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This Week in the Senate

March 30 - April 2, 2015



A Message from Senate President Pro Tempore David Shafer

During the final days of the 2015 Legislative Session, the House and Senate came to an agreement on House Bill 76, the Fiscal Year 2016 State Budget. The budget reflects our continued economic recovery with restoration of austerity cuts to education that should finally end teacher furloughs and keep students in class the full year.

The conference committee report for House Bill 170, the Transportation Funding Act of 2015, was also approved by both chambers. This bill repeals state sales taxes on gasoline, creates new revenue streams from gasoline excise taxes that are dedicated to transportation, institutes accountability measures for the Georgia Department of Transportation and provides a mechanism for broader tax reform.

The last week of the legislative session is always the most difficult. I would like to offer a special thank you to the Senate staffers, administrative assistants, aides and interns who worked long hours this week, especially on days 39 and 40. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31

Judge Ronald L. Newton Memorial Highway

House Resolution 215, carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonega) and sponsored by Rep. David Ralston (R - Blue Ridge), dedicates the section of State Route 60 from Fannin County to McCaysville as the Judge Ronald L. Newton Memorial Highway. Judge Newton was elected as Chief Magistrate of Fannin County in 1988 and served as the judge for the City of McCaysville for more than two decades. HR 215 passed unanimously. - **HR 215**

End-of-Life Care and Required Coverage for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton) and sponsored by Rep. Ron Stephens (R - Savannah), House Bill 429 sets parameters for both end-of-life care and the coverage of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in children up to six years of age. The bill prohibits health insurance plans, including Medicaid and State Health Benefit Plans, from denying coverage for or placing restrictions on end-of-life care. HB 429 also incorporates insurance guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of autism in children under six. HB 429 passed unanimously. - **HB 429**

Funding of Local Projects

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R - Chickamauga) carried House Bill 192, which was sponsored by Rep. Alan Powell (R - Hartwell). Passed in a vote of 45 to 5, HB 192 authorizes local economic development authorities to construct and maintain health care facilities through public and private funding. - **HB 192**

Increase Judicial Compensation

House Bill 279, carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton) and sponsored by Rep. Jay Powell (R - Camilla), passed with a vote of 43 to 9. House Bill 279 provides salary increases for Justices of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals, Superior Court Judges, District Attorneys and Circuit Public Defenders. The legislation also creates the Judicial, District Attorney, and Circuit Public Defender Compensation Commission and calls for a fourth Judge in the Western Circuit of Superior Court Judges. - **HB 279**



Witnessing Deeds, Mortgages and Bills of Sale

Carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton) and sponsored by Rep. Brian Strickland (R - McDonough), House Bill 322 passed with a vote of 51 to 1. The bill creates a late filing penalty of \$500 for deed holders who fail to file with the controlling local governing authority within 120 days of a foreclosure sale. The bill also clarifies the requirements for the official signing of a deed, mortgage or bill of sale. - **HB 322**



Commercial Driver's Licenses

House Bill 118, carried by Sen. Tyler Harper (R - Ocilla) and sponsored by Rep. Kevin Tanner (R - Dawsonville), aligns Georgia law with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Act. This legislation adopts numerous federal guidelines and penalties, including clarification that only the Department of Driver Services or the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators are able to certify examiners to administer the road skills test for Commercial Drivers Licenses. HB 118 passed with a vote of 51 to 1. - **HB 118**



Two-year Vehicle Registration

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R - Chickamauga) carried House Bill 147, which was sponsored by Rep. Alan Powell (R - Hartwell). The legislation allows new passenger motor vehicles to be registered for a two-year period with a \$40 registration fee. Following the initial two-year period, the vehicle will need to be registered annually. HB 147 passed with a vote of 41 to 1. - **HB 147**

Georgia's Official State Mammal

Carried by Sen. Ed Harbison (D - Columbus) and sponsored by Rep. Carolyn Hugley (D - Columbus), House Bill 70 passed in a vote of 49 to 1. The bill names the white-tailed deer, scientifically named the *odocoileus virginianus*, as Georgia's official state mammal. - **HB 70**



