

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

Full Week Ahead - 7 voting days left



by Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

Session Highlights

The legislature will be in session Monday-Friday this week marking Monday, March 23rd as the 34th day of the 40-day session. Last week the House and Senate began considering bills from the other Chamber in committees. The Senate completed the FY 2016 Budget ([HB 76](#)) by passing it out of the full Senate Appropriations Committee on Wednesday and the Senate on Thursday by a vote of 52-1. The session is on track to finish by April 2nd.

Budget Update

Senator Jack Hill (R-Reidsville) presented the Senate budget recommendations Wednesday morning. Senator Hill began his presentation by explaining how far the budget has come from the recession and it is just now over the amount of funds collected and allocated before the recession. However, he noted we have added nearly half a million people to Georgia. Senator Hill concentrated on those areas where the senate added funding based on their priorities or modified a House addition or change. He did not cover areas where the Senate was in agreement with the House and gave this advocate a bit of concern. However, when the budget was released online only a few minutes after the presentation it showed the Senate had agreed to the House recommendation for \$900,000 in new funding for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. As noted in the budget alert soon after the item

In This Issue

[Full Week Ahead - 7 voting days left](#)

Special
Announcements



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

***Working
Wonders
Recognition***

can be found on page 127 item 197.7 ([link to the document here](#)).

Thank you to everyone who made calls to Senators to show your appreciation for their support of the new VR funding. The Conference Committee of the House and Senate will be meeting this week to work on their differences. Since the Senate has agreed to the House recommendations that is a good sign; however, it is not complete until they agree on all the items and it is important to stay vigilant until the end.

Legislation Round-up

Note that bills that did not make it after Crossover Day have been dropped from this report but will be monitored next year. Only bills still in process and available for consideration will be covered over the next few weeks. There are no new bills to report as they would not be eligible for consideration this session.

Senate Bills

A hearing has been scheduled for the ***The Autism Spectrum Disorder Insurance Coverage*** ([SB 1](#)) in the House Insurance Committee Monday, March 23rd at 2pm in room 406 of the Legislative Office Building. [You can watch online here](#).

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. The House Education Committee recommended a due pass March 3rd.

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) did not receive final consideration by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and has failed for this session. Therefore, Senator Jackson prepared a Senate only study committee in [SR 459](#). This would be a privileged resolution and has been assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee but is not required approval by the House.

During this past week a House Resolution was introduced by Rep. Katie Dempsey (R-Rome) to initiate a ***joint study committee on postsecondary education and employment options for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities*** and was numbered [HR 642](#). The bill has been assigned to the House Higher Education Committee and requires a report by December 2015. However, since this resolution did not pass over by Crossover Day it cannot be considered as a joint study committee this year and may either be held over until next year or possibly change to a House only study committee.

House Bills

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

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

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](#)). 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 was given a due pass recommendation by the Senate Education and Youth Committee on March 5th.

The **Transportation Funding Act of 2015** ([HB 170](#)) by Rep. Jay Roberts (R-Ocilla) passed the House by a vote of 123-46 with a few changes. The Senate Transportation Committee gave the bill a thorough make over and the Senate passed the bill by a very narrow margin of 29-25 with several Republicans voting no. While there are plenty of changes in the rate of the excise tax and a fee on car rentals the area of most concern is to take \$250 million from the general fund to pay for bonds to free up transportation funds for construction projects. The House is very unfavorable to this change and a conference committee will be needed to work out the differences. Taking money away from the general fund is of great concern just as we are getting back to pre-recession funding levels.

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 House passed the bill by a vote of 162-2 and it awaiting consideration by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

Rep. Don Parsons (R-Marietta) bill [HB 201](#) to update the law governing the **"telephone system for the physically impaired"** passed the House on March 13th by a vote of 169-0. Since it received a vote on Crossover Day it is still alive for the session. The bill was just assigned to the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee.

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. On Crossover Day the bill finally received a vote and passed by 168-4. The bill has been assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee.

There seems to be a concern over the composition of the **State Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Dispensers**. Rep. Amy Carter (R-Valdosta) bill [HB 232](#) changes 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 passed the

House by 165-5 and was assigned to the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee.

Rep. Robert Dickey's (R-Musella) bill 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](#) received full House support by a vote of 160-7. The bill was favorably reported out of the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee on March 19th and awaits consideration by the full Senate.

[Back To Top](#)

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

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports

100 Edgewood Avenue
Suite 975
Atlanta, GA 30303
Phone: 404-523-6674

[Forward email](#)



This email was sent to by callen@asginfo.net |
Rapid removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).



Try it FREE today.

GATES | 404-523-6674 | 44 Broad Street | Suite 503 | Atlanta | GA | 30303