

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

Politics Prevailed in this Election Year



March 24, 2014
By Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

While many of us fight for good public policy to guide the public good we all know that we are operating in a political environment and it is the true driver of most policy decisions. This year we saw the highest goals of policy bent to political needs at the beginning of an election cycle. Most health bills were lost in the final hours of the session because they were good policy trying to survive in a toxic political stew. Other bad policies passed because they are good for that bumper sticker slogan.

In the shortest session in two decades limited or completely ignored debate, saw one or the other Chamber refuse to hold public hearings and stifled policy discussions. There is very little good public policy that came out of this legislative session. In the end most legislators were heard saying, "there is always next year" which translates into "there is always time when I don't have an election to win".

In terms of process the Governor has 40 calendar days to sign or veto legislation. The House and Senate staff will be working this week to publish the final version of all bills and transmit them to the Governor. This process usually takes an entire week and we won't be able to access the final status or versions of most bills until the middle of next week.

In the next Portals we will provide the final status of bills we covered during the session and then as the Governor signs or veto's legislation throughout April. However, we know that the Autism Coverage Mandate ([SB 397](#)) did not pass in any form even though it was attached the

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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

Medical Cannabis bill ([HB 885](#) which also failed to pass) and there were attempts to pass it on other bills along the way. While two bills passed that will inhibit the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in Georgia. The House Leadership's bill ([HB 990](#)) passed the Senate 35-19 primarily along party lines with Senator Chuck Hufstetler (R-Rome) the lone Republican against the bill. HB 990 will require legislative approval to expand Medicaid in Georgia above the current income threshold when signed by the Governor. Another bill awaiting transmission to the Governor is [HB 943](#) that was drafted to equalize the insurance coverage for cancer treatment. The Senate attached HB 707 to the bill that would prohibit all state entities and political subdivisions from using state resources from assisting citizens with the ACA.

The Atlanta Journal Constitution has a good round up of bills that may interest you on a professional or personal level published online [here](#).

FY 2015 Budget Complete

The FY 2015 final budget directs BHDD and GVRA to work together and sets a minimum amount for BHDD to put up as \$1,000,000, therefore showing only \$3,694,835 in federal funds to GVRA. There is additional language for GVRA to work with other State Agencies to create MOUs to maximize federal funds. You can view the budget [here](#). The Governor will be reviewing the budget and can line item veto a budget item but he can not add to the budget or change budget language.

It would be good for the Governor to hear we have watched this process and although glad both the House and Senate authorized GVRA to work with other state agencies, more resources are needed to accomplish its mission and there is much left to do to fully fund GVRA. Please take the time this week to call the Governor's office at 404-656-1776 and tell him....

"I am [name] with [organization] and appreciate the Georgia House and Senate recognizing the need for additional resources for the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. People with disabilities are some of the most productive citizens in our work place and we need to continue to support their employment goals. The language in the House and Senate Conference Committee Report is helpful. However, we hope Governor Deal will take the summer to consider fully funding GVRA with all the state match needed to draw down federal funding. We owe it to Georgians to fully fund GVRA, a trained workforce is good for business and great for Georgia."

Location and language in the Conference Committee Report:

27.24.3 CC: Yes; By January 1, 2015, the Department shall provide a report to the Georgia General Assembly with an actionable plan to create third party cooperative arrangements with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the University System of Georgia, the Technical College System of Georgia and the Georgia Student Finance Commission to maximize financial assistance for vocational rehabilitation clients. NO FUNDING IDENTIFIED FOR THIS.

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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27.28.6 CC: Yes; Recognize and execute a Memorandum of Understanding agreement with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (\$1,000,000) and receive additional federal funding for Vocational Rehabilitation services. TOTAL FUNDS \$3,694,835

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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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