

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

Governor's Budget Moves Vocational Rehab from DOL to Department of Human Services



2012 Legislative Beginnings

by Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

The beginning of the 2012 legislative session revealed many changes in Georgia's financial condition, leadership and structure. As the session began on January 9th, without a significant winter event, the Governor jumped right into his budget and policy proposals. This is the first year Governor Deal had full command of the Georgia budget and presented many of his own ideas and recommendations.

The Governor gave his State of the State Address in primetime on Tuesday, January 10th to a full House Chamber and to a live television audience on GPTV. He was fortunate to present when Georgia's financial picture was looking positive and the nation's unemployment rate was declining. The FY 2012 Amended budget was adjusted to \$18.5 billion and the FY 2013 budget is up \$700 million to \$19.2 billion (See graph below of Georgia State Revenues since the recession ended). While revenues have been climbing the Governor stuck to 2% cuts across most state agencies (including CRP contracts and other specialty providers). He also proposes eliminating 891 positions from state government, with 154 of those jobs currently held by active employees. Dropping the number of state employees to 96,796. Both budgets can be viewed on the [Office of Planning and Budget Website](#).

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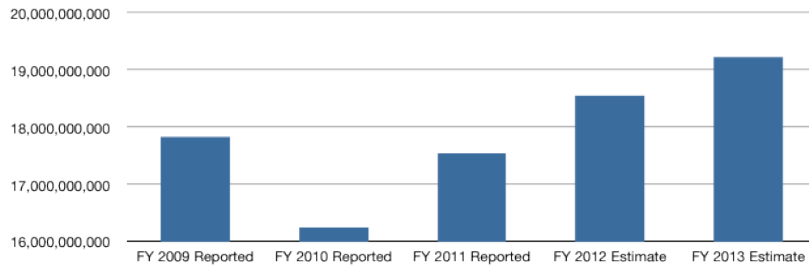
Special
Announcements



**State Use
Council Meeting**
January 26, 2012
10:00AM
Location: Sloppy
Floyd Bldg. West,
Atlanta, GA

ARMS Meeting
January 27, 2012
Location: Goodwill
of North GA
1502 Pleasant Hill
Rd
Duluth, GA

Georgia State Revenues FY 2009-2013



Governor Deal's speech centered on three themes: Economy, Education and Alternatives to Incarceration. The Governor proposed several infrastructure investments in transportation, water supply and deepening the port of Savannah as well as continued streamlining and efficiencies in state government. These investments would rely on bond packages to take advantage of Georgia's AAA rating. The Governor emphasized the critical need to enhance infrastructure to provide immediate and long-term economic recovery. He also unveiled his proposal to remove the sales tax from energy used during manufacturing (which is about 10% of Georgia's economy), expanding tax credits to companies creating jobs from 50 to only 15 per year, and lessening sales and use tax for big project construction materials.

In terms of Education he plans to restore cuts to all levels of education, although his proposal will not restore completely the cuts incurred over the years, and did not give all teachers raises. The Governor incorporated several of the Criminal Justice Reform Council changes into his budget to expand accountability courts with the largest state investment ever of \$10 million and fund substance abuse treatment centers. Governor Deal's son is a Judge who operates a Drug Court. Governor Deal himself is a former Judge. He is very dedicated to locking up violent criminals yet seeks to find alternatives for those whose lives are several impacted by addiction, substance abuse, mental illness and domestic violence resulting in criminal behavior.

In terms of leadership there were a few adjustments in the committee assignments amongst the legislative branch and a power struggle still going on in the Senate. First in the House, Speaker Ralston has moved Rep. Penny Houston (R-Nashville) over to become Vice Chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Economic Development and replaces her with Rep. Katie Dempsey (R-Rome) as the Vice Chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Resources. This is the most significant change impacting health and human service legislative leadership. In the Senate Lt. Governor Casey Cagle is still being challenged for control of the Chamber by Senators Tommie Williams and Chip Rogers. While Constitutionally the Lt. Gov. has little power but to preside over the Senate the Senate Rules determine how the Senate will function. A committee ran it last year leaving little power to the Lt. Gov and creating a cumbersome management structure. Governor Deal stepped in briefly to facilitate compromise mid-week but

GATES Board of Directors Meeting
 February 3, 2012
 9:30AM
 Location: Tommy Nobis Center, Marietta, GA

ARMS Meeting
 April 20, 2012
 Location: Tommy Nobis Center
 1480 Bells Ferry Rd
 Marietta, GA

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was unsuccessful. It appears this power struggle will continue, creating an unpredictable environment in the Senate.

The big news to the GATES family is the proposal by Governor Deal to move the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation from the GA Department of Labor to the GA Department of Human Services (DHS). This came as quite a shock to both GATES Executive Committee and the Department of Labor. GATES has enjoyed a strong working relationship with Voc Rehab over many years and welcomed Commissioner Butler when he took office in 2010. Commissioner Butler is a strong advocate for people with disabilities and put this commitment to work to enhance opportunities for employment.

GATES took the week to investigate the proposal and evaluate the implications of such a move. During a conference call with the GATES Executive Committee, the Governor's Office explained they are very committed to employment for people with disabilities and sought to find an alignment within state government that maximized resources and funding. After much deliberation the Governor was convinced a new alignment was required for Voc Rehab and a few other state agencies. GATES Executive Leadership also discussed this move with DHS Commissioner Clyde Reese, III, Esq. to understand his vision and plan. Commissioner Reese has appointed a Transition Team and its meetings are open to stakeholders. GATES plans to send representatives to attend the weekly meetings (meetings are planned for Monday's at 2pm in Room 29-250 in 2 Peachtree Street Offices in Atlanta). GATES will continue to monitor, evaluate and offer input as this proposal progresses. We will keep you informed of the progress and impact of this proposal.

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Call for Information

THE PORTAL is a communication tool for GATES and GATES members. If you have stories about your organization, staff announcements, program descriptions, or other information you want to share with other GATES members, please send the info to Charles Hall, chall@asginfo.net



GATES

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports

44 Broad Street
Suite 503
Atlanta, GA 30303
Phone: 404-523-6674

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