

## LWVAF, Report from the Capitol, Week 12

The last week of the session was two days, completing Day 40 and the General Assembly has adjourned sine die, without day. Bills that did not pass this year are eligible for passage next session. Most legislation needs a signature of the governor to become law. He has until May 12 to sign or veto. Should he choose not to act, the bills become law anyway.

In hindsight, this session was much like previous ones – only the emphasis was different. Transportation was hot, and the resistance to raising taxes was diminished. Local control was upheld in many issues, except for failing schools. Some think they can solve that problem at the state level without a funding increase when so many, in this state and others, have tried and found the success most difficult at best. The correlation between poverty and student achievement is so strong that trying to improve one without working on the other may again prove futile. Human trafficking again got some attention, this time getting funds and authority to help heal the victims.

Authority to create study committees rose to a much higher level. Whether each will form or not will depend on those who control the legislative budgets. The appointments thereto and the meetings will be posted on the legislative web site.

Final copies of bills passed are not yet available for many of these bills. Those should be forthcoming within days and the final report will be more accurate. It will be posted near the end of April at [www.lwvaf.org](http://www.lwvaf.org). The LWV Legislative Reception is April 25 at 11 a.m. at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, 4393 Garmon Rd, Atlanta, and the final report will be available. The event is free as are the yummys.

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**BOLD** Bill Number indicates final passage

**CA** = constitutional amendment. Requires a 2/3s vote in each chamber and a majority vote in the next general election, scheduled for November 2016.

**CCR** = Conference Committee Report

**NNS** = Needs No Signature

**TGFS** = To Governor for Signature

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### In CHAMBERS

#### BUDGET

**HB 76** Ralston – 7 **TGFS** The FY 16 budget. *Local boards of education must pay the additional health benefit premium costs of \$156 per month per part time employee. This will eat up a large chunk, \$103 million, of the \$280 million appropriated to reduce the austerity cut. Most local boards of education share the costs of the health premium with the employee in a proportion decided by each local board. There is \$175 million in transportation bonds in the general budget, of which \$75 million is for public transit. These are now paid for from the Motor Fuel Fund. A good reference for budget analysis is [www.gbpi.org](http://www.gbpi.org), the GA Budget & Policy Institute.*

#### CHILDREN

**SR 7** Unterman – 45 **TO BALLOT** CA to create the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund and to allow the General Assembly to impose additional penalties or fees for various sexual offences against minors.

**SB 8** Unterman – 45 **TGFS** Itemizes childhood sexual abuse crimes. Extends age to 25 to file civil actions for damages of such crimes. If SR 7 CA passes, an 8 member commission is established to oversee creation and costs of care and rehabilitation and social services for minors who have been sexually exploited. It may recommend to Governor and General Assembly changes in state programs, laws, policies, budgets, and standards relating to the care and rehabilitation of such minors. Additional penalties of \$2500 to be imposed per conviction of anyone over 18 for such offenses which shall be put in the Sexually Exploited Children Fund within the state treasury. Those under 18 cannot be guilty of these same crimes.

**HB 17** Spencer – 180 **TGFS** Children who have been sexually abused will have until age 23 to bring civil claims against the abuser or within two years after the victim has reason to know of such abuse which resulted in documented injury. Anyone may file until 1-1-17 if they had previously been barred because of the statute of limitations.

**SB 138** Miller – 49 **TGFS** State child welfare changes with particular emphasis on foster children. Creates the child abuse registry for convicted child abusers and substantiated cases of child abuse as of 7-1-16. ***Governor's proposal. Very extensive.***

**HB 268** Ballinger – 23 **TGFS** When a mandated report has been made to a designated person in an entity required to report suspected child abuse, the designated person cannot change the report made by the individual. Allows oral and electronic reporting. ***Mandated reporting by employees and volunteers is done in schools, health care facilities, sports leagues, community groups and other places where children congregate.***

**SR 487** Unterman - 45 **NNS** Creates a 4 member Senate Preventing Youth Substance Use Disorders Study Committee. Report due 12-1-15.

**HB 568** Dempsey – 13 **TGFS** Department of Human Services may require DNA testing if person receiving social services alleges that paternity is for another person not the previously established father. No test shall be done if child is adopted or conceived through artificial insemination. DHS will pay the costs if test proved alleged father is the father, else the allegor will pay.

**HR 641** Dempsey – 13 **NNS** Creates a 5 member House Study Committee on Children's Mental Health to study the available resources for such children and identify possible solutions or improvement. Report due 12-1-15.

## **DRIVERS LAWS, TRANSPORTATION**

**SB 4** Gooch – 51 **TGFS** Urban transportation plans for counties served by MARTA, which are Fulton, DeKalb, and Clayton. These plans are to include transit facilities and improvements, sidewalks, streetscapes, trails, and bicycle facilities in addition to the streets, utilities, parks, and playgrounds already authorized. A surface transportation project means public improvement planned to impact 10,000 acres or more and at least 10 transit miles including any related facilities, parks, trails, and other authorized facilities. Public private partnerships are authorized for up to 50 years.

**HB 48** Coleman – 97 **TGFS** Any peace officer, firefighter, or emergency medical personnel who sustains a major injury while on the job is eligible for a special license plate. A disabled veteran honorably discharged may have a free vehicle license. In the event of death, such free plates go to the unmarried spouse or minor child. Veterans licensing a motorcycle are entitled to a distinctive plate. Special Gold Star license plates honoring family members of military personnel killed in action may be extended to the surviving spouse of such service member's sibling.

