

## News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



# THE GATES PORTAL

## This is it!



*by Dawn A. Randolph, MPA*  
March 27, 2017

### Overview

We are here. The last week of this 2017 legislative session. While there were a few controversial issues attempting to hijack bills, it appears at the moment most have been set aside. The big news was that the House and Senate finalized the budget last week and voted for final passage. Thank you for all your advocacy! It made a difference.

### FY 2018 Budget

The Conference Committee held no further open meetings. It seems they had a lot more to agree on and very little to negotiate with \$25 billion in state revenue available to fund almost everything both chambers wanted. This allowed [HB 44](#) to be voted on by both chambers Wednesday, March 22nd. The House passed the final version of the budget 172-1 and the Senate 52-0. This includes the \$500,000 in new state funds for training, employment and supports for the vocational rehabilitation program for a total of \$2,500,000! You can see the funds [here](#) on page 133 line 200.6.

### Legislation

This is the final week for a bill to be voted on the floor. There are no committee meetings planned and typically only conference committees meet this week. The Rules Committees of the House and Senate will meet Monday early afternoon to set their bills to be voted on

## In This Issue

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Special  
Announcements



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**GATES Board  
of Directors  
Meeting**

**Apr. 21, 2017**

Time: TBD

Location: TBD

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Tuesday. While there may be a supplemental calendar of bills to be voted on by the House, this will not happen in the Senate. The Senate reserves Day 40 to any bills it did not get to on Day 39, conference committee reports, local bills and resolutions.

### **Service Animals**

[HB 288](#) by Rep. Tom Kirby (R-Loganville) clarifies a person with a disability, whether physically or mentally impaired, has the ability to be guided or accompanied by a service animal, replacing dog throughout the code section. It also provides penalties to anyone misrepresenting themselves as a service animal trainer, handler or breeder. It also adjusts the code to ensure no one harass a service animal while holding the person liable for any property damage by a service animal. The bill has been assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil committee. **Not viable for passage this session.**

Rep. Kirby has also introduced [HB 473](#) which has similar provisions but also includes oversight by the Georgia Department of Human Services. HB 473 was introduced on February 22nd and has been assigned the House Health & Human Services Committee. **Not viable for passage this session.**

[HR 510](#) by Rep. Kirby creates the House Study Committee on Service Animals for Physically or Mental Impaired Persons comprised of five House members to examine how to handle legitimate versus "fake service animals". The resolution has been assigned to the House Special Rules Committee and is likely to be put into place before the end of the session. **No change.**

[SR 467](#) by Senator Renee Unterman (R-Buford) creates a Senate Study Committee on Service Animals for Physically or Mental Impaired Persons as a companion to HR 510 to allow the Senate and House to meet on this issue since they did not put forward a joint resolution. This resolution moved quickly and was reported out of Senate Rules on March 22nd. **Awaits a vote by the Senate this week.**

[HB 343](#) by Scott Hilton (R-Peachtree Corners) is a update to the criminal code to replace "mental retardation and mentally retarded" with the term "intellectual disability". The House passed the bill by 168-0. **The Senate Judiciary Committee recommended a due pass by substitute on March 20th. This bill must be placed on the Senate Rules Calendar for a vote at Monday's Rules Committee meeting.**

[HB 475](#) by Rep. Buddy Harden (R-Cordele) addresses the placement, permission and appearance of collection receptacle on property not owned or leased by the owner of the collection receptacle. This bill passed the House 162-3. The Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee meet last Monday and worked on language requested by United Way of Atlanta and it passed out last Thursday. **Awaits Senate Floor vote. This bill must be placed on the Senate Rules Calendar**

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*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,  
[chall@asginfo.net](mailto:chall@asginfo.net)*

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*for a vote at Monday's Rules Committee meeting.*

**[SB 4](#)** by Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford) creates the Georgia Mental Health Treatment Task Force. This creates a committee to include legislators, state agency officials and advocates to examine mental health and substance abuse services. The bill passed the Senate February 7, 2017 by a vote of 44-0. ***The bill passed the House 138-5 on March 24th by substitute and now the Senate has to agree this week.***

**[SB 118](#)** by Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford) extends the age of benefits for children with autism from 6 to 21 years. Last year Senator Unterman successful moved her bill to cover children with autism in private insurance plans but limited that to children up to age 6. This bill moves that to age 21. The Senate Insurance and Labor Committee quickly reviewed and approved the bill for due passage. ***No change so the bill is not viable to pass this session.***

**[SB 144](#)** by Sen. Ed Harrison (R-Columbus) has introduced a bill to designate lottery funds for veterans services. The bill would direct funds to services and programs to aid with post-traumatic stress disorder, homelessness, health insurance support, disability benefits, veterans service organizations, centers and commissions, long-term care, and employment or employment training. The bill has been assigned to the Senate Higher Education Committee. ***No change so this bill is not viable to pass this session.***

#### **Study Committee Resolutions**

**[HR 318](#)** by Rep. Tom Kirby (R-Loganville) creates the House Study Committee on Inclusive Postsecondary Education to evaluate and make recommendations on the opportunities for students beyond high school in higher education. The resolution has been assigned to the House Special Rules Committee. ***No change but as a House only Study Committee it is still viable for consideration.***

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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](mailto:chall@asginfo.net)



## **GATES**

*Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports*

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

GATES, 404-523-6674, 44 Broad Street, Suite 503, Atlanta, GA 30303

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