

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

Highlights from the week



Dawn A. Randolph, MPA
April 2, 2018

A state says goodbye to the Governor who created HOPE

A Governor says goodbye after 8 years of economic growth

A Governor raises the revenue estimate to allow the legislature to fully fund the quality basic education formula

A Legislature says goodbye to nearly a third of their colleagues setting up 2019 for new leadership, new members and a new dynamic

Budget Complete

Over the weekend of March 24-25 Governor Nathan Deal felt the economics of the state were sound enough to raise the revenue estimate by \$195 million. This allowed the legislature to fully fund the \$166.2 million needed for the quality basic education formula, \$16 million in school safety and assure a few million for other little projects around the state. In the end, the \$26.2 billion budget received a final vote by the Senate (54-1) on Tuesday and the House (175-1) on Thursday. You can find the budget documents [here](#). The Governor and his staff now have 40 days to edit the budget. He can't add anything but he can line item veto.

In terms of health and social services the Governor's request to put

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Special
Announcements



**GATES Board
of Directors
Meeting
Friday,
April 27th,
2018**

10:00 AM

Location: TBD

more money towards children's mental health needs of around \$22 million made it through. There was never a discussion of funding for Medicaid expansion in the budget. While we did have testimony for vocational rehabilitation funding and good questions by house and senate appropriations leaders they did not find the funds this year to add to GVRA. In fact, they went with the Governor's recommendation to move the \$1.6 million permanently to the medical provider for Warm Springs and moved \$500,000 IPSE (Inclusive Post-Secondary Education) funding to the Governor' Council on Developmental Disabilities. Neither of these funds were eligible for 110 federal funding match. Moving these funds will finally get them off the GVRA balance sheet and show the true dollars dedicated to VR programs.

During the budget hearings many, many groups came with their requests; sadly very, very few were funded. The waiting list for those with developmental disabilities is still very far from being funded and continues to grow. That is also true for those waiting for senior services. While opioid addiction received a lot of attention during budget and committee hearings it got a small increase of \$4 million for substance use disorder treatment and recovery supports. This does not restore the \$18 million cut during the Great Recession. On balance, there are still many needs the state must address to adequately assist Georgians with disabilities.

Legislation

This was the second year of a two-year legislative session. As the General Assembly adjourned sine die (without a date for future meetings) on Thursday, March 29th, dipping it's toe into March 30th, a voting frenzy took place to attempt to get all those bills remaining a final and proper vote of passage. House and Senate offices are still sifting through the paper (literally piled up on the floor of each chamber as members and staff threw celebratory shredded documents into the air). The Governor now has 40 calendar days to sign, approve without signature, or veto each properly passed bill. The Governor will have to take all action by May 9th. Below is a summary of the legislation we have watched in terms of pass or fail. Those items that passed we will watch to see what the Governor decides.

PASSED

Georgia's Employment First Act. Rep. Terry Rogers (R-Clarkesville) sponsored [HB 831](#). The bill's primary focus creates a 14 member Employment First Council. The list of those who will serve on the council is named in the bill and includes a representative from the association of community rehabilitation providers (GATES) and a representative from SPADD (DD provider association) during a committee substitute. The Council will be attached to GVRA and has 5 responsibilities:

1. Develop a plan for employment first training;

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Charles Hall,
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2. Coordinate with other state, federal and private agencies on educational and awareness activities;
 3. Evaluate funding mechanisms;
 4. Review and make recommendations for a biannual report to the Governor and General Assembly; and
 5. Other functions as assigned by the Governor
- House passed the bill 174-1 on Feb 28th. Senate passed 51-1 on March 15th. The House needs to transmit to the Governor for his signature. There will likely be a signing ceremony.**

Rep. Penny Houston (R-Nashville) introduced [HB 844](#) to expand the Georgia Commission on Hearing Impaired and Deaf persons to add two members, change language from "hearing impaired" to "deaf and hard of hearing", create a multiagency task force to target children birth to third grade, and submit a report by September 1st of each year. **The House passed Feb 28th by 171-1. Senate passed 49-0 on March 15th. The House must transmit to the Governor for his signature.**

Governor Deal mentioned in his State of the State Address that he would be moving The State Workforce Development Board and its programs to the Technical College System of Georgia to create a symbiotic relationship with future employees and employers. Senator Brian Strickland (R-McDonough) introduced [SB 377](#) to codify the transfer into law. **Senate passed 51-0. House passed March 19th. The Governor's signed March 21st and it becomes Act 289.**

Sen. Brian Strickland (R-McDonough) sponsored [SB 406](#) to require background checks of all employees working with the senior population. The requirement will be for nursing homes, home health, hospice, and adult day care. If you provide adult day care you will want to see how this is implemented. **The Senate passed 52-1 and the House passed by substitute 163-4. The Senate agreed to the House Substitute and the Senate must now transmit to the Governor for his consideration.**

FAILED

[HB 794](#) and a companion resolution [HR 991](#) sponsored by Rep. Sandra Scott (D-Rex) to create the "Georgia Lottery for Assistance of Homeless Military Veterans Act" to designate lottery game(s) for the purpose of providing funding for programs to address homelessness among the veteran population in Georgia. Both the bill and resolution have the same set of Democratic Representatives. **Both resolutions were assigned to House Higher Education Committee but were never considered.**

Rep. Carl Gilliard (D-Garden City) sponsored [HB 891](#) to ensure a person who is blind is not discriminated against when being considered in child custody, guardianship, visitation, placement and adoption decisions. **The bill was assigned to the House Judiciary Committee but was never considered.**

[HR 1296](#) was introduced to study whether there is a need for a certification process and identification card for service animals. Rep. Kim Schofield (D-Atlanta) heard that people are passing their pets as service animals creating confusion and difficult situation in hotels, restaurants and other public businesses. This committee would meet to determine solutions and legislation around training and certification process for service animals. **The House Special Rules committee never considered.**

Senator Michael 'Doc' Rhett (D-Marietta) sponsored [SB 360](#), a bipartisan bill to direct the Department of Administrative Services to ensure that 10 percent of its contracts and purchases are from small business owned by veterans with disabilities. **House Economic Development and Tourism Committee never considered.**

Senator Lester Jackson (D-Savannah) introduced [SB 408](#) to require a licensed clinician to be present during a law enforcement officer's interview with a person with autism. **The Senate Public Safety Committee never considered.**

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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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