

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

Making up for Lost Time

STILL TIME TO REACH OUT TO THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE CONSIDERING FUNDING FOR GVRA - see below



February 24, 2014
By Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

The middle of last week began the mad dash to the 30th day, March 3rd, when all bills must pass out of one chamber to the next. Legislators in both chambers felt the pressure of two winter events on their schedule and even suspended rules to get newly introduced bills into and out of committees in a matter of a few days. There are only three voting days this week and it is expected every day will have a full agenda of bills and resolutions. Thursday will be dedicated as a committee day to finish up any bills still under committee review.

Autism Mandated Coverage

A great example of a bill that was introduced and passed out of committee in only two days is SB 397 sponsored by Senator Tim Golden (R-Valdosta). For the very first time since the Lt. Governor was elected to his office he came before a Senate Committee in support of [SB 397](#). He said that while he did not support healthcare mandates he felt this measure was necessary to get private insurance to cover treatment for those on the autism spectrum. He stated the successful early intervention for children up to age 6 was more than compelling to place this requirement upon insurance carriers. He explained the State Health Benefit Plan had also taken the step to fund coverage under its healthcare plans and would not be asking the private sector to do

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Special
Announcements



**State Use
Council
Meeting**
March 27, 2014
10:00 AM
Location: Sloppy
Floyd Bldg - West
Tower

**Working
Wonders Day**
March 27, 2014
Noon

something state government had not already taken the lead on. Senator Tim Golden expressed similar interests, which is why he took leadership to pull this bill forward quickly. The bill was introduced on February 20th and passed out of the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee that afternoon.

Future Revenue in Jeopardy

Sen. David Shafter put forward two resolutions last year to cap tax rates. The proposals, Senate Resolutions 412 and 415, would create two new and separate tax caps in the Georgia Constitution.

[SR 412](#) would permanently cap Georgia's sales tax rate, with two exceptions:

- Cities and counties would be free to raise local sales taxes through new SPLOST referendums to fund specific infrastructure projects, like roads and schools.
- State lawmakers would be allowed to raise the sales tax only to reduce the income tax.

[SR 415](#) would permanently cap the state's top marginal income tax rate at its current level of 6 percent.

SR 415 is scheduled for a vote on the Senate Floor Monday. You can watch the Floor debate [here](#). While a constitutional amendment does require a 2/3 vote the Senate Republicans have 37 members and this resolution will pass. It is hopeful the House will see the danger these resolutions will have on future legislative authority to make changes to tax rates in times of emergency and hinder tax reform for future generations.

GATES is a member of the [2020 Georgia](#) Coalition to seek a balanced budget and revenue solutions that meet the short and long-term needs of the state. 2020 Georgia is opposed to any measures that take away the opportunity to fund community services, healthcare, or education and tie the hands of elected officials in tax reform debates.

FY 2015 Budget Progress

The full House voted 169-4 Monday, February 17th, to pass the FY 2015 Amended Budget on to the Senate. Staying true to its said mission of focusing on restoring funds to education, 70% of additional revenue (\$662 million) was directed solely at education. This brings the state budget to \$20.8 billion dollars. The new education funds can be used to restore the instructional calendar closer to 180 days, increase teacher salaries, or cut out furlough days to teachers. The majority of the remaining balance of new revenue went toward merit pay raises for state employees and Medicaid enrollment.

Friday afternoon Senate Appropriations Subcommittee of Human Development and Public Health met to hear from each agency head on the Governor's request for their budgets. The committee did not take public comment nor speculate on any additional funds. Because crossover day is so near and legislators are focused on bills it is unlikely the Senate will take further action on the budget this week. But we do know they will be considering what they can do for their constituents.

*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)**

*THE PORTAL is a regular publication of GATES. If you have staff or others associated with your organization that you would like to receive THE PORTAL, please send their email address to:
Charles Hall,
chall@asqinfo.net*

Many of our GATES members contacted Senators on the subcommittee on Friday. For those that did not there is still time to share our message as the subcommittee considers our request to increase GVRA funding. - **PLEASE REACH OUT TO THE SENATORS LISTED BELOW with a CALL or EMAIL.**

Message:

You name/Your Org/Your phone number

"We are very disappointed the House did not allocate additional funds to fully fund Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation to take advantage of all funds available to Georgia, eliminate the waiting list, and serve more Georgians with disabilities that want to work and just need training and supports to make it possible. With only \$900,000 in state funds we can match federal dollars 1:4 and serve over 1,400 more Georgians, several hundred in our community. While we need \$8.2 million to fully fund GVRA we hope the Senate can move toward this goal in the FY 2015 Budget. Please appropriate an additional \$900,000 in state dollars to put more Georgians with disabilities to work"

(Please include your community/organization specific message)

Senate Approp Subcomm Human Dev. & Public Health

[Chairman Renee Unterman](#) R-Buford Capitol Ofc 404-463-1368
renee.Unterman@senate.ga.gov

[Sen. Don Balfour](#)
R-Snellville Capitol Ofc 404-656-0094, District 770-729-5764
don.Balfour@senate.ga.gov

[Sen. Tim Golden](#)
R-Valdosta Capitol Ofc 404-656-7580, District 229-241-1284
tim.golden@senate.ga.gov

[Sen. Butch Miller](#) R-Gainesville Capitol Ofc 404-656-6578
butch.Miller@senate.ga.gov

[Sen. Horacena Tate](#) D-Atlanta Capitol Ofc 404-463-8053
horacena.tate@senate.ga.gov

In addition we need to call the following members of the Senate Leadership NOW.

Senate [Appropriations Chairman Jack Hill](#) R-Reidsville Capitol Ofc 404-656-5038, District 912-557-3811
jack.hill@senate.ga.gov

[Majority Leader Ronnie Chance](#) R-Tyrone
Capitol Ofc 404-463-1366, District 770-969-9155
ronnie.chance@senate.ga.gov

[Speaker Pro Tem David Shafer](#) R-Duluth

Capitol Ofc 404-656-5038, District 912-557-3811
david.shafer@senate.ga.gov

[Lt. Gov Casey Cagle](#)
Capitol Ofc 404-656-5030

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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

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