

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

Election season begins Two weeks and six voting days to go



March 8, 2014
By Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

Last week was probably the longest string of days for a legislative session the first week of March in current history. We started with Crossover Day Monday, March 3rd, when all bills must pass their chamber of orientation to stay alive with the day ending very close to midnight. Then it was a mad dash to move bills into committees and hold as many committee meetings as possible to take testimony on issues such as coverage for autism by small insurance plans (SB 397) and many other issues. The legislature is in Monday 3/10 through Thursday 3/13 this week, days 35-38.

FY 2015 Budget Progress

The full Senate Appropriations Committee met early March 4th, Tuesday morning, to pass out the FY 2015 budget. As noted in a special Portal, language was put in the budget to direct the Georgia Department of Behavior Health and Developmental Disabilities to work with the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency on matching funds to draw down more federal funds. Many details still need to be worked out but right now we need to make sure the House and Senate Conference Committee maintain this language. (See below for the current message and those to talk with early in the week).

Autism Mandated Coverage

[SB 397](#) was assigned the House Insurance Committee. The bill's sponsor, Senator Tim Golden (R-Valdosta), gave a thorough review of the bill to committee members. The mandate would require employers

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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
Location: Sloppy

with 10 or more employees to have coverage in their plans to provide behavior modification therapies to children up to age 6, with a cap of \$35,000 per year. While families and health advocacy organizations supported the bill, more business organizations lined up against the mandated coverage. The Georgia Chamber of Commerce, National Federation of Independent Business and small business owners said this would cost much more and did not agree the cost would out-weigh the benefit. Chairman Richard Smith (R-Columbus) assigned the bill to a special committee to review and make their recommendations. They have only four days this week to get it done. Many times a move like this is sure to kill a bill so close to the end of the session. We shall see if advocacy by families and the Marcus Center can overcome powerful statewide business interests.

Election Season Begins

There were no surprises in those qualifying to run for State House or Senate seats. Legislative districts were drawn very tightly packed for one party or another earlier in the decade, making most Districts noncompetitive between the two parties. Even though folks say they want new representatives there won't be much to choose from either this spring or fall. After qualifying closed at noon on Friday there were no candidates from the opposition party in more than three quarters of legislative districts.

The House is assured to stay firmly in Republican control as 69 Republican House members have no opposition in the primary and another 27 have no Democratic opposition in the general Election. This will give Republicans 96 guaranteed seats, and they only need 91 to comprise a constitutional majority. The surprise is that Speaker David Ralston does have opposition in the primary from a teacher/coach in Ellijay, Sam Snider. The other top four House Republican leadership positions have no primary or general opposition.

The Senate is a little closer with 19 Republican incumbents assured reelection with no primary or general election opposition. There are another six districts where no Democrat has qualified. This will give Republicans 25 seats leading to the 29 they need for a majority. Barring any major upsets there is a clear path for the Senate to remain 38-18 in party composition of Republicans to Democrats.

In terms of statewide constitutional offices at least one Democrat has qualified for every office except District 1 of the Public Service Commission currently held by Doug Everett, who also has no primary opposition. Governor Deal has two opponents in the primary, current School Superintendent John Barge and former Dalton Mayor David Pennington. In the General Election the winner of the primary will face Senator Jason Carter. You can view the full list of qualified candidates on the [Georgia Secretary of State's website](#).

Budget Message to support language for BHDD/GVRA agreement:

State Your name/Your Org/Your phone number

"We are very pleased the Senate has found a creative way to use

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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Charles Hall,
chall@asqinfo.net*

funding from the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health to draw down additional federal funding to the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. We ask the conference committee to agree with the Senate's language for BHDD and GVRA to work together to provide employment supports to people with disabilities. This is a good first step in fully funding GVRA to put people with disabilities to work."

(Please include your community/organization specific message)
Example "additional funding will assist us to place more people into jobs in our community".

House Budget Conference Committee

[House Appropriations Chairman Terry England](#) (R-Auburn) Capitol Ofc 404-463-2247
englandhomeport2@windstream.net

[Majority Leader Larry O'Neal](#) (R-Bonaire) Capitol Ofc 404-656-5052
larry.oneal@house.ga.gov

[Speaker Pro Tem Jan Jones](#)
(R-Milton) Capitol Ofc 404-656-5072
jan.jones@house.ga.gov

[Speaker of the House David Ralston](#)
(R-Blue Ridge) Capitol Ofc 404-656-5020, District Ofc, 706-632-2221
david.ralston@house.ga.gov

Senate Conference Committee/Leadership

[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

If you have time make a call or drop an email/letter to Senators thanking them for finding a creative way to obtain matching funds for GVRA with an agreement through BHDD in the FY 2015 Budget.

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

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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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