

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

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Special Announcements:

GATES Board of Directors Meeting:

Friday, January 28, 2022, ZOOM Call - 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM

It's off to the Races



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Randolph, MPA**

January 11, 2022

Key Events This Week

Monday, Jan 10th the first day of the second half of the 2021-2022 legislative session. Schedule for the first week has them Wednesday - Friday.

Thursday, Jan 13 - 11:00am Governor Brian Kemp - State of the State and Highlight of Budget Recommendations. Online video broadcast under House Schedule. [Click on the Link](#) for House Floor Session or Joint Session for Thursday.

We have entered an election year, but not much has changed as we enter another Pandemic year. We will still be viewing the session remotely. The House and Senate are keeping the Galleries closed to the public and lobbyists so that half of the House members can sit in the House Gallery and Press can sit in the Senate Gallery. I am literally copying and pasting this from last year:

"There are still no rope lines to wait to talk with legislators and no pages to deliver notes. One must make an appointment with the legislator's office to talk with a legislator. No one can just walk up to a legislator and start a conversation. Legislators are required to get tested for COVID-19 twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays) and masks are required on everyone."

Currently, there is no direction on how committee meetings will handle testimony on bills or the budget. During the Special Session in November people could testify in-person or online. Legislators attended in person or online. I suspect we will have a hybrid process again but will know more next week during the budget presentations.

Flow of the Session

We have our first adjournment resolution, [HR 570](#).

- First week will be four days Monday and Wednesday – Friday Jan 10-14. They did not meet on Tuesday to allow everyone to attend the NCAA National Championship. Congratulations to UGA and all of Georgia for a HUGE victory. A nice way to begin the session with both World Series and Football victories for the state.
- Budget and State of the State Address by the Governor is on Jan 14 at 11am. You can watch it [live online](#) listed on the House website under House Schedule or clicking on the camera icon.
- Budget Week Jan 18-20. Here is the [schedule](#). GVRA Executive Director is not on the list to speak, nor has the position for the last several years. The Department of Human Services new Commission Candice Broce will present at 8:30am on Thursday, Jan 20th and she will provide a high-level overview of the GVRA Budget.

The Budget

We have known for months the tax revenue for 2021 far exceeded the budget projections by \$3.7 billion and this year is on track for higher revenue than estimated. The Governor will be providing teachers at least a \$2,000 raise to keep his election promise of a \$5K raise during his first term in office. In addition, the Governor has proposed a full and permanent \$5K pay raise for all state employees and an increase in matching 401(k) contributions up to 9%. He communicated this to all state agency leadership on Friday, Jan 7th.

The Speaker wants to provide raises to those in the criminal justice system and more funds for the mental health system. The Budget will be released after the Governor's address to a joint session on Thursday.

Session Issue Priorities

A-M-G – I am a car gal and during the pandemic I joined a podcast called The Thing About Cars (found on podcasts)

everywhere). Those who are car lovers like me hope that I might be talking about a new Mercedes AMG. Nope. Abortion – Mandates – Guns will be crowding the agenda in both chambers. Working backwards the Governor has signaled his support for guns everywhere with fewer restriction on concealed carry in response to the rise in violent crime. Many legislators will try to stop mandates on vaccinations and masks, even though each new variant brings new uncertainty. Finally, abortion will suck the air out of many health and judiciary committee meetings where other many pieces of legislation need equal consideration. Election years make for very extreme political posturing and 2022 will be a race to see who can out extreme the other.

Mental Health - Speaker Ralston, in several speeches throughout the fall, addressed his desire to focus more on Mental Health. The house committee examining the mental health system came up with some recommendations last year and several legislators are preparing a large piece of legislation to address the recommendations and request the budget support to fund them.

Education - There will be a lot of posturing on the plight of students dealing with the many impacts of learning in a COVID environment, teachers leaving the profession, and parents wanting more control over what their children learn. There is talk of legislation to allow books and critical race theory to be banned. It is uncertain how much of this will move forward, but it will certainly attract a lot of media attention and detract from other issues.

Employment – The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities has listed subminimum wage has part of their legislative agenda. A bill will likely be sponsored to address their concerns. The need for essential workers, health care professionals and many others will be a topic of concern for businesses. Employment will be an issue from several perspectives.

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 Caitlin Hyatt, chyatt@asginfo.net



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