Insurance Compliance Self-Evaluative Audits

House Bill 162, carried by Sen. P. K. Martin (R - Lawrenceville) and sponsored by Rep. Jason Shaw (R - Lakeland), allows an insurance company to audit itself in order to ensure practices are legally compliant. The bill would make the findings of those audits restricted except in special circumstances. HB 162 passed unanimously. - **HB 162**



Zoo Atlanta, Georgia Aquarium, and Fernbank Museum Tax Exemption

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R - Chickamauga) carried House Bill 428, which was sponsored by Rep. Ron Stephens (R - Savannah). Current law provides tax exemptions for

certain projects by Zoo Atlanta and the Georgia Aquarium, and these exemptions are scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2015. HB 428 extends the sunset date to January 1, 2017, and also allows Fernbank Museum to use the same tax exemption. HB 428 passed in a vote of 40 to 11. - **HB 428**

Principle-Based Reserving for Life Insurance Companies

Carried by Sen. Burt Jones (R - Jackson) and sponsored by Rep. Jason Shaw (R - Lakeland), House Bill 185 passed with a vote of 49 to 3. HB 185 extensively revises Georgia's Standard Valuation Law to require life insurers to adopt the Principle-Based Reserving (PBR) method. PBR is the new standard for calculating life insurance reserves from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. The bill also establishes how domestic mutual insurance companies can reorganize as a mutual insurance holding company. - **HB 185**

Revision of State House Districts

House Bill 566, carried by Sen. Bill Cowsert (R - Athens) and sponsored by Rep. Randy Nix (R - LaGrange) changes seventeen state House districts in Chatham, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Hall, Lowndes, Newton and Spalding Counties. HB 566 passed with a vote of 39 to 14. - **HB 566**

Distance Requirements For Selling Beer and Wine

House Bill 85, which was carried by Sen. Burt Jones (R - Jackson) and sponsored by Rep. Brett Harrell (R - Snellville), allows local governments to decide whether or not grocery stores may sell beer and wine near school grounds. HB 85 also specifies the distance requirements for selling or offering alcohol to a person confined in a correctional facility, in the Central State Hospital or in a building of the Georgia War Veterans Home. HB 85 passed in a vote of 35 to 17. - **HB 85**

Pure Captive Insurers and Federal Home Loan Bank

Sen. P. K. Martin (R - Lawrenceville) carried House Bill 552, which was sponsored by Rep. Bruce Williamson (R - Monroe). HB 552 makes several changes to current pure captive insurance company statutes. A pure captive insurance company is a licensed insurance company with one corporate owner and insures only the risks of the parent organization. There are currently no pure captive insurers operating in Georgia and HB 552 is an attempt to attract more of these entities. HB 552 passed with a vote of 48 to 2. - **HB 552**

Regulations on Sale of Metal to Recyclers

Carried by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) and sponsored by Rep. Jason Shaw (R - Lakeland), House Bill 461 clarifies the documentation a secondary metal recycler must maintain and receive in order to purchase secondary metals, like copper wire and coil. The transaction must include proof of registration and a signed statement that all documentation was present at the time of the sale. HB 461 passed unanimously. - **HB 461**

Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of Disabled Adults and Elderly

House Bill 72, carried by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) and sponsored by Rep. Wendell Williard (R - Sandy Springs), adds a new section to the Georgia Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act to protect disabled or elderly adults. The bill revises reporting requirements and also expands Georgia's



Good Samaritan Laws to include protections for someone who rescues an endangered individual from a locked car. HB 72 passed in a unanimous vote. - **HB 72**

Rehabilitation of Historic Structures Tax Credit

House Bill 308, carried by Sen. Judson Hill (R - Marietta) and sponsored by Rep. Ron Stephens (R - Savannah), amends the current definition of “certified structure” to include historic buildings and structures located in national historic districts or listed in the National Registry of Historic Places. Furthermore, this legislation also amends the definition of “qualified rehabilitation expenditure” to include the definition provided in the Internal Revenue Code. HB 308 passed with a vote of 36 to 10. - **HB 308**

Workers’ Compensation Reforms

Carried by Sen. P. K. Martin (R - Lawrenceville) and sponsored by Rep. Mark Hamilton (R - Cumming), House Bill 412 passed with a vote of 46 to 0. The bill clarifies that employers are liable for any additional rights and remedies agreed to in writing even if those agreements go beyond Workers’ Compensation laws. HB 412 also increases the maximum weekly benefits and compensation for death and also extends the sunset on the Subsequent Injury Trust Fund through 2023. - **HB 412**

