

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports

THE GATES PORTAL

Legislative Update - CALL TO ACTION!... It's Crunch Time



By Dawn A. Randolph, MPA
GATES Legislative Consultant

Last week was a full five days dedicated to legislation in the House and the Senate (update on important bills and issues below). While there was no work in public on the budget there was rumor that the differences in the FY 2011 Amended Budget were so small they did not require a conference committee. So the budget committees were silent all week. The regular committees and the floor of both chambers were busy with hearings and passage of bills to get them moving so they could make it to the other chamber before crossover day. Crossover is set at the 30th voting day of the session and this year currently scheduled for March 16th.

This week there is going to be movement on the FY 2012 Budget by the House because it must get that bill over to the Senate. A House Human Resources Budget Committee has been scheduled for Tuesday, March 8th at 4pm. Then the full House Appropriations Committee is set to meet on Thursday, March 10th at 7:30am in the morning to get the budget on the House floor by the 16th, if not sooner.

ACTION needed in the next 24 hours

We need all voices to speak up on the FY 2012 Budget. Our message is the same, targeted at the same House members plus leadership. If no one from your county is on this committee please contact the Chair of the committee and your local State Representative. Here is the link to all House members

In This Issue

It's Crunch Time

Special Announcements



**State Use
Council Meeting**
Thursday, Mar. 24
10 AM
Floyd Tower

**Working
Wonders Day
Luncheon**
Thursday, Mar. 24
12 Noon
Floyd Tower

**GATES Board
Meeting**
Friday, Apr. 29

http://www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011_12/house/alpha.html

The Message:

Voc Rehab community providers are taking a bigger cut than most areas of state government and should not be hurt greater than other programs. Please be fair when voting on cuts and restore funding to these vital programs. We serve people with disabilities to develop successful employment. These cuts hurt the consumer directly in a time of economic instability. (Insert your program's example of how the cut will hurt people).

House Human Resources Appropriations Subcommittee

Chair: Penny Houston (R-Nashville) at 404-463-2247 or

penny.houston@house.ga.gov

- Keith Heard (D-Athens) at 404-656-0220 or

keith.heard@house.ga.gov

- Michelle Henson (D-Stone Mountain) at 404-656-7859 or

michele.henson@house.ga.gov

- Judy Manning (R-Kennesaw) at 404-656-7868 or

judy.manning@house.ga.gov

- Greg Morris (R-Vidalia) at 404-656-5115 or

greg.morris@house.ga.gov

- Quincy Murphy (D-Augusta) at 404-656-0265 or

quincy.murphy@house.ga.gov

- Mary Margaret Oliver (D-Decatur) at 404-656-0265 or

mmo@mmolaw.com

- Ed Setzler (R-Acworth) at 404-656-0177 or ed.setzler@house.ga.gov

House Budget Leadership

-Speaker David Ralston (R-Ellijay) at 404-656-5020 (Best to call with your message)

-Appropriations Chair Terry England (R- Auburn) at 404-463-2245 or englandhomeport2@windstream.net

- House Majority Leader Larry O'Neal (R-Bonaire) at 404-656-5052 or larry.oneal@house.ga.gov

-Speaker Pro Tem Jan Jones (R-Milton) at 404-656-5072 or

jan.jones@house.ga.gov

-House Minority Leader Stacy Abrams (R-Atlanta) or

Stacey.abrams@house.ga.gov

Legislative Issues

There are three issues GATES members will be interested in as they are moving through the legislature.

The Comprehensive Revision of the Tax Code is now in bill form. Rep. Mickey Channell (R-Greensboro) with Majority Leader Larry O'Neal (R-Bonaire) as co-sponsor introduced [HB 385](#) on Tuesday March 1, 2011 co-signed by top Republican House Leaders. The bill is 127 pages and almost completely mirrors the recommendations of the **Special Council on Tax Reform and Fairness** to reform Georgia's tax code. A special joint committee was appointed to handle the bill and Rep. Channell explained that if the joint committee agrees to a version it will move directly and simultaneously to the House and Senate for floor

9:30 AM
Location - TBA

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votes with plans to have the vote this year.

While there was speculation the tax reform bill would not pass this year the reality of a special session to handle redistricting toward the summer and a big election next year makes putting the issue off difficult politically. The Atlanta Journal Constitution published a Special Report on Sunday: Remaking Georgia's Tax Code (<http://www.ajc.com/news/georgia-politics-elections/lawmakers-talk-tradeoffs-861637.html>). The major tax changes in the bill include:

Major Tax Reform Components

Casual sales tax - impose sales tax on private sales of airplanes, boats and cars

Cigarette Tax - increase tax from 37 cents to 68 cents on a pack of cigarettes

Grocery Tax - place the 4 percent state sales tax on all groceries

Income Tax reductions - decrease the top rate of income tax from 6 to 4 percent

Income Tax on Retirees - it eliminates the tax exemptions on certain non-work income such as investments and pension but would not affect Social Security or most disability payments

Service Tax - impose the 4 percent sales tax on services ranging from haircuts to veterinary procedures

Changes in the code impacting non-profit organizations ranging from sales tax to eliminating exemptions is including in the bill. The Special Joint Committee will be able to make changes and there is a range of support for the various proposals in the legislation. We will keep you posted as the committee meets.

On the Expenditure side of the budget equation is [SR 20](#), a constitutional amendment to limit state revenues and expenditures by population and government inflation growth formula. Around the country this type of legislation is commonly referred to as TABOR (Taxpayers Bill of Rights). Basically its goal is to reduce the scope of what government can do, cuts programs and makes it very difficult for new initiatives to occur. The resolution easily passed the Senate by a vote of 42-7 and now awaits consideration in the House Ways & Means Committee.

While immigration may not be of top concern to everyone it is an issue moving quickly through the legislature with lots of support. Last week the House passed **HB 87 - Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011** by a vote of 113-56. The bill's goal is to remove undocumented individuals from Georgia and plans to achieve this by targeting businesses. The primary focus of the bill will require all businesses with 5 or more employees to use the federal E-Verify program to confirm a new hires residency status. It also will give police authority to detain suspects and jail them if they think the person is undocumented. For individuals the bill creates a felony offense if a person uses fake identification to obtain employment, punishable up to 15 years in prison. For employers the bill will be another process to include when hiring new employees, impacting every employer with 5 or more workers, including non-profit organizations.

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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



GATES

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