

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

Session Begins with a mix of New and Old Leadership



By Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

With the first two weeks behind how long could this legislative session last. For the first time in memory the legislature voted on [HR 50](#) Monday, January 28th setting the first 29 days of the session until March 5th. They will be in Monday-Friday every week except for taking off Feb 15-18. A schedule, which spans three months, is unprecedented. Although I usually don't prognosticate political futures this one could still go into April because of all the new legislators learning the ropes, a Medicaid budget requiring \$745 million in new funds to cover increased enrollment and a hospital bed tax worth over \$500 million set to expire and leave a gaping hole if not passed.

In viewing the Senate we see leadership restored to Lt. Governor Casey Cagle (R) to make committee assignments and direct legislation to committees. Senator David Shafer (R-Duluth) has ascended to the role of President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Senator Ronny Chance (R-Tyrone) is the Majority Leader. The Minority Leader is still Senator Steve Henson (D-Tucker).

The Senate Appropriations Committee remains under the Chairmanship of Senator Jack Hill (R-Reidsville), finds Senator Renee Unterman (R-Buford) promoted to Vice Chair and Senator Tim Golden (R-Valdosta - recently converted from Democrat to Republican) as Secretary. In the Subcommittees we find an important flip of chairs. Senator Renee Unterman Chairs the Approp Subcommittee of Human Development & Public Health with Sen. Golden as Vice Chair. Then they flip positions in the Health Subcommittee. The new Georgia Voc Rehab Agency will

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Special Announcements



GATES Board Meeting

**Friday
February 1, 2013
10:00 AM
Location: Creative
Enterprises**

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regular publication
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have staff or others*

come under Human Development and Public Health because it is administratively attached to the Department of Human Services.

On the House side Representative David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) maintains his position as Speaker. Remaining in leadership are Rep. Jan Jones (R-Milton) as Speaker Pro Tem, Rep. Larry O'Neal (R-Bonaire) as Majority Leader, and Rep. Stacey Abrams (D-Atlanta) as Minority Leader. Key committee chairmanships on Appropriations remain the same. Rep. Terry England (R-Auburn) as overall chair, Rep. Butch Parrish (R-Swainsboro) chairs the House Health Subcommittee and Rep. Katie Dempsey (R-Rome) chairs the House Human Resources Subcommittee. This committee is responsible for making recommendations for the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities and the Department of Human Service which has GVRA administratively attached. Both committees are comprised of the same members.

Leadership matters and committee assignments are critical. Be sure to see if you have a facility or office in the District of any of these leaders.

Legislation is always slow in the first part of a 2-year session cycle. While this year is mostly the same there are two legislative items moving and focusing attention. The first is the Hospital Provider Fee [SB 24](#) (commonly referred to as the Hospital Bed Tax) which originated and passed the Senate the first week of the session by 46-9. The House Government Affairs committee moved it out and it could be on the House Floor soon.

The second is ethics reform that Speaker Ralston held a press conference on Tuesday, January 29th to take charge of the process. The bills ([HB 142](#) and [HB 143](#)) were appointed to a special subcommittee of the House Rules. Basically the bills make 4 major changes:

1. Total ban on individual lobbyist gifts for all state and local elected officials. Exception for official public travel or food and beverage provided at a reception where all members of the General Assembly have been invited;
2. Broader definition of lobbyist to require more people to register and pay the \$320 fee;
3. Require campaign contributions made between Jan 1st and the beginning of the session to be disclosed within 5 business days before the beginning of the session. Currently these contributions are not disclosed until the July Report is due; and
4. Restoration of rule-making authority to the ethics committee to allow for enforcement of ethics laws.

Both bills have a lot of champions and detractors. Next update will focus on the budget since there are several committee meetings this week.

If you would like to watch the first meeting of the House Human Resources Appropriations Subcommittee go online tomorrow from 1-3pm. GVRA may be covered on the agenda since the Department of Human Services will be presenting. The committee meeting is schedule from 1-3pm Thursday, January 31 in Room 515 of the Legislative Office Building right across from the Capitol. You can view it online by going to

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