Georgia Code of Military Justice Revisions

Sen. Hunter Hill (R - Atlanta) carried House Bill 98, which was sponsored by Rep. Christian Coomer (R- Cartersville). HB 98 revises the Georgia Code of Military Justice relating to authority to arrest, non-judicial punishments, post-trial procedures and punishments for offenses assigned by a court-martial. The bill also clarifies administration of oaths, training of enlisted men and procedures for complaints against superiors. HB 98 passed in unanimous a vote. - **HB 98**

Motor Vehicle Tax Penalty Exemption

Carried by Sen. John Wilkinson (R - Toccoa) and sponsored by Rep. Roger Bruce (D - Atlanta), House Bill 94 allows a Georgia resident to avoid paying penalties for non-payment of taxes on a motor vehicle or motor home, if the registration of the property is voluntarily canceled. HB 94 passed with a vote of 45 to 0. - **HB 94**

Secure Cargo and Trailers

House Bill 123, carried by Sen. Rick Jeffares (R - McDonough) and sponsored by Rep. John Yates (R - Griffin), requires motor vehicles to use safety chains or cables when operating a motor vehicle drawing a trailer. Current law requires all cargo loads on a motor vehicle to be adequately secured. This legislation requires registered trailers to be adequately secured as well. HB 123 passed unanimously. - **HB 123**

Joint Tenancy After Divorce

Carried by Sen. Tommie Williams (R - Lyons) and sponsored by Rep. Eddie Lumsden (R - Armuchee), House Bill 99 passed in a vote of 42 to 5. HB 99 defines what records are needed to prove that someone no longer has claim to property held in a previous marriage. The bill adds that a decree of divorce or annulment can suffice as proof how joint tenancy of property has been resolved. - **HB 99**

Mandatory Insurance Coverage for Transportation Network Companies (TNCs)

Carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton) and sponsored by Rep. Rich Golick (R – Smyrna), House Bill 190 requires all Transportation Network Company (TNC) drivers to maintain minimum motor vehicle liability insurance coverage. The bill requires a minimum coverage of \$100,000 during the time the driver is logged on to the network and able to accept a ride request, and a minimum of \$1 million during the time the driver accepts a ride request until the ride is complete. HB 190 goes into effect on July 1, 2016 and passed with a vote of 42 to 4. - **HB 190**

Civil Forfeiture Reform

Sen. Jesse Stone (R - Waynesboro) carried House Bill 233, which was sponsored by Rep. Alex Atwood (R - St. Simons Island). HB 233 clarifies numerous sections relating to civil forfeiture of property as the result of criminal activity. The bill defines various important terms in the process of civil forfeiture, including the seizure of property. The bill also clarifies the process for disposition of seized property. - **HB 233**

Postponed Payment of Taxes and License Fees

House Bill 234, carried by Sen. Rick Jeffares (R - McDonough) and sponsored by Rep. Dale Rutledge (R - McDonough), allows for the late payment of taxes or filing of tax returns when the due date occurs on a day the Federal Reserve Bank is closed. Under this legislation, the due date is extended to the first day that is not a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday. HB 234 passed with a vote of 46 to 0. - **HB 234**

Education Provisions Clarified

Carried by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R - Rome) and sponsored by Rep. Mike Dudgeon (R - Johns Creek), House Bill 502 passed with a vote of 46-4. HB 502 repeals outdated requirements for the publishing of previously mandated reports, updates definitions in the school waiver process and adds clarification for several certification processes. HB 502 also encourages instruction on the founding fathers and founding documents of the United States. - **HB 502**

The Pharmacy Audit Bill of Rights

House Bill 470, carried by Sen. Hunter Hill (R - Atlanta) and sponsored by Rep. David Knight (R - Griffin), makes various changes and clarifications to The Pharmacy Audit Bill of Rights, including granting the Insurance Commissioner the power of enforcement. HB 470 passed unanimously. - **HB 470**

