

## News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



# Five Voting Days Left in the Session, Budget Nearly Complete

by Dawn A. Randolph, MPA  
March 14, 2016

### ***Session Schedule this week***

The legislature will only be in three days this week from Monday - Wednesday. They are still set for the final day for adjournment on March 24th.

### **Budget Update**

The FY 2017 big budget passed the full Senate Friday morning, March 11, 2016. Chairman Jack Hill announced that there are few difference between the House and Senate versions and does not expect they will need to engage a conference committee to resolve those differences. Therefore the budget should be resolved this week.

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.

### In This Issue

[Five Voting Days Left in the Session](#)

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Special  
Announcements



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**Thursday,  
March 24  
State Use  
Council  
Meeting**

10 AM

Sloppy Floyd Bldg  
West Tower  
18th floor, ATL

## Election Update

Qualifying ended Friday, March 11th. We know for sure that the Republican Party will maintain control of the legislature. In the Senate the Republicans already have 29 seats since 18 Republicans have no opposition and 11 only have primary opposition as no Democratic candidate qualified for the general in those districts. On the House side 68 Republicans have no opposition and 24 will only have primary opposition. Giving the Republicans 92 seats and a majority in the House.

Of interest are the large number of Republican leaders who have attracted primary opposition. Both Speaker David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) and Senate Majority Leader Bill Cowser (R-Athens) have primary opposition. Even House Appropriations Chairman Terry England (R-Auburn) has a primary challenger. After the session we will publish an election edition of the Portal so that you may know what is happening in your Districts.

## 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. The Senate Finance Committee reported the bill favorable out of committee on March 10, 2016. It now awaits a vote by the full Senate. **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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## Thursday, March 24 Working Wonders Luncheon

Noon  
Sloppy Floyd Bldg  
West Tower  
Empire Room, ATL

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## Friday, April 29 GATES Board Meeting

10 AM  
Nobis Works,  
Marietta

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## Friday, June 10 GATES Annual Meeting

10 AM  
Anderson  
Conference Center,  
Goodwill Middle  
GA, Macon

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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**

It often takes several attempts for a bill to get through the process. A bill that has been vetted many times in the past made it through the House in just one month. Rep. Bubber Epps (R-Dry Branch) with several other Representatives introduced [HB 924](#) on February 4th and it quickly proceeded through committee for a full vote by the House on Crossover Day, Feb 29th, passing 159-13. This bill will give a state sales and use tax exemption to certain sales by qualified job training organizations. Although not specifically stated in the bill it is intended for the Goodwills in the state. The bill has been assigned to the Senate Finance Committee. **On the MOVE**

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 voted on the study committee resolution and approved it by a vote of 157-0 on March 2, 2016. The Study Committee 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.

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Call for Information

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*Charles Hall,  
[chall@asqinfo.net](mailto:chall@asqinfo.net)*

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## **GATES**

*Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports*

100 Edgewood Avenue  
Suite 975  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
Phone: 404-523-6674