

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

Senate finishes Little Budget and House will take-up Big Budget



by Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

The legislature will be in session Monday-Thursday this week marking Thursday, February 12th as the fifteenth day of the 40-day session. The Senate is scheduled to pass out the Amended FY 2015 budget

Monday morning with a vote in the full Senate before the end of the week. The House will begin work on the FY 2016 budget.

ACTION NEEDED: The House is scheduled to hold a **PUBLIC HEARING** on the full FY 2016 budget Tuesday, February 17, 2015 in Room 415 of the Legislative Office Building from 2-4pm. We need strong participation by CRP executives, employees and employers to talk about the critical need to fully fund GVRA Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Please email [Dawn Randolph](mailto:Dawn.Randolph@gaates.com) to let her know if you can speak so that she can put your name on the list. There will only be 3-5 minutes allowed for each speaker.

Budget Update

All Senate subcommittees met last week to work on their section of [Amended FY 2015](#). Just as in the House, the Senate subcommittees had all the leaders of each agency come before them to discuss recommendations by the Governor for changes in their budget amounts. The Senate tracking document can be found [here](#). Although a public comment time was allowed after each meeting there was only one person from the aging committee who spoke as they had a funding request in the Amended budget.

Executive Director Greg Schmiege presented the GVRA FY 2015 Amended Budget changes to the Senate Human Development

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Special
Announcements



**State Use
Council**
March 26, 2015
Location: Sloppy
Floyd Twin
Towers, Capitol
Square
10:00 AM

**Working
Wonders**

Appropriations Subcommittee on Monday, February 2nd. While he was directed to concentrate on the changes recommended by the Governor he was able to explain how the VR 110 funding was structured and the critical need to fully fund the agency. Senator Butch Miller asked several key questions around how to work with other agencies to obtain matching funds and the amount it would take in state dollars to fully match the federal 110 appropriations for Georgia. Director Schmieg provided a handout to the committee to show the matching funds as well as provide a few examples of how GVRA was working with BHDD, Department of Corrections and Technical Colleges to explore partnerships to matching fund potential. The Committee wanted more information when the full FY 2016 budget was under consideration.

Legislation Round-up

There were not a lot of committee meetings last week to consider bills. However, there were a few new bills introduced in each chamber that may be of interest.

Senate Bills

The **Autism Spectrum Disorder Insurance Coverage** ([SB 1](#)) has been assigned to the House Insurance Committee where it has meant with strong opposition in the past.

Senator Lindsey Tippins (R-Marietta) introduced [SB 2](#) to help high school students seeking a vocational education in a technical college be awarded a high school diploma to assist with their educational achievements at a younger age. The Senate passed the bill February 3, 2015 by a vote of 56-0 and it is assigned to the House Education Committee.

Another bill moving quickly through Senate HHS was [SB 53](#) by newly elected Senator Greg Kirk (R-Americus). This bill extends a sunset clause from last year's bill to grant authority to authorize a 1013 (72 hour monitoring) by a **Licensed Professional Counselor** (LPC) to evaluate and recommended involuntary commitment for a person in mental health or substance abuse crisis to a longer term inpatient status. The bill awaits a vote on the Senate Floor.

Senator Donzella James (D-Atlanta) is sponsoring [SB 57](#) to required **motorized wheelchairs** and scooters that operate on public sidewalks and other roadways to be equipped with reflectors. This bill awaits consideration in the Senate Public Safety Committee.

The **Governor's Task Force on Blind and Visually Impaired Persons** is a bill to "investigate how state services and initiatives can be developed or improved for blind and visually impaired persons" and provide a report by November 1st each year to the Governor recommending specific legislation. The bill ([SB 66](#)) sponsored by Senator Lester Jackson (D-Savannah) has been assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

House Bills

Recognition Luncheon
March 26, 2015
Location: Empire Room Sloppy
Floyd Twin Towers
Noon

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Rep. Brooks Coleman (R-Duluth) who chairs the House Education Committee is sponsoring a bill to **eliminate the Georgia High School Graduation Test**. [HB 91](#) has several key legislative co-sponsors such as House Appropriations Chairman Terry England (R-Auburn). It also provides for previous students who did not pass the graduation test to ask to be granted a high school diploma. It appears this bill could be very beneficial for students with learning and development disabilities. The bill awaits consideration by the House Education Committee.

House members have attempted to create a version of the federal Family and Medical Leave Act by introducing bills to allow **employees to use sick leave to care for family members**. This year Rep. Tommy Benton (R-Jefferson) and several others in a bi-partisan effort have again put their support behind [HB 92](#). The bill awaits review by the House Industry and Labor Committee.

Rep. Al Williams (D-Midway) and a few other Democratic House members are sponsoring the **Georgia Fair Pay Act** in [HB 151](#). The bill would require state agencies to pay their vendors within 30 days or pay 12 percent per annum interest on the amount. The bill directs the state accounting office to establish rules and regulations to handle the various aspects of invoice payment and disputes. The bill has been referred to the House Governmental Affairs Committee.

Transportation funding has quickly become the hot topic of the session with the House taking the lead by introducing the **Transportation Funding Act of 2015** ([HB 170](#)) by Rep. Jay Roberts (R-Ocilla). It appears right now to shift funding from local governments to the state to fund a billion dollar infrastructure improvement for roads, bridges and even transit while raising no new revenue. The county and municipal governments have all come out in strong opposition to the bill as proposed with many local governments passing strong resolution against the bill.

The **Home Care Patient Protection Act** ([HB 183](#)) is sponsored by Rep. David Knight (R-Griffin). The bill revises "the definition of private home care provider to include contractual arrangements with licensed independent contractors". It appears this bill is an attempt to monitor, investigate and regulate those homes under the supervision of a contracted entity. The bill is in the House Health and Human Services Committee.

Rep. Don Parsons (R-Marietta) is sponsoring [HB 201](#) to update the law governing the **"telephone system for the physically impaired"**. This law brings the current statute into the 21st Century by allowing wireless devices and applications to be added to the telecommunications services used for universal access by blind and other citizens with sensory impairments. The bill has been assigned to the House Energy, Utilities & Telecommunications Committee.

There is a slight change proposed to the **Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Act** in [HB 209](#) sponsored by Rep. Wes Cantrell (R-Woodstock) to change the attendance requirement for eligible students from the prior school year to the prior semester and provide written

notice to parents of a student eligibility for the scholarship. The bill has been assigned to the House Education committee.

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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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