Feral Hog Control Act

Sen. Tommie Williams (R - Lyons) carried House Bill 475, which was sponsored by Rep. Tom McCall (R - Elberton). House Bill 475 removes restrictions on the hunting of feral hogs by allowing a person with a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issued wildlife control permit to hunt or trap feral hogs at night. HB 475 passed in a vote of 49 to 0. - **HB 475**

Water Conservation Tax Credit

Sen. Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonega) carried House Bill 464, which was sponsored by Rep. Bruce Williamson (R - Monroe). Current law allows a tax credit for those making a qualified water conservation investment or a 10 percent transfer of ground-water usage from a qualified water conservation facility. This legislation adds donation of property to the list of actions that qualify for a tax credit and creates a sunset date of December 31, 2016. HB 464 passed with a vote of 51 to 0. - **HB 464**

Todd Gurley Bill: Prohibiting Certain Transactions to Postsecondary Student-Athletes

Carried by Sen. Bill Cowsert (R - Athens) and sponsored by Rep. Barry Fleming (R - Harlem), House Bill 3 passed in a vote of 48 to 4. The bill prohibits any person from soliciting a student-athlete in a transaction that causes the student to lose athletic scholarship eligibility, or the ability to participate on an intercollegiate team in one or more intercollegiate sporting competitions. Any person found violating these provisions will be guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature. - **HB 3**

Special Needs Option Notification

Carried by Sen. Judson Hill (R - Marietta) and sponsored by Rep. Wes Cantrell (R - Woodstock), House Bill 209 modifies the notification requirements in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Act. The bill requires school systems to provide written notice of the options available under the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Act at the first Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting with parents of students with disabilities, and every year thereafter. HB 209 passed unanimously. - **HB 209**

Road Naming Omnibus Bill

Sen. Tommie Williams (R - Lyons) carried House Resolution 36, which was sponsored by Rep. Tommy Benton (R - Jefferson). The resolution honors and commemorates numerous outstanding Georgians who have served their community, state and country admirably. The honorees include veterans and first responders injured or killed in the line of duty. HR 36 passed by a vote of 48 to 2. - **HR 36**

Qualified Interactive Entertainment Production Company Tax Credit Extension

Carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton) and sponsored by Rep. Jon Burns (R - Newington), House Bill 339 passed with a vote of 44 to 7. Current law allows tax credits for entertainment production companies and affiliates that expire on January 1, 2016. HB 339 extends sunset date to January 1, 2019. The bill also requires companies claiming the tax credits to issue an annual report to the Department of Revenue, with the Commissioner reporting these employment figures to the House Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committee. - **HB 339**

Defining Most Recent Employer

Sen. Josh McKoon (R - Columbus) carried House Bill 117, which was sponsored by Rep. Mike Hamilton (R - Cumming). HB 117 clarifies the definition of "most recent employer" in Georgia law to streamline the process to apply for unemployment benefits. The bill clarifies that when an employee leaves an employer in good faith, the employee cannot claim unemployment benefits. The bill also outlines when the statute of limitations on filing may be extended from three to seven years. HB 117 passed with a unanimous vote of 54 to 0. - **HB 117**

Basic Skills Education Tax Credit

Carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonega) and sponsored by Rep. Kevin Tanner (R - Dawsonville), House Bill 63 passed unanimously. Current law provides a basic skills education employer tax credit of \$150 per full-time student or equal to 1/3 of the cost of education per full-time student, whichever is less. HB 63 repeals that provision and replaces it with either a \$400 or a \$1200 tax credit. - **HB 63**

Prestige License Plates and Ad Valorem Tax Exemption

House Bill 48 was carried by Sen. Mike Dugan (R-Carrollton) and sponsored by Rep. Brooks Coleman (R - Duluth). HB 48 creates a special license plate for first responders who suffer a major injury in the line of duty. The legislation clarifies how a disabled veteran can receive a free license plate and allows a service member's surviving spouse or sibling to retain the special veteran's license plate. The bill also allows the unmarried surviving spouse or children of a disabled veteran to receive ad valorem tax exemptions. HB 48 passed in a vote of 45 to 3. - **HB 48**

Automated Medication Systems

Carried by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) and sponsored by Rep. Ron Stephens (R - Savannah), House Bill 511 allows pharmacists to transport prescriptions from the pharmacy in order to restock an automated medication dispenser. The bill also defines "durable medical equipment" and requires any person delivering such equipment to possess a valid supplier license. HB 511 passed unanimously in a vote of 48 to 0. - **HB 511**

