

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



Legislative Update



By Dawn A. Randolph, MPA
GATES Legislative Consultant

At day 33 we usually know what is in store for the last seven days of the session. But this year is completely different than any I have experienced in fifteen years. Even veterans of 20 and 30 years at the Capitol are stumped at what will happen next. So let me recap what we have seen so far and a few predictions for April.

Since the Governor lowered the revenue estimates and proposed more cuts to agencies and a steep cut to Medicaid providers, budget discussions stalled. The Hospitals realized that a 10.25% Medicaid rate cut would be a lot more difficult to crawl out of than some type of bed tax. One by one the various hospital groups came on board to accept a smaller pill. So the last two weeks of March have been devoted to negotiations around the Hospital Bed Tax, which was settled around 1.45% capped for three years. Finally by crossover day HB 307 passed the House by 141-23. I will get back to the actions in the Senate in a moment. The entire budget hinged on revenue so all discussions about the various agency budgets had been on hold.

In terms of general legislation, very little legislative action had occurred so far this session, and then the days leading up to crossover more bills were put onto the calendars and considered by each chamber. However, crossover day was not the midnight race that it has been in the past. The Senate finished their business around 7pm and then the House concluded three hours later. Hundreds of Senate bills and well over a thousand House bills have died in committee. The only chance for survival is if they are attached to a friendly bill that has made it across the hall. With so few bills traversing each side it is very unlikely these bills will make it.

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Special Announcements



Deaf2Work Training

9:00 AM

April 12, 2010
Conference Rm
3337 Goodwill
Northeast Plaza,
Atlanta, GA

This week has been rather quiet and somber at the session. With the death of former Senator Nancy Schaefer (R) and her husband, Bruce, as well as several vacancies in the Senate with Senator Valencia Seay (D) in ICU at Emory and Senator David Adelman (D) off to Singapore as a new Ambassador, things are very unsettling in the Senate. Bringing us to a great cause for budget angst. The Senate Finance Committee has complicated the Hospital tax by placing a capitol gains cut into the bill. That would take out between \$300-350 million of revenue leaving only \$170 million to plug the deficit. The House was so angry over the change that they cancelled all budget committee meetings scheduled for Tuesday putting off discussions again.

On Thursday April 1st, Day 33, the House and Senate will come in after lunch and the altered HB 307 is on the Senate Calendar. With only seven days to go, no budget from the House, and the General Assembly taking off starting Friday, April 2nd until Monday, April 12th there is no end in sight. We could see the session going well into the end of April and possible even May. And that is no April Fools.

Actually if the House and Senate leadership did wait to finish the session until after candidate qualifying at the end of the month that would certainly give them an advantage they have never had when finishing a legislative session. And that is to see who the competition is before making final decisions about several pieces of tax legislation, the state budget and other controversial bills. So it could be politically advantageous to draw this session out into May.

Finally, qualifying for candidates is the entire last week of April. If any of you out there have an itch to tackle politics, now is the time. We need some smart and caring folks at all levels of government.

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Commission Thurmond Meets with VR Contractors

Commissioner Michael Thurmond spent more than 90 minutes with a group of over 75 people last Friday 3/26. The topics included the financial condition of GDOL, plans for use of stimulus monies, and ARRA stimulus opportunities for CRPs and other vendors. GATES had a very good representation (I counted ten GATES member organizations). The Commissioner was very 'upbeat' despite this economic downturn, and shared the secret as to how GDOL has avoided furloughs and layoffs. GDOL's VR program has continued to get its share of 110 dollars due to changes he instituted over the past 24 months, particularly the new integration of services through OASIS. Able to use



GATES Board Meeting

9:30 AM

April 30, 2010

Location - TBD

GATES Annual Meeting and Training

June 10-11,

2010

Location - TBD

State Use Council Meeting

Thursday

June 24, 2010

Atlanta, GA

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DOL funds as match due to the integration, GDOL has received \$11 million additional federal dollars since April 2009. The Commissioner repeatedly told the audience 'Money is not the issue - serving the people is the goal'.

The meeting was led by Ms. Janelle Wilhite, the Commissioner's budget officer. In her presentation she noted that since 2006 funding for 'Other GDOL Programs' is down 34% yet the 110 program funding is down only 6%. The Commissioner's point appeared to be that he has cut elsewhere to protect the funding for people with disabilities. Complaint about lack of referrals was by far the most frequent comment and passionate complaint from the broad range of providers, and certainly from our own GATES members.

Near the end of the dialogue, the Commissioner shared that there are \$2.5 to \$3 million in stimulus funds to be awarded in this fiscal year to successful proposals from CRPs and other vendors in attendance. From his comments we are estimating there would be \$5 to \$9 million in stimulus monies for projects in FY11.

In the next day or so you will receive an email from Cheryl outlining several 'STATEWIDE' initiatives that GATES will propose to members for consideration. We need to know if you are interested in participating in the project if we secure the funding. The thought is GATES will propose 2-3 statewide initiatives in which we hope most of our membership would like to participate. With the statewide impact we think some of these initiatives will be very attractive for VR. We would also encourage CRP's to submit their own ARRA Proposals because we expect some single projects to be funded. Look for more information to be coming from GATES on this in the next few days.

Please be sure to review the guidelines and the target audience for these funds. If you need a copy of the guidelines and application process please send me an email - chall@asginfo.net Also please note the proposals are due via EMAIL at GDOL no later than C.O.B. on Monday, April 12, 2010 to kimberlyn.shaw@dol.state.ga.us.

If you have any questions please [call](#) or [email](#) -

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HOLD THIS DATE - April 12, 2010

Deaf2Work Training for all CRP

operational and program related staff

TO ALL:

GATES will host, in cooperation with the VR Deaf Services Program, a Deaf2Work Training Program on April 12, 2010 from 9:00 AM until 11:00 AM. This 2 hour training program will be followed by a debriefing and CRP program planning discussion. The session will adjourn by noon.

The Deaf2Work training program will be conducted by Barbara Chandler. This training program is designed for any / all operational and program related staff.

The location is the Goodwill Northeast Plaza conference room, 3337 Buford Highway, Atlanta, GA 30329. For those that cannot attend in person a conference call line will be provided to call in for the training.

We hope that all GATES members can be represented either at the meeting or via telephone. Please complete the attached registration form so we will know how many participants for planning and hand out purposes.

Thank you.

Charles

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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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