

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

Stealthy Spend and Tax Moves



by Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

In an unprecedented move on Monday, March 12th the House (159-0) and Senate (46-0) voted unanimously to pass the **AFY 12 or Supplemental Budget** of \$18.5 million. Agencies still took cuts, but there were funds allocated to cover increased enrollment in K-12 and Medicaid. All 2% cuts to providers, agencies and programs stayed the same. What was even more unusual about the process this year was the absence of a conference committee to work out the difference. Political speculation suggests the Senate could not determine whom they would appoint to the conference committee. The House took the Senate version, made a few changes and the Senate agreed. Governor Deal signed the Amended FY 12 Budget on Friday, March 16th.

There were no meetings on the FY 2013 Budget this week. We continue to support restoring the 2% cut to all community vocational rehabilitation providers. **Call your Senator and ask him or her to restore the 2% cuts to providers in the FY 2013 budget to ensure the new Vocational Rehabilitation Services Agency has a solid beginning with all funds restored and moved from the Department of Labor to the new agency.** Please make an extra call to Senator Renee Unterman (R-Buford), Senator Jack Hill (R-Reidsville) and Senator Tommie Williams (R-Lyons). You can track the Senate FY 2013 budget [here](#).

Tax Reform may not be dead after all. The House has scheduled a meeting of the Special Joint Committee on Georgia Revenue Structure for 11am on Monday, March 19th in room 506 of the Legislative Office

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Special
Announcements



**State Use
Council Meeting**
Thursday, March
22, 2012
10:00 AM
Location: Floppy
Floyd Twin Towers
Bldg. 18th floor.

**Spring Board
Meeting**
April 12, 2012
9:00 AM
Location: Goodwill
of the Coastal
Empire

Building. On the agenda [HB 386](#), introduced over a year ago. It was one of the many tax reform bills Sponsored by Rep. Mickey Channell (R-Greensboro) as Chair of the House Ways & Means Committee. It is possible this bill will be gutted and a modified tax reform proposal presented in its place.

On Tuesday, March 13th, The Senate Health and Human Services Committee recommended a due pass on [HB 1146](#) in the same version passed by the House creating a new **Vocational Rehabilitation Services Agency** attached to DHS. Commissioner Butler said the new bill creating a standalone agency was better and asked to keep it administratively attached to DOL. He talked about their computer systems being very old but necessary to be compatible with the federal requirements for unemployment insurance services. He said his agency is embarking on a project to update that system and could include VRS. He suggested there is conflict with creating a new board for the agency when an advisory council already exists. A few people testified to keep VRS attached to DOL, but the majority of those signed up to testify where in favor of moving the agency and attaching it to DHS. Only two legislators asked questions regarding the cost of the move and the amount of funding allocated to fully fund VRS. Rep. Tom McCall (R-Elberton) explained the Governor had allocated funds in the FY13 Budget to cover the move, estimated to be under \$500,000 and not taken from services. Senator Nan Orrock (D-Atlanta) said she has only heard complaints about VR services since they moved to DOL. While she didn't blame Commission Butler, she did not feel this was a good fit. The bill now awaits assignment for a vote in the Senate.

Monday, March 19th is the 34th day. They are scheduled to meet four days this week with March 22nd as the Day 37th.

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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@asqinfo.net



VRLT/GATES Meeting

April 18, 2012
Location: Macon
VR Leadership Team and GATES members meet to discuss programs, activities and cooperative projects. More detail to be announced later.

ARMS Meeting

April 20, 2012
Location: Tommy Nobis Center
1480 Bells Ferry Rd
Marietta, GA

Annual Meeting

June 7-8, 2012
Location: TBA
Details coming soon

*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,
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