Georgia Sports Commission Fund

House Bill 510, carried by Sen. Michael Rhett (D - Marietta) and sponsored by Rep. Ron Stephens (R - Savannah), passed in a 42 to 7 vote. HB 510 creates the five-member Georgia Sports Commission Fund. If a sports commission meets certain financial requirements and registers with the OneGeorgia Authority, that sports commission could be eligible for grants to reduce expenses, as long as the grants will be recovered via tax revenue generated by the event. - **HB 510**

Annual Cost Adjustment for Medical Records

Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville) carried House Bill 385, which was sponsored by Rep. Chad Nimmer (R - Blackshear). Each year the cost of copying and transmitting medical records is adjusted to reflect changes in the

Consumer Price Index. HB 385 transfers responsibility of this cost adjustment from the Office of Planning and Budget to the Department of Community Health. HB 385 passed in a 44 to 0 vote. - **HB 385**

Committee for Rural and Human Services Transportation Repeal

House Bill 386, carried by Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville) and sponsored by Rep. Chad Nimmer (R - Blackshear), repeals Georgia law relating to the Georgia Coordinating Committee for Rural and Human Services Transportation. HB 386 passed in a vote of 46 to 0. - **HB 386**

Facilities Fund for Charter Schools

Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville) carried House Bill 372, which was sponsored by Rep. Christian Coomer (R - Cartersville). This legislation prohibits any municipality, county or other local political subdivision of Georgia from requiring a charter school certified by the Department of Education to obtain any additional licenses to operate. HB 372 passed with a vote of 44 to 8. - **HB 372**

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

Carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton) and sponsored by Rep. Rick Jasperse (R - Jasper), House Bill 512 revises Georgia law relating to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) administration of mental health services. HB 512 replaces the term "regional office" with "local office" and replaces the term "regional planning board" with "regional advisory council." HB 512 passed with a unanimous vote. - **HB 512**

Bond Requirements for Tobacco Distributors

House Bill 312, carried by Sen. Tyler Harper (R - Ocilla) and sponsored by Rep. Jan Tankersley (R - Brooklet), passed in a vote of 50 to 0. Currently, tobacco manufacturers, importer, and distributors must file a performance bond with the Department of Revenue. HB 312 eliminates filing a performance bond for tobacco manufacturers and importers. - **HB 312**

Prepaid Fuel Tax Suspension

Carried by Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville) and sponsored by Rep. Chad Nimmer (R - Blackshear), House Bill 319 temporarily suspends the collection of any rate of pre-paid state taxes on motor fuels and aviation gasoline. The temporary suspension ends December 31, 2015. HB 319 passed with a vote of 47 to 5. - **HB 319**

Spendthrift Trusts

Sen. Bill Cowsert (R - Athens) carried House Bill 197, which was sponsored by Rep. Mike Jacobs (R - Brookhaven). HB 197, titled the Debtor-Creditor Uniform Law Modernization Act of 2015, allows for the transfer of assets into a qualified self-settled spendthrift trusts. The bill defines who can have an interest in these funds and that they are not available for alimony or child support claims. HB 197 passed in a vote of 37 to 17. - **HB 197**

Senate Approves 2016 Budget

The Senate approved the conference committee report for the FY 2016 general budget as defined in House Bill 76 in vote of 55 to 1. Carried by Sen. Jack Hill (R - Reidsville) and sponsored by Rep. David Ralston (R - Blue Ridge), HB 76 appropriates \$21.8 billion in state revenues for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2015, and ending June 30, 2016. The budget is constructed on approximately 4.57% Department of Revenue tax revenue growth over the 2015 amended revenue estimate. It includes \$280 million additional funds for the Quality Based Education program to offset austerity cuts and \$93.6 million to fully fund the Teachers Retirement System. The Senators who served on the conference committee are David Shafer (R - Duluth), Jack Hill (R - Reidsville) and Bill Cowsert (R - Athens). - **HB 76**

HB 17 Hidden Predator Act

Carried by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) and sponsored by Rep. Jason Spencer (R - Woodbine), House Bill

