

News from GATES...



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What has been happening at the Session?

Special Announcements:

State Use Council Meeting:

Thursday, March 24, 2022, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, VIRTUAL

GATES Board of Directors Meeting:

Friday, April 22, 2022, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, Location TBD

What has been happening at the Session?



**Dawn A.
Randolph, MPA**

March 7, 2022

Key Events This Week

General Assembly will be in three days of voting this week, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. Long Committee Days on Monday and Thursday.

Budget meetings: While not scheduled yet this week there will be a full House Appropriations Committee meeting early morning to pass out the FY '23 budget.

Candidate Qualifying all week

Candidate Qualifying week

First, I want to begin by saying that everything this session is about this year's elections. The bills that pass, the bills that don't pass, the amount of money for various issues and constituencies in the budget, and the project's left unfunded. This week candidates will parade to the Capitol to sign-up and pay their fee for a chance to be called "Honorable". There will be a lot of media attention on who is challenged in the primary and where the few competitive districts with Republican and Democratic candidates could tilt the balance of power one way or another. Next week after I analyze which of our targets

have challengers, I will examine outreach to those candidates. May 24th is the primary and we should begin outreach the beginning of April after the session adjourns sine die April 4th. If you would like to check who is qualifying in your area here is the link to the GA Secretary of State's candidate qualifying tracking system <https://sos.ga.gov/qualifying-candidate-information>.

Maps over legislation

You are probably wondering why there have not been a lot of updates. Actually, not much legislation has been taking place on the issues we care about. Very few committees have met. It has been all about the local maps that shape each school, county commission and even some city maps around the state. Gwinnett County has really experienced major revisions to both its school board and county commission. Cobb county has had lines moved in the county commission districts. The Republican Party holds the majority, and they control the map making process. However, that has not stopped Democrats from make strong arguments against their maps and making long speeches about the injustice they see.

Budget Update

The Amended FY22 budget passed the Senate on Friday, March 4th. In the GVRA budget the Senate agreed to the \$5,000 increase for state employee raises and restoring the \$202,250 to the Statewide Independent Living Council that was cut during the pandemic. GVRA Vocational Rehabilitation budget is on page 112 of the budget document ([here](#)).

In the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Budget under Adult Developmental Disabilities Services the Senate put in \$1,250,000 for respite care and \$250,000 for non-emergency and non-medical transportation. This budget starts on page 34. Funding for the mental health bill discussed below will be in the FY23 budget.

All the House subcommittees have finished their meetings and public hearings on the FY23 budget. House Leadership is trying to balance agency and independent organizations' requests for ARPA funds with their request for budget items. The budget must be passed out of the House before crossover day on March 15th, the 28th legislative day. Chairman Terry England assured me they are working on our request. If you have not made a call yet you can still make it in the next few days.

Speaker Ralston's Mental Health Bill

The legislation getting a lot of attention and work has been the mental health parity bill or [HB1013](#). While I can make the argument there is much irony in the number of the bill (1013 – which is also the name of the order to involuntary transport for someone experiencing a mental health crisis) to the content in the bill, it is the most comprehensive bill on mental health issues that has been passed since we created the

Department of BHDD. The bill addresses parity in private insurance and directs the Commissioner of Insurance to create a position to monitor and act on parity in commercial health plans. This has been a large issue since the federal government passed MHPEA (The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act) back in 2008. Georgia has had nothing to enforce the requirements of the federal law. Thus impacting the public system when people can't get the mental health attention and treatment they need while employed. The bill also addresses workforce needs, involuntary commitment, court system, funding, data collection and the most controversial part a registry of children with frequent behavioral health crisis. Here is a link to the [brief by Georgians for a Healthy Future](#). The bill took a long time to pass out of the House Health and Human Services Committee, but finally did so Friday, March 4th. It is scheduled for a floor vote on Tuesday, March 8th.

In summary

Technically we have four weeks until sine die on April 4th. Much will be impacted by the election, and we will be saying goodbye to some great champions through either retirement or defeat. The biggest loss will be Appropriations Chairman Terry England. But there may be others, so it is critical that we again build and maintain relationships with those that seek to govern.

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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