

## News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



### Budget Has Been Focus and Now We See Bills Moving

**Dawn A. Randolph, MPA**

February 19, 2019

#### Key Events This Week

*Senate Appropriation Committee meeting on AFY 2019 Tuesday Feb 19 at 8:00am to finalize Senate Recommendations*



*House and Senate are in Tuesday through Friday this week.*

#### Flow of the Session

I think new Senator Sally Harrell said it best last week: *"The first ten days of the session have been packed with ritual, rule-setting, and resolutions. So far, only a handful of bills have made it through Committee and onto the House and Senate floor for votes. But that's all about to change this coming week."* Indeed as I started to do my bill research I see that legislation has finally been assigned to committees and bills are beginning to be considered. In addition, the session schedule has been set for the rest of the 40 days. You can view the schedule in [HR152](#). Two key dates to note are March 7th as Crossover Day when bills must make it out of one chamber to stay alive in their original form and April 2nd is set for Sine Die, the final day of the 2019

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#### Special Announcements



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Session. Yet due to President's Day they are only in 4 days this week with few committee meetings.

### **The Budget**

The House Appropriation Subcommittees meet last week to hear from agency leaders about the FY 2020 Budget. I am very proud of all the CRP executives who attended the meeting last Wednesday and spoke about the critical need each agency fills to serve people with disabilities in their employment goals. Legislators asked wonderful questions and the number one question was asked by Rep. Tommy Benton (R-Jefferson). He wanted to know if each agency was better off under DOL or now as an independent agency. All CRPs commented that they had more referrals under DOL, before the move. Rep. Benton was an author of the bill moving VR out of DOL to become an independent agency attached to DHS in 2012. GATES did not ask for more funding because we pointed out that in 2015 the committee had put another \$900,000 into GVRA and in 2017 another \$500,000 to match federal funds because of GATES advocacy, yet the amount of contracts to CRPs has been flat since 2014 and referrals are down. Therefore, we commented that we could not support more funds if we did not see a benefit to serve more Georgians. Committee members took note of this unusual lack of request with great concern.

### **New GVRA Executive Director**

After Executive Director Sean Casey presented at the House Budget Hearing on Wednesday he left the committee room immediately, as did the majority of his staff. Only Kevin Harris and Charlie Miller stayed to hear other testimony. There was great speculation from the legislators about the future of leadership at GVRA. On Thursday Sean Casey announced he would be leaving GVRA and a new Director appointed to begin on Monday, February 18th. Yet no one knew who until it was announced Monday.

### **Shawn Ryan, new GVRA Executive Director**

Shawn Ryan joined Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency as Executive Director on February 18, 2019. He previously served as Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services, which provides state agencies with business services in the areas of state purchasing, risk management, human resources administration, fleet management and surplus property. Mr. Ryan is also a former president of the Georgia Student Finance Commission, which administers the state's post-secondary scholarship, grant and financial aid programs. He previously served as the director of Georgia's Integrated Eligibility System, the largest information technology project in state history, and as director of communications for the Georgia Department of Public Health. Mr. Ryan has more than a decade of experience in Washington, D.C., where he worked in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as for the Mortgage Bankers Association and the Heritage Foundation. He is a graduate of the

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University of Vermont. He and his wife, Jennifer, and their son live in Atlanta and are parishioners at the Cathedral of Christ the King.

We look forward to meeting Mr. Ryan and working with him and the GVRA leadership team to move the agency forward to serve more Georgians with disabilities.

### **Legislation**

Finally, we have some bills to report on for this session. The House has officially read and assigned 324 bills to committee while the Senate has processed 110. That is less than a third of the House but the Senate has a third less members. So we are on track from past sessions in terms of ratio of Senate to House bills but still behind in numbers of bills introduced. This is likely because both Chambers spent the first 4 weeks getting organized and allowing Atlanta plenty of days for Super Bowl 53. Here are bills we are currently tracking.

[HB 1](#) Rep Petria is proposing to change the name of the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Act to the Senator Eric Johnson Scholarship Act. Senator Johnson is a former Senator from Savannah. *The bill has been assigned to the House Education Committee who has not acted on the bill yet.*

[HB 5](#) Rep. Park Cannon and other Democratic members are sponsoring the Georgia Prospective Employer Act. The bill would prohibit employers from using salary history during the hiring process. This could be helpful to employment opportunities for people with disabilities and veterans. *The bill has been assigned to the House Industry and Labor Committee. No action has been taken yet.*

[HB 40](#) Rep. Sandra Scott has sponsored a bill to require schools to screen for dyslexia. *The bill has been assigned to the House Education Committee. No action yet.*

[HB 69](#) Rep. Scot Turner wants to amend the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program to allow students of active duty military parents to access the program if they lived in Georgia the previous year or qualify for the scholarship the previous year through an IEP. ***The bill was favorable voted out of the House Education Meeting on 2/15/2019.***

[HB 70](#) Rep. Chuck Efstrotation is proposing changes to the guardian and ward statute for youth and adults. This may effect those that work with guardians in dealing with court orders. *The bill has been assigned to the House Juvenile Justice Committee but no action has been taken yet.*

[HB 79](#) Rep. Carl Gillard is sponsoring this bill to change definitions and provisions pertaining to blind persons in child custody issues. *The bill*

*will be considered by the House Juvenile Justice Committee but no action as been taken yet.*

[HB 102](#) Rep. Chuck Martin is sponsoring a bill to tweak the property tax code for buildings owned by charitable organizations. Truly there are three word changes in this bill but it may impact a non-profit's tax liability in a positive manner. I recommend you have your CPA review the implications for your organization and the positive or negative impact. *The bill has been assigned to the House Ways and Means Committee but no action has been take yet.*

[HB 114](#) Rep. Heath Clark has introduced this bill to remove the sunset date of sales and use tax by qualified job training organizations. I am not sure if this applies to any CRPs but wanted to make everyone interested or impacted aware of this bill. *The bill is before the House Ways & Means Committee but no action on it yet.*

[HB 123](#) Rep. Bill Werkheiser has proposed moving the State Workforce Development Board from The Technical College System to the Department of Labor. Some may recall that Governor Nathan Deal during his eight years in office removed all of the administrative agencies from DOL and put them into other agencies throughout state Government. This may signal a move to put more programs back under DOL. ***This bill received a favorable due pass from the House Industry and Labor Committee on 2/13/2019 and awaits a vote on the House floor.***

[HB 126](#) Rep. Randy Nix proposed establishing a GeorgiaBest program within the Georgia Department of Labor. The GeorgiaBest program would be an "employability skills program" with a defined curriculum. When I see a bill like this I typically believe there is someone out there promoting their curriculum. If any CRPs are familiar with this program please let me know so I can share with others. ***The House Committee on Industry and Labor favorable passed the bill on 2/13/2019 and it awaits a vote by the full House.***

[HR 52](#) Rep. John Corbett has sponsored a resolution to bring attention to dyslexia and the impact it has on their educational experience. This type of resolution is really urging educational systems to take this diagnosis more seriously and see the potential of those with dyslexia. *The House Education Committee will consider the bill but no action has been taken yet.*

[SB 100](#) Sen. P.K. Martin wants to bring the state relay service and audible reading program managed by the Georgia Public Service Commission into the 21st Century. I received a lot of input about this program when I ran for the GA Public Service Commission. By adding wireless devices and applications to the law and striking telephone relay the PSC will be able to upgrade to new technology, a long overdue update. ***The bill was assigned to the Senate Regulated***

***Industries and Utilities Committee on 2/14/2019 and awaits consideration.***

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*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)



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