17 passed in a unanimous vote of 54 to 0. HB 17 amends the statute of limitations for someone who was sexually abused during childhood to file a civil claim. The statute of limitations will now expire on the day following the victim's 23rd birthday or after two years following the victim's discovery of such abuse. The provisions only apply to childhood sexual abuse committed on or after July 1, 2015. The bill also seeks to provide victims with access to evidence by allowing records to be disclosed in civil proceedings after a criminal case has been closed. - **HB 17**

Legalize the Sale of Fireworks

House Bill 110, carried by Sen. Jeff Mullis (R - Chickamauga) and sponsored by Rep. Jay Roberts (R - Ocilla), legalizes the use of fireworks in compliance with National Fire Protection Association standards by those 18 years of age or older, except in school safety zones. The bill also establishes a 5 percent excise tax on all fireworks, including sparklers. HB 110 passed with a vote of 43 to 7. - **HB 110**

Senate Approves Transportation Funding Plan

In a 42 to 12 vote, the Senate approved the conference committee report for House Bill 170. Carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonega) and sponsored by Rep. Jay Roberts (R - Ocilla), HB 170 repeals all state sales taxes on motor fuel but imposes excise taxes on gasoline motor fuel at 26 cents per gallon and diesel motor fuel at 29 cents per gallon. The bill also creates a highway impact fee for vehicles weighing above 15,500 lbs. and outlines how local governing authorities can enact Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Taxes to raise funds for local transportation projects. The bill also adds a \$5.00 per day fee to hotel and motel rates to stays less than 30 days and creates the Special Joint Committee on Georgia Revenue Structure. The Senators who served on the conference committee are Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonega), Tommie Williams (R - Lyons) and David Shafer (R - Duluth). - **HB 170**

Removing MARTA Budget Restrictions

House Bill 213 passed by a vote of 29 to 20. The bill, carried by Sen. Brandon Beach (R - Alpharetta) and Rep. Mike Jacobs (R - Brookhaven), suspends MARTA's budgetary restrictions as long as the organization submits to an independent management audit every four years and extends MARTA's 1% sales and use tax into 2057. The bill also makes the Executive Director of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority a voting member and outlines the competitive bidding process for new projects. - **HB 213**

THURSDAY, APRIL 2

Conveyances and Easements from Bidding Requirements

Carried by Sen. Rick Jeffares (R - McDonough) and sponsored by Rep. Emory Dunahoo (R - Gainesville), House Bill 104 clarifies and streamlines existing law relating to public competitive bidding procedures by exempting conveyances and easements from bidding requirements. HB 104 passed in a vote of 49 to 2. - **HB 104**

Hearing Aid Dealers and Dispensers

Sen. Dean Burke (R - Bainbridge) carried House Bill 232, which was sponsored by Rep. Amy Carter (R - Valdosta). HB 232 creates the State Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Dispensers. The bill revises licensing requirements and sets a required number of hours for continuing education for the renewal of a dispenser's license. Additionally, this bill requires that the applicant has satisfactory results from a fingerprint check report conducted by the Georgia Crime Information Center and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. HB 232 passed with a vote of 51 to 1. - **HB 232**

Child Support Contempt Jurisdiction

Carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton) and sponsored by Rep. Katie Dempsey (R - Rome), House Bill 567 establishes which courts have jurisdiction to enforce orders to pay child support. HB 567 passed with a vote of 52 to 0. - **HB 567**

Retirement and Pensions Corrections

Carried by Sen. Ellis Black (R - Valdosta) and sponsored by Rep. Paul Battles (R - Cartersville), House Bill 266 corrects certain provisions to investment authority of local retirement systems and clarifies that the mandatory contributions for retirement benefits are to be returned to the employee's spouse or his/her estate in the event of death before retirement. HB 266 passed unanimously. - **HB 266**



Early Child Care and Learning Code Revision

Sen. John Wilkinson (R - Toccoa) carried House Bill 401, which was sponsored by Rep. Chuck Efstration (R - Dacula). The bill passed in a vote of 53 to 1. HB 401 updates several definitions in the code relating to temporary or part-time employee. It outlines the procedures for fingerprinting and background checks, and also allows the Department of Early Care and Learning to solicit and accept outside funds or grants. - **HB 401**



