

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

2016

Georgia Legislative Primer



by Dawn A. Randolph, MPA
January 11, 2016

Session Begins and It is Election Season Again

The Session kicked off today, January 11, 2016 at 10am and they are scheduled to be in all five days the first week. It is an election year again, and a big one at the National level for President. It is also an election year for all House and Senate members. Speaker Ralston has indicated he likes the fast pace they have set over the past two years and he intends for this legislative session to move fast and finish up by mid to late March. Just as two years ago, they all must contend with an early primary set for May 24th. Not to be confused with the Presidential primary that will be on March 1st. While most legislative districts are not very competitive between parties, primary challenges within parties is now where an election for an incumbent legislator can be held or lost. There are plenty of candidates out there trying to knock out incumbents. In addition, statewide and legislative elected officials can not raise campaign funds while the session is in progress, therefore the sooner they end the sooner they can raise funds. This fact alone shows strong predictions for a mid-March sine die, barring any natural or fiscal disaster.

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Special
Announcements



State Use Council Meeting

Thursday

January 28, 2016

10:00 AM

Sloppy Floyd
Building, West
Tower, Conference
Room 1816-A

200 Piedmont Ave.
Atlanta, GA

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Budget

Governor Nathan Deal will be giving his annual State of the State Address on Wednesday, January 13th at 11am. He will also provide an overview of his recommendations and priorities for both the Amended 2016 and 2017 budgets. The Appropriations Committee plans for three days of budget hearings during the second week of the session. The Joint Appropriations hearing will take place on Tuesday, January 19th and the Subcommittees will hold meetings and public hearings on January 20-21. You can view the schedule for the Joint hearings and subcommittees [here](#). You can watch the Governor's Budget and hearings by following the House Broadcast Schedule [here](#) and click on the event when it is live. All agencies, except Education and Medicaid, were required to request only flat funding for the FY 2017 fiscal year.

Session Scope

While elected officials try to avoid highly controversial issues during an election year there are many difficult policy issues that are not going away. The top five issues at the moment are:

- Religious Freedom Bill
- Merit Pay for Teachers
- Adjustment to the Transportation bill passed last year
- Legalizing cultivation of marijuana for medicinal purposes
- Casino Gambling.

In terms of impact on folks with disabilities and non-profit organizations that support them, we will keep watch and provide updates and action when needed as the session progresses.

Study Committee Reports and Recommendations

The House and Senate Study Committees wrapped up their work in early December and issued their reports the first week of January. By January 8, 2016 all reports were posted online.

The House Study Committee on Postsecondary Education and Employment Options for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities final report can be viewed [here](#). Through testimony from individuals with disabilities, families, advocates, providers and government agencies the committee determined the path to employment for people with disabilities can be difficult. They believe the system is fragmented and disjointed. Their main recommendation is for an Employment First Georgia Council to be formed under the authority of GVRA by executive order of the Governor. This Council would be charged with developing a comprehensive strategic plan with four elements. The committee is concerned about moving too quickly. They believe Employment First is a good goal but are concerned the scope of change required would have unintended consequence for providers and state agencies, thus they are cautious and want to proceed carefully to avoid any negative impact. There are six Council seats outlined for providers and GVRA can add other members as needed. The report directs GVRA to develop this Council in conjunction with their budget submitted due at the end of September 2016.

Board Meeting

Friday

February 5, 2016

10:00 AM

Center for the
Visually Impaired
739 West
Peachtree Street,
Atlanta, GA

THE PORTAL is a regular publication of GATES. If you have staff or others associated with your organization that you would like to receive THE PORTAL, please send their email address to:

*Charles Hall,
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Reports from all the House Study Committees can be viewed online under the [House Study Committee page](#) and clicking on each Committee. Senate Study Committee reports are listed under [Current Study Committees](#).

Happy New Year! Here is to 2016 bringing successful policy and budget progress.

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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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