandate.

News04

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“...right trumps that.”

The slate of Republican-backed bills in the Arkansas Legislature are largely in response to new vaccine mandates on government agencies and large private employers proposed by President Joe Biden. The three bills passed in the Senate today (Mon) now go to a House committee for a vote.