

## News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE  
**GATES PORTAL**

### 2014 First Week and Five Days Done



By Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

#### **Budget Moving at Break-neck Speed**

The first week of session certainly did not disappoint in terms of all the hype about how fast the session would move. In addition to the Joint Budget Hearings Wednesday afternoon, which were limited to Education, Transportation and the economic outlook for Georgia, there were Joint Appropriation Subcommittees to hear every part of the budget recommendations for Amended FY 2014 on Thursday and Friday. You can view in the Governor's Budget [here](#). It is expected that the Amended FY 2014 will pass out of the House this coming week and they will begin review FY 2015 the last week of January.

#### **Vocational Rehabilitation Budget Impact**

The Governor continued the commitment the Legislature made to Warm Spring in the Amended FY 2014 budget to fund the operating deficit. The document described the appropriations by saying: "\$5,534,290 for the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency including \$5.4 million to sustain medical operations at the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute." Unfortunately this money cannot be used for matching 110 funds. The Governor continues this into the FY 2015 budget by placing "\$469,043 in new state funds to sustain medical operations" at Warm Springs and \$6,100,000 facility improvements in bonds for Warm Springs.

This does not change the message, \$8.2 million in new state funds is still needed to fully fund GVRA, meet the need of people with disabilities to be available for work, and restore the promise of a "lift and shift" made

#### In This Issue

[2014 First Week](#)

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Special  
Announcements



**GATES Board  
of Directors  
Winter Meeting  
Thursday  
January 30, 2014  
9:30 AM  
Goodwill of the  
Southern Rivers,  
Columbus, GA**

**State Use  
Council  
Meeting  
January 23, 2014  
10:00 AM**

when GVRA was established as an independent agency. Especially since Governor Deal made the following comment during his State of the State Speech.

*There is no such thing as free money, particularly when it comes from Washington and has costly strings attached. Washington wants to mandate to Georgia how we spend our dollars. Let me tell you, in Georgia, we know a lot more about how to balance a budget than Washington does. And don't be deceived by the argument that "it's our money-the Federal Government is just giving some of it back." Yes, it is our money, but if the Federal Government doesn't need it for federal purposes, they should stop taking it in the first place!*

These very bold words have legislators/candidates concerned about federal matching funds. Emphasis needs to be on \$8.2 million in state funds as a commitment to Georgia citizens with disabilities and those returning military veterans. You can read his State of the State and Joint Appropriations Committee speeches.

This past week advocacy was in full force as vocational rehabilitation professionals and people with disabilities visited with their legislators and participated in the GRA Reception on Thursday. There was a great turnout and many legislators visited with their constituents. This must continue with haste over the next two weeks since the session is moving quickly as expected.

#### **Issues impacting the session and state health policy**

As mentioned in the session primer this legislature is moving fast because of the requirement for federal elections to move to May 20th. Legislators did not want to have two separate primary election times (one for federal candidates and another for state candidates). Therefore the Senate worked to make the necessary changes to an existing election bill ([HB 310](#)) with a May 20th date for all primaries and qualifying of all candidates set for March 3-7. The general election will remain on the first Tuesday, Nov 4, 2014.

Two other issues taking center stage are lifting gun carry restrictions on college campuses and allowing for dispensing of medical marijuana. While the gun carry issue seemed to be getting leadership backing a recent poll showed the public did not favor allowing college students to carry guns on campus by an overwhelming 56% against carrying guns to 31% in support. On the other hand recent news coverage of children with seizure disorders and other conditions where medical marijuana has shown some assistance with managing the condition seems to be gaining ground. A poll by [Insider Advantage](#) currently showed 51% in favor of allowing physicians to prescribe medical marijuana on a limited bases to reduce childhood seizures compared to 27% opposed.

[Back To Top](#)

Call for Information

**Location: Sloppy  
Floyd Bldg - West  
Tower**

#### **State Use Council Meeting**

**March 27, 2014  
10:00 AM**

**Location: Sloppy  
Floyd Bldg - West  
Tower**

#### **Working Wonders Day**

**March 27, 2014  
Noon**

**Location: Sloppy  
Floyd Bldg**

#### **GATES Board of Directors Spring Meeting**

**April 25, 2014  
Location: -TBD**

#### **Galaxy of Stars and Tommy Awards**

**Luncheon  
April 30, 2014**

**Cobb Galleria  
Centre**

**(sponsored by  
Nobis Works)**

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## GATES

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