

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

Half-way



by Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

Session reaches half-way mark

The legislature will be in session Monday-Thursday this week marking Monday, February 23rd as the 20th day of the 40-day session - the half-way mark. This week the House is scheduled to complete the FY 2016 budget and then Senate begins work on it Friday.

Budget Update

The House and Senate completed the Amended FY 2015 Budget ([HB 75](#)) without a conference committee. On Thursday the House agreed to Senate changes and both chambers passed out the final version of the Amended Budget for FY 2015 and sent it immediately to Governor Deal for his review and approval.

The House held public hearings on FY 2016 Budget ([HB 76](#)) early in the week. GATES members organized a strong line-up of presentations from employees, employers and professionals. The message was loud and clear to fully fund GVRA, beginning with a \$900,000 investment to match federal 110 dollars for a total of \$4.5 million. Thank you to Nobis Works, Easter Seals Middle Georgia, Goodwill of North Georgia and CVI for organizing speakers to present testimony on the importance of investing in vocational rehabilitation services across Georgia.

The Senate Human Development Subcommittee of Appropriations is set to hear from agency officials and hopefully the public this coming Friday, February 27th in room 341 of the Capitol at 10:30am.

Legislation Round-up

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Special
Announcements



**State Use
Council**
March 26, 2015
**Location: Sloppy
Floyd Twin
Towers, Capitol
Square**
10:00 AM

**Working
Wonders
Recognition
Luncheon**

Senate Bills

The Autism Spectrum Disorder Insurance Coverage (SB 1) has been assigned to the House Insurance Committee where it has met with strong opposition in the past.

Senator Lindsey Tippins (R-Marietta) bill [SB 2](#) helps **high school students seeking a vocational education in a technical college** to be awarded a high school diploma to assist with their educational achievements at a younger age. The Senate passed the bill February 3, 2015 by a vote of 56-0 and it is assigned to the House Education Committee.

Senator Greg Kirk (R-Americus) first bill [SB 53](#) just extends a sunset clause from last year's bill to grant authority to authorize a "1013" by a **Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)** to evaluate and recommended involuntary commitment for a person in mental health or substance abuse crisis to a longer term inpatient status. This bill passed out of the House Health and Human Services Committee Thursday, February 19th with no changes.

Senator Donzella James (D-Atlanta) is sponsoring [SB 57](#) to required **motorized wheelchairs** and scooters that operate on public sidewalks and other roadways to be equipped with reflectors. This bill awaits consideration in the Senate Public Safety Committee.

The **Governor's Task Force on Blind and Visually Impaired Persons** is a bill to "investigate how state services and initiatives can be developed or improved for blind and visually impaired persons" and provide a report by November 1st each year to the Governor recommending specific legislation. The bill ([SB 66](#)) sponsored by Senator Lester Jackson (D-Savannah) was reviewed by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee on Thursday, February 19th. The committee asked Senator Jackson to make some changes to the bill to include the report going to the House and Senate Health and Human Services committee chairs and including any recommendations for policy changes. The bill is set to be considered again this Tuesday.

House Bills

Rep. Brooks Coleman (R-Duluth) who chairs the House Education Committee is sponsoring a bill to **eliminate the Georgia High School Graduation Test**. [HB 91](#) has several key legislative co-sponsors such as House Appropriations Chairman Terry England (R-Auburn). It also provides for previous students who did not pass the graduation test to ask to be granted a high school diploma. It appears this bill could be very beneficial for students with learning and development disabilities. The bill passed the House Floor by a vote of 172-0 on Thursday, Feb 12th and has been assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee.

House members have attempted to create a version of the federal

March 26, 2015
Location: Empire
Room Sloppy
Floyd Twin
Towers
Noon

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Family and Medical Leave Act by introducing bills to allow **employees to use sick leave to care for family members**. This year Rep. Tommy Benton (R-Jefferson) and several others in a bi-partisan effort have again put their support behind [HB 92](#). The bill awaits review by the House Industry and Labor Committee. No change in the status of this bill since introduced.

Rep. Al Williams (D-Midway) and a few other Democratic House members are sponsoring the **Georgia Fair Pay Act** in [HB 151](#). The bill would require state agencies to pay their vendors within 30 days or pay 12 percent per annum interest on the amount. The bill directs the state accounting office to establish rules and regulations to handle the various aspects of invoice payment and disputes. The bill has been referred to the House Governmental Affairs Committee. No change in the status of this bill since introduced.

Transportation is still the hot topic of the session with the House taking the lead by introducing the **Transportation Funding Act of 2015** ([HB 170](#)) by Rep. Jay Roberts (R-Ocilla). It appears right now to shift funding from local governments to the state to fund a billion dollar infrastructure improvement for roads, bridges and even transit while raising no new revenue. The bill received a review in the House Transportation Committee the previous week with several changes made. The new version still shifts \$520 million from local governments, which the city governments and school boards oppose, while the County Commissioners seem to now support the revised bill. However, a fiscal analysis by Georgia State University indicates it will not raise the billion dollars needed in the first few years of implementation. The Transportation Committee finally moved the bill out by substitute on February 19th and it awaits a vote by the full House.

The **Home Care Patient Protection Act** ([HB 183](#)) is sponsored by Rep. David Knight (R-Griffin). The bill revises "the definition of private home care provider to include contractual arrangements with licensed independent contractors". It appears this bill is an attempt to monitor, investigate and regulate those homes under the supervision of a contracted entity. The bill is in the House Health and Human Services Committee. No change in the status of this bill since introduced.

Rep. Don Parsons (R-Marietta) is sponsoring [HB 201](#) to update the law governing the **"telephone system for the physically impaired"**. This law brings the current statute into the 21st Century by allowing wireless devices and applications to be added to the telecommunications services used for universal access by blind and other citizens with sensory impairments. The bill has been assigned to the House Energy, Utilities & Telecommunications Committee. No change in the status of this bill since introduced.

There is a slight change proposed to the **Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Act** in [HB 209](#) sponsored by Rep. Wes Cantrell (R-Woodstock) to change the attendance requirement for eligible students from the prior school year to the prior semester and provide written notice to parent's of a student eligibility for the scholarship. The bill has been assigned to the House Education committee. No change in the

status of this bill since introduced.

There seems to be a concern over the composition of the **State Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Dispensers**. Rep. Amy Carter (R-Valdosta) has introduced [HB 232](#) to change one of the members appointed to the Board that provide licenses for dispensing hearing aids and regulate to a non-industry member or professional. In addition there will be a requirement for a criminal background check and 20 hours of continuing education for renewal of a dispenser's license. The bill has been placed into the House Regulated Industries Committee for consideration. No change in the status of this bill since introduced.

When I studied public administration there was great attention focused on centralized versus decentralized government and the theories of control and command over bureaucracy across many graduate courses. It is interesting to see so much reorganization of government take place during one administration. The latest is a bill sponsored by Representative Robert Dickey (R-Musella) to replace the Governor's Office of Workforce Development with The Workforce Division under the Georgia Department of Economic Development and create the **State Workforce Development Board** with [HB 348](#). The bill has been assigned to the House Industry and Labor Committee.

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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



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