



2017 Legislative Session Wrap-Up, June 22, 2017

Whence from Here?

Bills that simply fail to pass are returned to the last subject committee from whence they came. Thus, a bill that passed the House and the Senate HHS Committee, but never got a Senate floor vote, will pick up next year back in Senate HHS. If that same bill were voted down at any point, it must be reintroduced as a new bill next year and start the entire process over.

Bills on the Way to the Governor's Desk

The Budget – [HB 44](#) was passed by both Houses on the 37th Legislative Day, the earliest point in the process in anyone's memory. At \$24.9 billion, it's also the largest budget in history, although not the largest per capita. The Governor has line-item veto authority in Georgia and generally strikes through a few items, most often for technical reasons, but sometimes based on policy or political disagreements.

Campus Carry -- [HB 280](#) (Mandy Ballinger-R) passed with only a six-vote margin in the House and a three-vote margin in the Senate Thursday night, but it now rests on the Governor's desk. Gov. Nathan Deal vetoed a similar bill last year, but this year's version made a few modifications, so the Governor's position on the bill remains one of the big question marks for the session.

Dental Hygienists -- [HB 154](#) (Sharon Cooper-R) finally crossed the finish line in the General Assembly. The bill will allow dental hygienists to work in venues such as nursing homes and schools without their supervising dentist in the same building. It also means the hygienist can clean your teeth in the dental office while the dentist steps next door for lunch. Georgia was the last state in the nation to take this step.

Medical Cannabis -- [SB 16](#) (Ben Watson-R) is a bill that expands the number of ailments that may be treated with doctor-prescribed medical cannabis. The actual bill that passed started in the Senate, but Rep. Allen Peake (R-Macon) is the legislator credited with leading the charge on medical cannabis for the last several years.

Assistance to Failing Schools – [HB 338](#) (Kevin Tanner-R) is the Governor's second try at rescuing failing schools in Georgia. Voters rejected a constitutional amendment last year, so this session pared back the Governor's authority somewhat and does not change the constitution. The current bill that passed both houses allows only non-profit companies to take charge of schools deemed to be failing. The overall rescue system will be run by a Chief Turnaround Officer who answers to the state Board of Education.

Firefighters Cancer Insurance -- [HB 146](#) (Micah Gravely-R) will require all fire departments to provide cancer insurance policies to firefighters. A bill last year requiring workers comp coverage for firefighters' cancer failed, but this year's compromise made it to the Governor's desk.

Rural Hospital Tax Credits -- [SB 180](#) (Dean Burke-R) goes to the Governor as a bill that adds juice to last year's measure allowing tax credits for contributions to rural hospitals. In the case of a single individual or head of household, 90% of the actual amount expended or \$5,000 per tax year, whichever is less, may be deducted. For a married couple filing jointly, those figures change to 90% or \$10,000, whichever is less. SB 180 also changes the definition of "rural hospital" to include those in counties of 50,000 or less

population, instead of 35,000. The latter amendment allows six additional hospitals to participate that are physically located in larger counties, but serve very rural populations in surrounding counties.

Rural Development Tax Credit – [HB 314](#) (Jason Shaw-R), known as the Georgia Agribusiness and Rural Jobs Act, would allow tax credits for qualified capital investments in rural development projects. The language made its way as an amendment onto [SB 133](#) (Larry Walker-R), a bill dealing with corporate net worth tax minimums. The amended bill failed to pass the Senate on its first vote Thursday night, 26-23, because 29 yeas are required. Sen. Walker (R-Perry) won a motion to reconsider the Senate’s action by a five-vote margin, and that maneuver resulted in a 29-23 victory the second time around, sending the package on to the Governor without a vote to spare.

Downtown Revitalization Tax Credit -- [HB 73](#) (Penny Houston-R) provides for tax credit incentives to promote the revitalization of vacant rural Georgia downtowns by encouraging investment, job creation, and economic growth in long-established business districts. It’s on the way to the Governor’s office after passing the House and Senate with wide margins.

Family Sick Leave – [SB 201](#) (Butch Miller-R) requires that businesses with 25 or more employees that already provide sick leave as a benefit, must allow employees to use at least four earned sick days to care for ill family members. After a close vote in the Senate, it’s headed to the Governor’s desk.

Nurse Licensure Compact – [SB 166](#) (Renee Unterman-R) goes to the Governor as a part of SB 109. The SB 166 language adds Georgia to a compact of 25 other states allowing licensed nurses to temporarily practice in another state while applying to be licensed in the new state. It is hoped the measure will ease nursing shortages, especially in hospitals near a state line. [SB 109](#) (Michael Williams-R) is a compact for Emergency Medical Technicians, which permits them to practice across state lines.

Better Luck Next Year

Income Tax Reform – [HB 329](#) (Jay Powell-R) Both the House and Senate passed versions of income tax reform, but they couldn’t iron out specific differences on the 40th Day. Thus, it will be back next session to help kick off election year politicking.

