

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



GATES BOARD Meets on Friday

The GATES Board of Directors will hold its regularly scheduled Spring meeting on Friday, April 19 at Bobby Dodd Institute at WORKTEC, 221 Stockbridge Road, Jonesboro, GA 30236. The meeting will begin at 9:30 AM and should adjourn by 3:00 PM. GVRA Executive Director Greg Schmiege is scheduled to update GATES members with during the morning session.

All GATES members are invited to attend. Lunch will be served so please contact Charles Hall at chall@asginfo.net or 706-255-5655 to confirm your attending to be included for lunch.

Sine Die 2013 Wrap up of budget and legislation



By Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

Thursday, March 28th the legislature adjourned sine die. The Governor has 40 calendar days to sign/veto bills that are just starting to be transmitted to him for review. The Governor also can line item veto any specific spending amount in the budget; however, he cannot add anything to the budget. Here is a round up of how things ended.

Budget update

The House and Senate passed the FY 2014 Conference Committee Report on Budget [HB106](#) the last day of the session. The Conference Committee met early Monday morning, March 25th, to work out the differences between the House and Senate versions and then didn't

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[Sine Die 2013](#)

Special
Announcements



GATES Board of Directors Meeting

April 19, 2013

10:00 AM

**Location: BDI-
South Jonesboro,
GA**

GATES ANNUAL MEETING

June 6-7, 2013

Location: -TBD

meet again until Thursday during lunch to say they had brokered a deal. Surprisingly to some but as usual they managed to find another \$50 million from a recent Tobacco settlement agreement to cover all that was needed to restore cuts in Medicaid provider rates and increased enrollment for Medicaid. This allowed money to be spent on local projects and bond issues more freely than they had originally talked about that Monday. There was no mention of the financial issues at the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. The Senate voted on the final bill at 6pm Thursday passing 54-0 and then the House voted around 8:20pm passing the budget 175-1.

The budget amounts to \$19.9 billion and put \$224 million to fill a hole in Medicaid, \$146 million was appropriated to cover increased K-12 public school enrollment, and \$72 million for the University System's growth in enrollment. Unfortunately there are still over 140 school systems that linger around 150 school days instead of 180 and most teachers still take furlough days. There are hundreds of vacancies in state government jobs and projects going unfunded each year. So while Georgia has been able to fund programs it is only now at the same funding level as 2008 while the population and needs of the state continue to grow.

In terms of revenue growth for this fiscal year the March tax collections were relatively flat, only a 1.1% increase over March 2012. The good news is the steady rise in revenues over the last two years, but not enough to expand resources and services, barely enough to keep up with inflation.

Legislative Round-up

It seems the Budget and the Ethics Bills were the most important items for the leadership from the House and the Senate to finish. The Conference Committee on [HB 142](#) presented a compromise to satisfy an incremental approach to lobbyist influence and legislative accountability. During the final hours the Senate voted 56-0 and the House voted 169-0 to eliminate many loopholes and they set a cap on lobbyist gifts at \$75 per gift. It is certain the Governor will sign the bill soon.

[HB 191](#) and [HB 193](#) - HB 191 sponsored by Rep. Ron Stephens (R-Savannah); originally a bill worked on by Goodwill to help eliminate the sales tax of goods resold in their stores was assumed into HB 193. The intent of HB 193 (also sponsored by Rep. Stephens) is to assist non-profit health clinics and food banks with tax provisions. Rep. Stephens folded in the goals of HB 191 into the bill and it will eliminate sales tax for those non-profit organization in the state which meet the following criteria:

- Specializes in the retail sale of donated items;
- Provides job training and employment services to individuals with workplace disadvantages and disabilities; and
- Uses a majority of its revenues for job training and placement programs.

The bill passed the House 160-10 and Senate 52-0 on the last day of

State Use Council Meeting

June 27, 2013

10:00 AM

**Location: Sloppy
Floyd Bldg - West
Tower**

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the session in its final form. Awaiting the Governor's signature.

[HR 107](#) - Creates a Joint Study Committee on Medicaid Reform. The bill was sponsored by Rep. Donna Sheldon (R-Dacula) and seeks to review the sustainability of the current program and recommend changes by the end of the year. While the federal climate and other states are embracing Medicaid Expansion Georgia is holding back. The bill passed the House on crossover day by a vote of 167-5 and Senate 49-0. The resolution was transmitted to the Governor on April 4th and awaits his signature.

[SB 62](#) - Sponsored by Sen. Judson Hill (R-Marietta) establishes a Federal and State Funded Health Care Financing Program overview committee to review the care and protection of indigent and elderly patients. Passed the Senate 45-5 on crossover day and the House 126-27. There were differences in each version that a conference committee hammered out to pass a compromise the last day of the session. Awaiting the Governor's signature.

[SB 65](#) - Senator Renee Unterman (R-Buford) sponsored this bill to expand the authority of licensed professional counselors (LPCs) to certify that a person with a mental illness needs involuntary treatment. The Senate passed the legislation on February 11th by a vote of 51-2. The House Health and Human Services Committee Chaired by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) held a hearing on the bill March 14th and passed it out unanimously with a minor change to collect data on the impact to the Sheriffs and set a sunset date for March 2015. Only the Sheriff's Association was against the bill publicly. The House postponed a vote on the floor Friday, March 22nd and then again on March 28th. On the final day the House tabled the bill and recommitted it to the House Human Services Committee to be considered next session.

[SB 128](#) - Sponsor Sen. Fran Millar (R-Atlanta) Allows marriage and family therapists to diagnose behavioral health issues. Passed the Senate 44-8 on February 28th and the House Regulated Industries Committee on March 14th. The House was not able to take it up on the last day and it can be considered next session.

[SB 163](#) - Sponsor Sen. William Ligon (R-Brunswick) Requires the Department of Community Health (DCH) to study and identify options for Medicaid reform. Passed the Senate 39-10 and favorable reported out of the House Health & Human Services Committee. Another bill that did not make it to a final House floor vote and is still alive for next session.

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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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