



2024

capitol watch

Nine Day Sprint To The Finish

Monday kicked off the week for the State Senate, State House, US Congressional, and some local seats known as 'qualifying week.' Incumbents and opponents crowded the second floor of the State Capitol to put their names in the race for this year's state and federal elections. In last minute news, relatively new and soon to be former State Senator Shelly Echols announced her retirement late Friday afternoon. The full list of known retirements post qualifying is below:

State House:

- Representative James Beverly (House Minority Leader)
- Representative Roger Bruce
- Representative J. Collins
- Representative Gloria Frazier
- Representative Penny Houston
- Representative David Knight
- Representative Jodi Lott
- Representative Pedro Marin
- Representative Clay Pirkle
- Representative Mandisha Thomas

State Senate:

- Senator Gloria Butler (Senate Minority Leader)
- Senator Shelly Echols
- Senator Valencia Seay
- Senator Horacena Tate

FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET HOUSE BILL 916 – HOUSE HIGHLIGHTS

The House Appropriations Committee unveiled its version of the FY 2025 State Budget early in the week. The \$36.1 billion spending plan includes a number of notable changes from Governor Kemp's proposed plan.

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

- \$3,194,724 addition to operationalize the Macon Crisis Stabilization Diagnostic Center for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- \$2,500,000 addition for the Georgia Housing Voucher program to support the requirements of the Department of Justice (DOJ) Settlement Agreement.
- \$2,000,000 addition for the Georgia Apex Program to expand mental health services in schools.
- \$300,000 addition to support staffing of the '988' hotline.
- \$300,000 addition to expand enrichment activities, family support, and employment opportunities for children and young adults with developmental disabilities.
- \$225,000 addition for behavioral health services for Georgians experiencing homelessness in the Atlanta area.
- \$200,000 addition for behavioral health and support services at a rehousing facility.

Department of Community Health

- \$2,000,000 addition for grants up to \$1,000,000 for hospitals with graduate medical education programs to fund medical education training, equipment, and infrastructure needs to support new and expanding residency programs with priority given to new and rural sites.
- \$2,000,000 addition for rural hospital stabilization grants.
- \$1,232,990 addition to increase the class size of Mercer School of Medicine's Accelerated Track.
- \$900,000 addition for additional loan repayment for Dentists in Rural Areas.
- \$750,000 addition for three federally qualified health center start-up grants for primary care in Union County, behavioral health expansion in Cobb County, and a dental service expansion for multiple counties.
- \$750,000 addition in one-time start-up funds for OB/GYN service expansion.
- \$550,000 addition in one-time start-up funds for two internal medicine residency programs.
- \$515,747 addition for an additional 26 new residency slots in primary care medicine (in addition to 79 in Governor's proposal).
- \$500,000 addition for infant mortality research at Morehouse School of Medicine.
- Additions to accommodate increased Medicaid reimbursement rates for speech-language pathology, audiology, physical therapy, and occupational therapy providers.

Department of Public Health

- \$2,500,000 addition to initiate a multi-year plan to stabilize the trauma network.

- \$1,752,00 addition to expand the pilot to provide home visiting in at-risk and underserved rural communities during pregnancy and early childhood to improve birth outcomes, reduce preterm deliveries, and decrease infant and maternal mortality.
- \$796,000 addition for outreach and breast cancer screening services.

The 2024 Legislative Session will reconvene at 10:00am Monday, March 11th, 2024

Awaiting Governor Kemp's Signature

1078 - Rep. Jesse Petrea

PACE Program Establishment - Seeks to create a new adult day center licensure exclusion; to authorize the Department of Community Health to establish and implement the Georgia Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) as part of the state's medical assistance program. This legislation passed the House floor, 165-1 and passed the Senate floor, 49-1.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee

HB 1046 - Rep. David Clark

APRN/PA Death Certificates - Seeks to authorize advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants to sign death certificates under delegating authority by the physicians. The new version stripped out the permissions for APRNs and PAs the ability to write home health orders; it left intact the permission for them to sign death certificates and granted them the authority to do so in Titles 31 and 43. The APRN or PA would be required to have such authority in the practice agreement or protocol from the physician. Additionally, they will be required to complete biennial continuing education regarding the recognition and documentation of the causes of death and appropriate execution of death certificates, as approved by the Composite Medical Board and check a box that the certificate is signed by a non-physician. This legislation received a hearing only.

HB 1264 - Ron Stephens

Provider Wellness Program - to authorize the Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists to establish a professional health program to provide for monitoring and rehabilitation of impaired healthcare professionals. This legislation received a hearing only.

