

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

Legislative Update - CALL TO ACTION!... The Halfway Mark



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GATES Legislative Consultant

You know you are halfway through the legislative session when the committee meeting schedule picks up and the Amended budget crosses over to the Senate. This year both Chambers moved a little quicker on the Amended FY 2011 budget, with the full Senate voting on the appropriations bill on the 19th day, February 22, 2011.

Amended FY 2011

The House reviewed the amended budget recommended by Governor Deal with very few changes. Even though revenue is looking better (up 8.1%) the first seven months of the fiscal year and the Governor only estimated a 4% increase in the budget, legislators are being very cautious in restoring any cuts or adding to the budget. The overall goal of the new Deal Administration and appropriations leaders is to rebuild the Revenue Shortfall Reserve. This is the fund that everyone refers to as the State's Rainy Day Fund. As the recession dragged on this fund was depleted almost completely to make up the fall in tax revenues, mostly to cover education and healthcare expenditures.

As the Senate Appropriations Committee considered the Amended budget they too took a very cautious approach. The Chairman, Senator Jack Hill (R-Reidsville) said during his presentation on Tuesday, February 22, 2011, that there were a lot of agreements with the House version and "That makes it easier in conference committee." Basically the Senate needed to add \$500,000 to cover the expenses they would

In This Issue

[THE HALFWAY MARK](#)

Special
Announcements



**State Use
Council Meeting**
Thursday, Mar. 24
10 AM
Floyd Tower

**Working
Wonders Day
Luncheon**
Thursday, Mar. 24
12 Noon
Floyd Tower

**GATES Board
Meeting**
Friday, Apr. 29

incur when they meet for the Special Session later in the year to deal with reapportionment of congressional and legislative districts. We will probably see even more appropriated for this purpose in the FY 2012 budget. There were also adds for enrollment growth in K-12 Education (\$82.9 million) and funds for the Georgia Aviation Authority which the House cut. The Senate agreed with the House in most of the cuts across state agencies and further cut funding to the OneGeorgia Authority. Governor Deal had allocated \$19 million for OneGeorgia, the House reduced this to \$10 million and the Senate reduced it further to \$9 million.

The conference committee will probably begin in early March on the Amended Budget to iron out the differences. Unfortunately, both the House and Senate left the cuts to Vocational Rehabilitation programs the same. But on a positive note it did restore \$43,129 of the \$139,977 cut to the Georgia Council for the Hearing Impaired. You can link to the Senate tracking documents [here](#).

FY 2012 Budget

The work began in the House Monday this week to hear from Commissioners on the Governor's proposal for the FY 2012 full budget. Commissioner Frank Shelp presented the Department of Behavioral funding recommendations for programs and services for people with mental health issues, developmental disabilities and addictive diseases. For those who have been following funding developments in this agency there is going to be a huge build-up of community programs as the US Department of Justice Settlement Agreement is put into place. The US DOJ reached an agreement with Georgia last year to improve the state institutions, develop robust community programs, move all people with developmental disabilities out of state facilities, and create strong community programs for people with mental health and dual diagnosis.

Commissioner Mark Butler presented the Governor's recommendations for the FY 2012 DOL budget Monday afternoon. When he took office in January he directed staff to submit a 4, 6 and 8% cut to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. Unfortunately, to his dismay, it appears the Governor's staff took up the recommendations of the previous administration and cut program contracts by 11-22%. It appears that those without any federal match took a 22% reduction and programs with a federal match around 11.3% (up from the 9.4% in the amended budget). Rep. Judy Manning (R-Marietta) and Rep. Keith Heard (D-Athens) became champions when they asked the Commissioner numerous questions about cuts to VR programs and services. He said the Department would be losing almost \$5.3 million in federal match funding which would lead to a loss of an additional \$1.1 million due to the failure of the state's maintenance of effort. That is about \$6.4 million lost in federal matching funds. Legislators were very dismayed at this loss of federal dollars. Commissioner Butler promised to get the spreadsheet to the committee to show the loss of funds to specific programs in their counties.

Making life at DOL even tougher the Department will need to pay the federal government \$24 million in interest to cover the \$635 million it

9:30 AM
Location - TBA

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has borrowed for the state Unemployment Fund. The interest payment is currently due September 30th. States which do not pay their interest on time face severe penalties, including losing federal funding for the Unemployment program and increases in employer federal taxes. Every session has it multi-million dollar emergency, let's hope this is the only one it faces before the session concludes.

TAKE ACTION

So what can you do? Now is the time we concentrate on Representatives of the House Human Resources Subcommittee of Appropriations. If no one from your county is on this committee please contact the Chair of the committee and your local State Representative. Here is the link to all House members http://www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011_12/house/alpha.html

The Message:

Voc Rehab community providers are taking a bigger cut than most areas of state government and should not be hurt greater than other programs. Please be fair when voting on cuts and restore funding to these vital programs. We serve people with disabilities to develop successful employment. These cuts hurt the consumer directly in a time of economic instability. (Insert your program's example of how the cut will hurt people).

House Human Resources Appropriations Subcommittee

Chair: Penny Houston (R-Nashville) at 404-463-2247 or penny.houston@house.ga.gov

- Keith Heard (D-Athens) at 404-656-0220 or keith.heard@house.ga.gov

- Michelle Henson (D-Stone Mountain) at 404-656-7859 or michele.henson@house.ga.gov

- Judy Manning (R-Kennesaw) at 404-656-7868 or judy.manning@house.ga.gov

- Greg Morris (R-Vidalia) at 404-656-5115 or greg.morris@house.ga.gov

- Quincy Murphy (D-Augusta) at 404-656-0265 or quincy.murphy@house.ga.gov

- Mary Margaret Oliver (D-Decatur) at 404-656-0265 or mmo@mmolaw.com

- Ed Setzler (R-Acworth) at 404-656-0177 or ed.setzler@house.ga.gov

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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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