Georgia HIV/Syphilis Pregnancy Screening Act of 2015

House Bill 436, carried by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) and sponsored by Rep. Valerie Clark (R - Lawrenceville), updates the Georgia HIV Pregnancy Act of 2007 to include syphilis testing for pregnant women. This measure also requires a physician to discuss and offer testing for HIV to pregnant women. HB 436 passed in a vote of 47 to 0. - **HB 436**

Pardons and Paroles

House Bill 71 passed in a unanimous vote of 55 to 0. Carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega) and sponsored by Rep. Kevin Tanner (R - Dawsonville), HB 71 outlines the procedures relating to the notice of victims and district attorneys prior to a Board of Pardons and Paroles. The bill also details when a hearing will be held, what information will be considered by the Board and how the Board will communicate its conclusions. - **HB 71**



Ad Valorem Tax

Sen. Tyler Harper (R - Ocilla) carried House Bill 374, which was sponsored by Rep. Randy Nix (R - LaGrange). HB 374 exempts self-propelled farm equipment held in inventory for sale or resale from ad valorem taxation. This bill also adds to the definition of farm equipment. HB 374 passed with a vote of 51 to 2. - **HB 374**



Condominium Special Assessments

Carried by Sen. P. K. Martin (R - Lawrenceville) and sponsored by Rep. Matt Dollar (R - Marietta), House Bill 245 allows the board of directors of a condominium to impose a special assessment no more than one-sixth of the yearly common expense for the unit up from \$200. HB 245 passed with a vote of 38 to 14. - **HB 245**

Juvenile Court Jurisdiction

Sen. John F. Kennedy (R - Macon) carried House Bill 361, which was sponsored by Rep. Andrew Welch (R - McDonough). HB 361 enacts reforms from the Georgia Council on Criminal Justice relating to charges against a defendant under the age of 17. Traffic violations are now exclusively under the juvenile courts. The bill also defines how cases can be transferred to juvenile court and what violent offenses are solely the purview of The Superior Court. HB 361 passed in unanimous vote of 41 to 0. - **HB 361**



Consumer Information and Awareness Act

House Bill 416 was carried by Sen. Fran Millar (R - Atlanta) and sponsored by Rep. Carl Rogers (R - Gainesville). This bill requires each health care practitioner to clearly post and communicate his or her specific licensure to all current and prospective patients. HB 416 passed with a vote of 44 to 7. - **HB 416**



Professional Corporations

House Bill 316, carried by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R - White) and sponsored by Rep. Bert Reeves (R - Marietta), provides that the practice of medicine, surgery and optometry will be considered the practice of only one profession for the purposes of professional corporations. HB 316 passed in a vote of 49 to 1. - **HB 316**

Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority Registration

House Bill 524, carried by Sen. Tommie Williams (R - Lyons) and sponsored by Rep. Barry Fleming (R - Harlem), passed in a unanimous vote. The bill provides a standardized registration process for the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority to use for business's registration. The bill also amends the current fee structure and allows the Authority to collect \$5 from each fee. - **HB 524**



War Veterans' Home

Sen. Burt Jones (R - Jackson) carried House Bill 180, which was sponsored by Rep. Rusty Kidd (I - Milledgeville). This bill revises residency requirements for admission to the War Veterans' Home from five years to two. HB 180 passed with a unanimous vote. - **HB 180**



Sales and Use Tax

Sen. Hunter Hill (R - Atlanta) carried House Bill 426, which was sponsored by Rep. Darlene Taylor (R - Thomasville). This bill provides a limited tax exemption for grocers that donate to food banks. HB 426 passed in a vote of 52 to 1. - **HB 426**

Property Insurance for Aircraft

Carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton) and sponsored by Rep. Mike Cheokas (R - Americus), House Bill 84 requires all aircraft property insurance policies to advertise any specific exclusions related to pilot and aircraft certification. This notice must also contain instructions the insured person must take to protect and preserve rights and coverage under the policy. HB 84 passed in a vote of 37 to 0. - **HB 84**



Alcoholic Beverages

House Bill 152 was carried by Sen. Bill Cowser (R - Athens) and sponsored by Rep. Geoff Duncan (R - Cumming). This bill requires bars to provide notification of disciplinary actions to the Department of Revenue, and prohibits anyone under the age of 21 from serving as bouncers or entering bars alone. It also bans the use of powdered alcohol, with certain exceptions. HB 152 passed in a vote of 52 to 2. - **HB 152**

