News from GATES...

March 3, 2014
By Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

Today is the day all legislation must pass out of its chamber of origination to the next; otherwise bills are dead in their original form but elements of a bill can be amended to another bill that has crossed over if it is relevant to the issue. The budget bills have already passed over from the House to the Senate. In keeping with the expeditious nature of this session the final version of the FY 2014 Amended budget was passed by both chambers last week and awaits the Governor's review and signature. Since there were so few differences between the House and Senate there was no conference committee. The Senate agreed to the Governor's recommendation for Warm Springs Hospital additional funds of $5,416,250. In the Amended budget these additional funds are not able to match 110 federal funds and only able to fund medical services at Warm Springs. You can view the Amended budget final report here.

Election Season Begins
Today is also the beginning of qualifying week for elected officials at the federal, state and county levels. Three Senators have already announced their exit, Senator Ronnie Chance (R-Tyrone), Senator Cecil Stanton (R-Macon) and today Senator Tim Golden (R-Valdosta). There are certain to be many surprises to come.

GVRA in the news
The Atlanta Journal Constitution (AJC) published an extensive article (Disabled Georgians wait months for state services) in Sunday's paper on the challenges GVRA has faced since it became an independent agency attached to the Georgia Department of Human
Autism Mandated Coverage
SB 397 passed the Senate by a vote of 51-0 and its sponsor Senator Tim Golden (R-Valdosta) announced his retirement from the Senate today after 24 years in the legislature.

FY 2015 Budget Progress
As legislators rushed to move bills out of committee and onto a full vote by each chamber the FY 15 budget did not receive much attention last week. The Senate Appropriations Subcommittees did meet behind closed doors on Friday to review requests and make their recommendations. We may know by the end of this week what the Senate is recommending for the full FY 2015 budget.

It is possible that we have a small window of opportunity because of the AJC article at the beginning of this week to make one last effort in a united voice to obtain an increase in state funding for the Vocational Rehabilitation Division. Focus should be on Senators Unterman, Golden, Jack Hill and Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle.

Message:
Your 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
In addition we need to call the following members of the Senate 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

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