HB 1339 - Rep. Butch Parrish

Certificate of Need - Seeks to amend Title 31 relating to the State's Certificate of Need Law. Rep. Parrish noted this bill was driven by the House CON study committee report findings. This legislation received a hearing only.

A meeting will occur on Monday, March 11th at 9:30 a.m. and CON will be taken up with a vote at that time. A new substitute will be offered.

Senate Health and Human Service Committee

HB 546 - Rep. Rick Jasperse

Pharmacy Practice Act - Seeks to revise the definition of "pharmacy care," and allows pharmacists to perform prescription adaptation. It adds a new definition for "pharmacy care" to allow for the adaptation of a prescription drug order. It allows the pharmacist to change the quantity of medication prescribed under certain conditions; change the dosage of the prescription prescribed if in the best interest of the patient; or complete missing information on a prescription drug order if there is evidence to support the change. There is a requirement for the pharmacist to document any adaptation. This legislation received a Do Pass and now sits in the Senate Rules committee.

HB 872 - Rep. Lee Hawkins

Dental Student Service Cancellable Loans - Seeks to expand the service cancelable loan program for physicians and other health care providers in underserved areas to include dental students. This legislation received a Do Pass and now sits in the Senate Rules committee.

HB 1028 - Rep. John LaHood

Department of Public Health Cleanup - Seeks to to repeal the requirement of screening of public school children for scoliosis, to amend Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to health, so as to revise the state health officer's authorization to issue standing orders, to repeal provisions relating to the Georgia Diabetes Control Grant Program, to repeal provisions relating to a pilot program for preexposure prophylaxis drug assistance or services; to repeal provisions relating to control of mass gatherings. This legislation received a Do Pass and now sits in the Senate Rules committee.

HB 1083 - Rep. Bruce Williamson

Residential Mental Health Services Licensing - Seeks to extend grace periods applicable to the Department of Community Health, including creation and promulgation of rules and regulations and the issuance of a one-time provisional license. This legislation received a Do Pass and now sits in the Senate Rules committee.

Senate Children and Families Committee

HB 1010 - Rep. Jan Jones

Paid Parental Leave - Seeks to increase the number of hours permitted for paid parental leave to 240 for state employees. This legislation received a Do Pass and now sits in the Senate Rules committee.

Senate Education and Youth Committee

HB 874 - Rep. Lee Hawkins

School Automatic Defibrillators - Seeks to require automated external defibrillators in all schools, provide for the establishment of emergency action plans to address a person in cardiac arrest, provide for internal response teams, and provide for practice drills. This legislation received a Do Pass and now sits in the Senate Rules committee.

House Regulated Industries Committee

SB 370 - Sen. Mike Hodges

Human Trafficking Hotline Postings - Seeks to require certain establishments to post human trafficking hotline information. Specifically, the bill extends this posting requirement to convenience stores, body art studios, manufacturing facilities, and massage therapy businesses. The bill also provides for surprise inspections of massage therapy practices, requires that massage therapy licenses bear a photo of the therapist and that massage therapy board members receive training on human trafficking. This legislation received a Do Pass and now sits in the House Rules committee.

***Chairman Powell announced that SB460 which was amended on the Senate floor to include supervision provision for certified registered nurse anesthetists, would be assigned to the Special Committee for perfections.

*****SB 460 - Sen. Clint Dixon**

APRN/PA Supervision & CRNA Independent Practice - Seeks to revise provisions relating to the number of advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants that a physician can authorize and supervise at any one time from 4 to 8. Additionally, a floor amendment was made by Senator Brass to amend Title 43 to expand a nurse anesthetist's scope of practice. The measure seeks to allow certified nurse anesthetists to administer anesthesia in rural county hospitals that qualify for the Rural Hospital Tax Credit.

House Insurance Committee

SB 307 - Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick, MD

Gold Card Bill - Seeks to require insurers operating in the state to create and register a prior authorization program with the Department of Insurance. The legislation will streamline the approval process for providers that meet certain thresholds as it relates to prior authorization. This legislation received a Do Pass and now sits in the House Rules committee.



For legislative highlights and review, watch *Lawmakers*, which airs on **Georgia Public Broadcasting** at **7PM** every night the Georgia General Assembly is in session.

We will be sending out legislative updates regularly throughout the 2024 session, so keep an eye on your inbox to stay updated on all of the happenings from under the Gold Dome.

More information: Please reach out to our office at 770.435.5586 or reach out to us personally via our cell phones.

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