

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



Only 10 Voting Days Left

by Dawn A. Randolph, MPA
March 1, 2016

Session Schedule this week

The legislature met Monday for a long day voting on bills to get them out of their chamber of origin. They will only be in for one other day this week, Wednesday, March 2nd. Although a few bills of interest were introduced last week they did not move through the process to be considered for a vote by Crossover Day on Monday, Feb 29th. The rest of the week will be quiet as all sides to an issue evaluate what is still viable and what can get done in the last 10 voting days of the session.

Budget Update

The FY 2017 big budget is now in the hands of the Senate. There is only one meeting scheduled this week to take comment on the budget and that is for Medicaid. There are no other meetings currently scheduled in the Senate to work on the budget this week and it does not seem likely the Senate will hold a budget hearing for human services.

ACTION: Since the House Human Resources Subcommittee did not recommend more funding for GVRA we need to take our request to the Senate. Please call members of the Senate Committee this week. You can connect to each member's webpage by clicking on their name below which 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

In This Issue

[Only 10 Voting Days Left](#)

Special
Announcements



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regular publication*

the gap further on fully funding GVRA.

Senate Human Development & Public Health Subcommittee of Appropriations

[Chairwoman Renee Unterman](#) (R-Buford)

[Senator Burke Dean](#) (R-Bainbridge)

[Senator Chuck Hufstetler](#) (R-Rome)

[Senator Butch Miller](#) (R-Gainesville)

[Senator Horacena Tate](#) (R-Atlanta)

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.

Senate Bills

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 passed the House by a vote of 161-0 on Feb 23, 2016. It has been assigned to the Senate Finance Committee and has a very good chance to pass this session.

On the MOVE

Representative Tom Kirby (R-Loganville) and several others on both sides of the aisle supported [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 did not receive consideration in the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee and has died for the year. **DEAD**

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A bill, introduced by Representative Spencer Frye (D-Athens), [HB 809](#) to exempt housing for people with physical disability from the ad valorem tax did not receive consideration by the House Ways and Means Committee before Crossover Day and is therefore dead for the year. **DEAD**

Representative Brett Harrell (R-Snellville) introduced a bill last week to allow profit corporations to benefit from a tax credit to help finance or own a home for persons with developmental disabilities. [HB 981](#) received a due pass from the House Ways and Means Committee last week and a 164-0 vote by the full House. It now awaits consideration in the Senate Finance Committee. **On the MOVE**

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 House Special Rules Committee voted a due pass for the bill on February 17, 2016. Since this is a House Study Committee it does not need to cross over by the 30th day to the Senate and can be voted on at a later time to take effect. If the Study Committee is approved it must publish its report by December 1, 2016.

Representative David Clark (R-Buford) is sponsoring [HR 1365](#) to create a Joint Study Committee on Veterans' Health and Employment Initiatives. It would meet to determine how to assist veterans to build career skills and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The bill did not receive consideration by the House Special Rules Committee and as a Joint Study committee it can not proceed further. The bill's sponsor may decide to rewrite this as a House Study Committee.

[Back To Top](#)

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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