Internet Retailers Sales Tax – [HB 61](#) (Jay Powell-R) would force internet retailers to either collect Georgia sales tax or give the state a list of people who purchased goods over the internet without paying sales tax so the state may pursue the tax. The language was added to HB 329 (above), which made it to a conference committee, but didn’t receive a final vote. Thus, they will have to revisit it next year.

Surprise Billing – [SB 8](#) (Renee Unterman-R) an effort to curtail “surprise” bills from out-of-network” health providers when a procedure is performed by an in-network hospital. The bill passed the Senate but remains in the House HHS Committee.

Destination Resorts (Casino Gambling) – [HB 158](#) (Ron Stephens-R) and [SB 79](#) (Brandon Beach-R) both offered up scenarios to permit casino gambling at destination resorts with a requirement for massive investment in non-gaming developments that produce more revenue than the gaming. Neither bill moved, but the issue is expected to be a hot topic again next year.

The FAST Act -- [SB 2](#) (Mike Dugan-R) is a bill being pushed by Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle with the intent of streamlining the process by which small businesses must get permits and licenses from both state agencies and local governments. The House pushed back on some of the language that appeared to heap bureaucratic requirements on cities and counties. The bill passed the Senate easily and made it to the House floor, but was never called for a vote. It will be returned to the House Small Business Committee and pick up there next year.

Higher Percentage of Lottery Revenues to HOPE – [SB 5](#) (Bill Cowsert-R) puts into language an idea the Senate Majority Leader has pushed for some time – a higher percentage of lottery proceeds should be directed to the HOPE scholarship coffers, meaning less for administrative costs such as salaries and advertising. The bill passed the Senate but was never voted on by the full House. It will return to the House Appropriations Committee.

[HB 205, Oil and Gas Deep Drilling Act](#), (Rep. John Meadows-R)

Relating to mining and drilling, so as to regulate the exploration and extraction of gas and oil and to create an Oil and Gas Board and impose a severance tax on the extraction of oil and gas. **Status:** Referred to the Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Cmte, Hearing Only in Energy Subcmte, Second Hearing Only in Energy Subcmte, Energy Subcmte Favorably Reported, Cmte Favorably Reported by Substitute, Pending Rules Cmte, Passed House by Substitute, Sent to Senate, Referred to Regulated Industries & Utilities, Cmte Favorably Reported by Substitute, Pending Rules Cmte, Passed Senate As Amended, Pending House to Agree, House Agreed as Amended, Senate Disagreed, House Insisted, Conference Cmte Appointed
Note: Conference Cmte report never brought to the floor.

[HB 247, Tax Exemption for Concrete Mixer Transports](#), (Rep. Dominic LaRiccia-R)

Relating to general provisions regarding state sales and use tax, so as to exempt machinery used to mix or transport concrete from such tax. **Status:** Referred to Ways & Means Cmte, Hearing Only Sales Tax Subcmte, Passed Sales Tax Subcmte, Passed Cmte by Substitute, Pending Rules Cmte, Passed House by Substitute, Sent to Senate, Referred to Finance Cmte, Cmte Favorably Reported, Pending Rules Cmte, Passed Senate, On to the Governor, **Governor Deal Signed on May 8, 2016.**

[HB 134, Change provisions of special district mass transportation sales tax](#), (Rep. Bubber Epps-R) Relating to general provisions regarding the special district mass transportation sales and use tax, so as to change the definition of transportation purposes regarding such tax; to change certain provisions relating to special districts and the imposition of such tax. **Status:** Referred to Ways & Means Cmte, Sales Tax Subcmte Favorably Reported, Passed Cmte by Substitute, Pending Rules Cmte, Passed House by Substitute, Sent to Senate, Referred to Finance Cmte, Cmte Favorably Reported by Substitute, Pending Rules Cmte, Passed Senate, Pending House to Agree, House Agreed to Senate Amend or Sub, On to the Governor, **Governor Deal Signed on May 1, 2017**

[SR 152, Joint Study Committee on Stream Buffers in Georgia](#), (Sen. Frank Ginn-R)

A RESOLUTION creating the Joint Study Committee on Stream Buffers in Georgia; and for other purposes. **Status:** Referred to Natural Resources and the Environment Cmte, Cmte Favorably Reported, Pending Rules Cmte, Passed Senate, Sent to House, Referred to Natural Resources & Environment Cmte. Cmte Favorably Reported, Passed House

[HB 107, Change definitions for rooms, lodgings, and accommodations for excise tax](#), (Rep. Jay Powell-R)

Relating to excise tax on rooms, lodgings, and accommodations, so as to change certain definitions regarding such taxes. **Status:** Referred to Ways & Means Cmte, **Dead for the Session**

[HR 848, House Commission on Transit Governance and Funding](#), (Rep. Kevin Tanner)

A RESOLUTION creating the House Commission on Transit Governance and Funding; and for other purposes. **Status:** Referred to Rules Cmte, Cmte Favorably Reported, Passed House

Note: Language similar to [HB 160](#) which was a joint commission

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