



Georgia Senate Press Office Staff

Andrew Allison
Acting Director

Kessarin Horvath
Senior Communications Associate

Kami Briden
Communications Associate

Bianca Theodore
2020 Broadcast Aide

Caleb Torres
2020 Communications Intern

David Howell
2020 Broadcast Intern

Keenan Rogers
2020 Senate Photographer

201 Coverdell Legislative Office Building
18 Capitol Square S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30303
p: 404.656.0028

Edited by:


Steve Tippins, Chief of Staff
Senate President Pro Tempore Office
steve.tippins@senate.ga.gov
321 State Capitol Building
404.656.6578

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This Week in the Senate

Special Session - March 16, 2020



Authorizing a Public Health Emergency

After the abrupt suspension of our legislative business on Friday, Governor Brian Kemp called on the legislature to return for a special session on Monday in order to ratify an executive order declaring a public health emergency in Georgia. The powers granted to the Governor under this order, while great, are necessary in order to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and get the resources to the patients and healthcare facilities that need them the most. While an unconventional week, it arguably contained the most important work we will conduct all year.

On Monday morning, the Senate convened at 8:00 a.m., as required for special sessions under Georgia statute, and immediately got to work. After passing a few procedural resolutions, the Senate and House came to an agreement which, along with approving the Governor's executive order, calls for the General Assembly to reconvene for a special session on April 15, 2020, in order to assess the progress the state has made in addressing the pandemic. If necessary, the Governor is also granted the power to renew the public health emergency if the circumstances dictate.

On Tuesday, Gov. Kemp signed the amended budget for the 2020 fiscal year. While this budget contains a great many provisions, including funding to establish a criminal gang database for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the most urgent allocation is \$100 million which will go towards COVID-19 response efforts. This funding will be critical in ensuring our state is prepared to address any resource needs specific to helping state agencies in their response efforts. Additionally, if the full \$100 million is not used, the remainder will be deposited back into our state's emergency fund. The balance for this fund depends on careful stewardship of state finances and has been built up over the course of years in order to be used for situations just like this.

Gov. Kemp and his team have been working tirelessly to collect all the data on COVID-19 in our state and respond accordingly. His transparency throughout this process has been commendable and his cooperation with the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has resulted in a quick and effective response to the outbreak. DPH will continue to update their public website with new data each day, so decision makers will always have the most up to date information. I am thankful for Gov. Kemp and his staff, Commissioner of DPH Dr. Kathleen Toomy, and the countless medical professionals and first responders who continue to work around the clock to assist all those affected by COVID-19.

While a date to resume the regular 2020 legislative session has not yet been set, the General Assembly will continue to work for all those we represent. Now, more than ever, it is vital that your elected representatives look out for your best interests and that the public remain calm and listen to the guidance issued by Gov. Kemp's office, Georgia DPH and the CDC. As we continue to wade into unfamiliar waters, know that your state is in good hands. If I can be of any assistance or if I can answer any questions related to Georgia's COVID-19 response or any legislation that has been discussed, please reach out to my office.

Senator Butch Miller
President Pro Tempore, Georgia Senate

MONDAY, MARCH 16

Adopting Senate Rules for the 2020 Special Session

Senate Resolution 1EX, sponsored by Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville), codifies the Rules of the Senate for the 2020 Special Session of the Georgia General Assembly. This resolution would revise the rules in order to permit the immediate transmittal of bills and resolutions to the House, as well as enact other minor adjustments to Senate procedures. SR 1EX was adopted with a vote of 50 to 0. – **SR 1EX**

Notifying the House of Representatives of the Senate's Convening

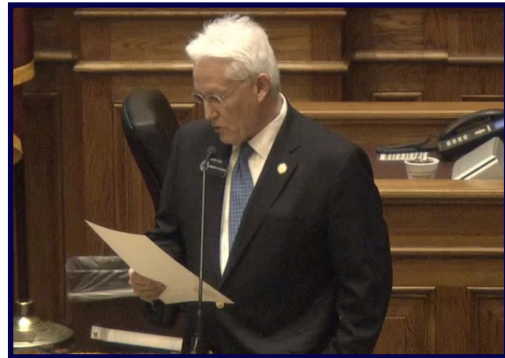
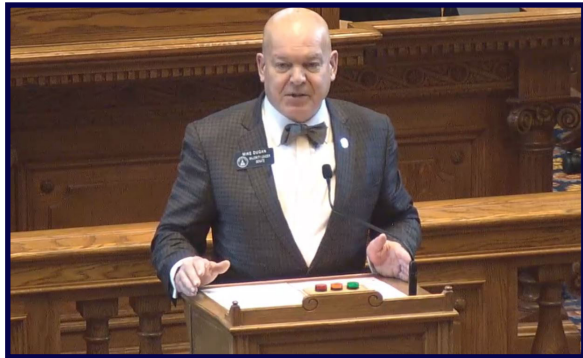
Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville) sponsored Senate Resolution 2EX, which alerts the House of Representatives that the Senate has convened for the 2020 Special Session of the Georgia General Assembly. – **SR 2EX**

Alerting the Governor of the Convening of the Senate

Senate Resolution 3EX, sponsored by Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville), notifies Governor Brian P. Kemp that the Senate has convened for the 2020 Special Session of the Georgia General Assembly. – **SR 3EX**

Agreeing With the Declaration of a Public Health Emergency

Sen. Mike Dugan (R – Carrollton) carried House Resolution 4EX, which concurs with Governor Brian P. Kemp's executive order declaring a public health emergency in Georgia and would grant him additional powers outlined in O.C.G.A. 38-3-51. HR 4EX passed with a vote of 47-0. – **HR 4EX**



Helpful Resources:

Gov. Brian Kemp's Declaration of a Public Health Emergency: <https://gov.georgia.gov/executive-action/executive-orders-0/2020-executive-orders>

Georgia Department of Public Health: <https://dph.georgia.gov/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Small Business Administration: <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/>

Georgia COVID-19 Hotline: (844) 442-2681

The Georgia Senate will reconvene at a date and time determined by joint agreement between the Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House