

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



Brief Update

Session Half Over / Budgets on the Move

by Dawn A. Randolph, MPA
February 8, 2106

Session Schedule this week

The legislature will be in Monday-Thursday with floor activity in both Chambers in the morning and some committee meetings in the afternoon. Thursday will mark the 20th day of the Session, or the half way mark since the Constitution allows for a 40 day session. There was very little floor activity last week and no new bills of interest introduced on either side of the aisle.

Budget Update

First thing Monday morning the full Senate Appropriations is scheduled to meet at 8:15am to support the Senate's version of the Amended FY 2016 Budget. This will give the Senate enough time to finalize the budget this week in the full Chamber.

The House Human Resources Subcommittee of Appropriations is scheduled to meet Monday, Feb 8th at 2pm to hear from each Agency official on the FY 2017 big budget in room 341 of the Capitol. If you have time to watch the presentations you can view the committee meeting [here](#). GVRA is scheduled to present last.

NOTE: You can continue to call [members of the House Human Resources Subcommittee](#). Just scroll down to find the Committee list near the end of the webpage. All you need to do is click on their name

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Special
Announcements



and it will take you to their page to find their email or office phone number. **We are supporting an additional \$900,000 in state funds to close the gap further on fully funding GVRA.**

You can view the Governor's Budgets online [here](#). You can also follow budget tracking documents for the House [here](#) and the Senate [here](#). Tracking documents show the changes at each stage of the budget process.

SPECIAL THANKS

A special thank you goes to several GATES members and individuals that came and testified on the GVRA Budget. GVRA cannot request any more funds once the Governor submits his budget so GATES has to make the legislature aware of the need. Last year through GATES member efforts the legislature increased the GVRA budget with a \$900,000 increase in state funding (which was matched with \$3.6 M in federal funds). We are requesting another increase of \$900,000 for GVRA in the FY17 budget.



Larkey Peterson from Goodwill North Georgia testifies before House Subcommittee

Members of the GATES community testified before the House Human Resources Subcommittee on Thursday afternoon, February 4 at the capitol and included, Pam Mills, BDI; Ken Carswell and Denise Creel, Middle GA Easter Seal; Cheryl Cornett, Larky Peterson, Shawnala Garvin (CEO, AETC, Inc.), Goodwill of North Georgia and Dawn Randolph, GATES. GATES members shared examples of how GVRA vocational rehab training is putting people to work in their communities and additional funding is needed. A BIG THANK YOU to these folks for spending their Thursday afternoon working to help Georgians with disabilities.

Senate Bills

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No Senate bills of interest under consideration or introduced at this time.

House Bills

Rep. Don Parsons (R-Marietta) bill [HB 201](#) to update the law governing the "telephone system for the physically impaired" passed the House on March 13, 2015 by a vote of 169-0. Although the bill received a vote on Crossover Day the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee never gave it a hearing. It is now awaiting consideration by the Senate Committee. **NO CHANGE**

As a result of several House Study Committees and the strong advocacy of many in the disability community several key members of House leadership have signed on to support [HB 768](#). The Georgia ABLE legislation (Achieving a Better Life Experience) will allow families to create and contribute to tax-exempt accounts that can fund qualified expenses to support people with disabilities. The bill has been assigned to the House Ways and Means Committee. **NO CHANGE**

Representative Tom Kirby (R-Loganville) and several others on both sides of the aisle are supporting [HB 796](#) to enhance the rights and responsibilities for service animals. While the bill defines fines up to \$2,000 and up to 30 days in prison for those impeding the rights of individuals accompanied by a service animal it also cleans up language and broadens the rights from service and guide dogs to all service animals. The bill has been assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee and awaits consideration. **NO CHANGE**

A bill has been introduced to exempt housing for people with physical disability from the ad valorem tax. Representative Spencer Frye (D-Athens) introduced [HB 809](#) last week on January 25, 2016. The bill has been assigned to the House Ways and Means Committee. **NO CHANGE**

Study Committees

Rep. Penny Houston has introduced [HR 979](#) to create a House Study Committee to examine programs that provide reading services to the blind and visually impaired. The Study Committee would be comprised of seven members; including four Representatives, The PSC Executive Director, The Director of the Board of Regents Public Library Service, and a representative of the Center for the Visually Impaired. The Resolution has been assigned to the Special Rules Committee. If the Study Committee is approved it must publish its report by December 1, 2016. **NO CHANGE**

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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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