

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



Regular Session is in Suspension while Special Session called for One Day

Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

March 17, 2020

Key Events This Week

Special Session - March 16th approves the Public Health Emergency Declaration by the Governor.



House & Senate passed Amended FY '20 budget and it awaits the Governor's approval and signature.

House passed the full FY '21 budget but the Senate did not have time to begin the committee process.

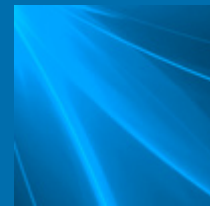
Special Session

Legislators came in yesterday at 8am on March 16th to a Special Session called by the Governor to vote on the Resolution for a Public Health State of Emergency that gives the Governor expanded powers to handle the novel coronavirus. One would think this would have been a quick vote, but the House version of the Resolution called for the General Assembly to reconvene as soon as the current emergency had expired on April 13th if the Governor wanted to extend the

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Special Announcements



State Use Council Meeting

Thursday,
March 26, 2020

10:00 AM

Conference Call -
Please call

emergency order. The Senate wanted to allow the Governor to continue the emergency order without legislative action.

We all waited online for hours until 3:10pm when each Chamber returned to vote. The House conceded to the Senate and the Resolution will allow the Governor the ability to extend the emergency declaration without approval if the Chambers cannot return. However, both Chambers have filed for a Special Session on April 15th to extend the emergency declaration if necessary.

Thank You!

I know you are all enacting your emergency protocols and procedures. As each day unfolds new information on the coronavirus is discovered and disclosed. Thank you for being there for our families and individuals with disabilities. Legislators will be grappling with the budget implications if an economic downturn results from policies put in place to arrest the spread of the virus. A recession may be looming and result in lower state revenues. Georgia has about \$3.5 billion in a reserve fund that can be tapped for emergencies such as this. Legislators will need to look hard whenever they return. Their only constitutional duty is to pass a state budget, so at some point before June 30 they will need to vote on the FY '21 budget. Thank you doing all you can during these uncertain times.

Session Suspended Indefinitely

There is a saying that I know you have heard "**May you live in interesting times**". After sitting here waiting for the Special Session to come back in while they negotiated the terms of the emergency declaration I decided to see if this saying could be attributed to the Chinese. It appears the English decided it came from a Chinese Curse or Proverb. Wikipedia states it is an English expression that purports to be a translation. However, there is nothing in Chinese that comes close to expressing this sentiment. We all are aware it is a curse because if you live in times of ease or boredom then there is peace and if it is "interesting" then surely there is trouble afoot.

This is certainly interesting to have the legislature suspend on Day 28 only for a few of its Leaders to come in on Friday for Day 29 to assign bills that had crossed over from the other Chamber to Committees so that they were all placed to facilitate committee meetings sometime in the future.

There is no date for return and the adjournment resolution allows The Speaker of the House and the Lt. Governor to make the decision to come back into regular session. There are 10 voting days left and they can wait as long as is needed. They also do not have to use up these 10 days. They could just come in to vote on the FY '21 budget and adjourn. They have adjourned before the 40th day in the past few years. It could be that all legislation is dead for this year.

706-845-7834 for more information.

Working Wonders Luncheon

(DELAYED until further notice due to COVID-19)
Thursday,
~~March 26, 2020~~
~~12:00 Noon~~
~~Sloppy Floyd Building,~~
~~Empire Room~~

GATES Board Meeting

Friday,
April 24, 2020
10:00 AM
Location, TBD

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Charles Hall,
chall@asginfo.net

Budget Details

Both Chambers passed the Amended FY 2020 budget and added \$100 million to address the coronavirus by the end of crossover day on March 12th. Every year I wait for the \$100 million problem that must be solved in one of the budgets and this year it came sooner than anticipated for the most frightening of reasons.

The House did pass the full FY 2021 budget as well by crossover day. It restored most of the funding in Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, including half (\$500,000) of the cut to Intensive Family Supports managed by the Bobby Dodd Institute. It continued to support the administrative and personnel cuts to GVRA. The Senate had scheduled budget hearings for the full budget this week but by noon on Friday they had all been cancelled.

Passing a budget is the only constitution duty of the legislature. They will either have to come back or the Governor will need to call a Special Session.

Update on Bills

Because the legislature has been suspended it is uncertain if these bills or others will ever be considered this year.

Rep. Carl Gilliard (D-Garden City) proposed two bills to address the minimum wage in Georgia. The first bill, [HB 804](#), would prohibit employers from paying less than minimum wage to people with disabilities and [HB 805](#) would change the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25/hour. There are several exceptions in HB 804 in terms of employing people with disabilities; such as a person's disability offers many restrictions to employment or performance of the job. Both bills have been assigned to the House Industry and Labor Committee and **there has been no activity on either bill so both bills have died for the year.**

Rep. Rick Williams (R-Milledgeville) is sponsoring a bill to prevent healthcare providers from discriminating against recipients of organ transplant who have a physical or mental disability. The bill, [HB 842](#), was voted due pass by the House Insurance Committee on Feb 20th and just passed the full House by a vote of 160-1 on Friday, Feb 28th. It is being called Gracie's Law and is being supported by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities. **The bill passed the House by a vote of 160-0 on Feb 28th. It has been assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.**

Senator Gail Davenport (D-Jonesboro) introduced [SB 383](#) on Feb 18th and Rep. Carl Gilliard (D-Garden City) introduced [HB 963](#) on Feb 21st.

Both bills would create a Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Both bills have been assigned to the Health & Human Services Committee in each Chamber. Both bills would create an agency with an Executive Director who would oversee and manage services, coordinate with other agencies and develop programs and plans. **Neither bill received a committee vote and are dead for the session.**

Representative Calvin Smyre (D-Columbus) brought forth a bill on March 4th to create the Elder Financial Exploitation Task Force which would cover financial matters with elder citizens and adults with disabilities. This task force would be charged with assessing current services and resources and making recommendations which could include legislative action. **[HB 1097](#) was assigned to the House Human Relations & Aging Committee but did not receive a hearing before crossover day.**

In the House Rep. Hutchinson is sponsoring [HR 1282](#) to create a study committee to evaluate, simplify and eliminate duplication of regulations among mental health and social service providers. This study committee will be tasked with cost/benefit analysis to identify duplication and make recommendations. It was assigned to the House Special Rules Committee on Feb 27th. **Because this is a House Study Committee if and when the session comes back in they may consider the resolution.**

A bill in the Senate has been introduced by Senator P.K. Martin (R-Lawrenceville) to define work-based learning programs. **[SB 447](#) defines cooperative education, employment skill development, internship, mentorship, school-based enterprise, service-learning experience, work-based learning, and youth apprentice to codify these types of learning experiences. The bill passed the Senate on March 10th and was assigned to the House Education Committee on March 13th.**

There has been a lot of discussion about the future of work globally and the path for youth. I believe any discussion will need to include young people with disabilities. Senator P.K. Martin builds on his bill (SB 447 summarized above) by creating a Joint Study Committee on Preparing Our Future Workforce with **[SR 833](#). The resolution passed the Senate on March 10th by a vote of 48-1 and was placed in the House Education Committee. Because this is a Joint Study Committee the House can consider it if and when they return to this session.**

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Call for Information

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