Public Retirement Investments

Sen. Ben Watson (R - Savannah) carried House Bill 217, which was sponsored by Rep. Terry Rogers (R - Clarkesville). This bill expands the list of allowable investments for public retirement funds to include investments in mutual funds,



commingled funds, collective investment funds, common trusts and group trusts. HB 217 passed in a vote of 49 to 3. - **HB 217**

Insurance Coverage for Specific Burn Treatments

Sen. Dean Burke (R - Bainbridge) carried House Bill 409, which was sponsored by Rep. Darlene Taylor (R - Thomasville). This legislation prohibits health insurance companies that provide coverage for burn treatments, from limiting or excluding coverage on the basis that cryopreserved cadaver skin tissue is an experimental medical treatment. HB 409 passed unanimously. - **HB 409**

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

Carried by Sen. John Wilkinson (R - Toccoa) and sponsored by Rep. Mandi Ballinger (R - Canton), House Bill 268 passed unanimously. HB 268 requires the suspected child abuse be reported when there is reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred by a school or agency personnel. - **HB 268**

Move Over for Sanitation Workers

Carried by Sen. John Albers (R - Roswell) and sponsored by Rep. Brett Harrell (R - Snellville), House Bill 206 establishes that sanitation workers will now get “move over” protection. Drivers must make a lane change or reduce speed when they encounter active sanitation workers. HB 206 passed in a vote of 47 to 3. - **HB 206**

Behavioral Health Coordinating Council Members

Carried by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) and sponsored by Rep. Katie Dempsey (R - Rome), House Bill 288 allows the Governor to appoint two additional members to the Behavioral Health Coordinating Council. HB 288 passed in a vote of 46 to 4. - **HB 288**

Paternity Testing

Sen. Dean Burke (R - Bainbridge) carried House Bill 568, which was sponsored by Rep. Katie Dempsey (R - Rome). HB 568 passed unanimously and defines when the Department of Human Services (DHS) may order a genetic paternity test. The bill also outlines who is responsible for the costs of these tests, and the request process that genetic testing material must be destroyed after testing is complete. - **HB 568**

Building and Housing Requirements

Sen. Rick Jeffares (R - McDonough) carried House Bill 341, which was sponsored by Rep. Howard Maxwell (R - Dallas). The legislation outlines requirements for state buildings and housing codes to provide that certain qualified inspectors may be certified by the Building Officials' Association of Georgia. HB 341 passed in a vote of 48 to 0. - **HB 341**

Local Government Investment Pool

House Bill 95, carried by Sen. John Albers (R - Roswell) and sponsored by Rep. Kevin Tanner (R - Dawsonville) requires the state treasurer to place funds in the local government investment pool in a separate trust fund administered State Depository Board policies. HB 95 passed unanimously. - **HB 95**

Georgia Lottery Corporation

Sen. Hunter Hill (R - Atlanta) carried House bill 275, which was sponsored by Rep. Brian Strickland (R - McDonough). This bill adds the Georgia Lottery Corporation to the current enumerated list of claimant agencies entitled to pursue unpaid lottery proceeds as setoff debt collection relative to income taxes. This will now include unpaid lottery proceeds. HB 275 passed with a vote of 41 to 2. - **HB 275**

Date of Incorporation of Local Ordinances for Drug-Free Commercial Zones

House Bill 89, carried by Sen. Donzella James (D - Atlanta) and sponsored by Rep. Roger Bruce (D - Atlanta), passed by a vote of 44 to 3. The bill allows city or county ordinances relating to a drug-free commercial zone

established on or before July 1, 2015, to be included in Georgia's drug enforcement law for the charges of manufacturing, distributing, dispensing and possessing with intent to distribute controlled substances or marijuana.
- **HB 89**

Avondale Estates

House Bill 662 presented by Sen. Elena Parent (D - Atlanta) sponsored by Rep. Karla Drenner (D - Avondale Estates). This bill amends the charter for the City of Avondale Estates by changing the corporate limits of the city. HB 662 passed with a vote of 40-4. - **HB 662**

The Georgia State Senate has **ADJOURNED SINE DIE!**