**SB 76** Jackson – 24 **TGFS** Motorcycle Mobility Safety Act. If a traffic control device or signal is inoperative because of the lightweight design of a motorcycle or bicycle, and the driver has been stopped and there is no vehicle within 500 feet moving toward this intersection, the signal may be treated as a stop sign. ***GA has over 100,000 motorcyclists. This proposal could increase accidents and insurance premium.*** Drivers must stop at crosswalks when pedestrian-activated rectangular rapid flash beacons are ON. Beacons not to be activated without using the crosswalk to cross the street.

**HB 106** Roberts – 155 **TGFS** Accident reports submitted electronically are to be sent to DOT (or DDS) within seven days, formerly 15 days. Law enforcement agencies failing to meet the reporting requirement may result in ineligibility to receive grants through DOT. The process for DOT, counties, and cities selling property held less than 30 years are clarified. Allows counties to call a referendum for a TSPLOST for up to 1% for transportation projects for up to 10 years. Counties which are served by GRTA, GA Regional Transit Authority, may do so in 2015. Counties, particularly those with a current TSPLOST, must wait at least 2 years. Each county may agree with another county on a common project list and fund it with a TSPLOST. The referendum can be held on any date allowed for SPLOSTs, which are March and November. ***Counties may pass such a proposal when the money stays within their boundaries. Being able to do a partial 1% may be positive with short project lists. Counties can merge together for a regional project using intergovernmental agreements; or they could create another project list within the regions defined for the 2012 TSPLOST referenda which lost in 9 out of 12 regions.***

**HB 118** Tanner – 9 **TGFS** Applicants for commercial driver’s license or driving permit are committing an unlawful act for making false statements or concealing a material fact or committing a fraud during the examination. Third party providers of the Department of Drivers Services testing must have and maintain a surety bond in an amount set by the department. Certification of examiners must include a national criminal history background check and pass a training course. Persons who train examiners cannot administer the tests. Commercial driver’s licenses are issued to those who first have a driving permit after which they have 180 days to get their license. Conviction of traffic offenses will require no driving commercially for either 60 days or 1 year depending on the severity of the offense. Use of wireless phones banned except for calling 911, or if a public utility employee or contractor or public safety personnel.

**HB 123** Yates – 73 **TGFS** Every motor vehicle pulling a trailer shall attach it securely to prevent dropping or shifting it onto the roadway and creating a safety hazard. Failure to do so is a misdemeanor.

**SB 125** Beach – 21 **TGFS** Authorizes tolls for road projects and improvements to manage traffic. Includes managed lanes, signage, barriers or gates. Establishes how managed lanes are to be used and paid for by drivers.

**HB 147** Powell – 32 **TGFS** Purchasers of new passenger motor vehicles within the 16 counties that require federal emissions inspection may initially register the car for 2 years and thereafter annually. The fee for the first registration will be \$40. *Saves a blank check.*

**HB 170** Roberts – 155 **TGFS** Transportation Funding Act of 2015. Besides roads and bridges, motor fuel taxes may be used for public transit, rail, buses, airports, seaports and all associated infrastructure and services to access these transportation facilities. Removes the sales tax on motor fuel, which removes \$180 million from the general fund, the fourth penny which goes to the general fund. Raises excise tax to 26 cents/gallon on gasoline, up from 7.5 cents, and 29 cents/gallon on diesel fuel, both to be adjusted for inflation annually until 2018. Alternative fuel vehicles, fueled by electricity, natural gas, or propane, but no hybrids, are assessed an annual fee of \$200 or \$300 if for commercial use. Fees of either \$50 or \$100 per year for trucks depending on weight. A hotel-motel tax of \$5/night is levied. Fees are to be indexed to the Consumer Price Index effective 1-1-16. Tax credits for electric vehicles and alternative fuel and hybrid vehicles are repealed as is the jet fuel sales tax exemption for airlines flying out of Atlanta. The governor may suspend or modify the state sales tax on motor fuel but it must be ratified by the General Assembly with a 2/3 vote. \$250 million to be paid from general budget to pay off debt owed by DOT which must be appropriated annually. All local sales taxes remain at 1% each and taxing of motor fuel will continue up to \$3 per gallon. Thereafter, no tax is levied. The general budget will fund \$250 million per year in DOT debt service. Counties which levy a MARTA tax or are served by GRTA may levy up to 1% for transportation projects or join with adjacent counties for projects for up to 10 years. Counties in the regions that passed a TSPLOST tax in 2012 may do the same after 2017. Department of Transportation to report to the House and Senate Transportation committees annually and present their comprehensive transportation plan.

**HB 190** Golick – 40 **TGFS** Specifies liability insurance coverage up to \$1 million for vehicles and drivers in a transportation network such as Uber.

**HB 206** Harrell – 106 **TGFS** To pass sanitation vehicles flashing yellow, amber, or red lights, one must move over one lane, or if that is not feasible, slow to 10 mph under the posted speed limit or 5 mph whichever is more, until passed. Fine can be up to \$500. *Sanitation workers are injured more than most other public employees.*

**HB 225** Powell – 32 **TGFS** Drivers of taxis and all other for-hire vehicles must have for-hire license endorsements. Establishes operating rules for all types of for-hire transportation companies. Cities and counties cannot impose further licensing requirements. May get a master license or pay sales taxes on fares which are distributed to local governing authorities as a LOST or SPLOST.

**HB 386** Nimmer – 178 **TGFS** Repeals the requirement for the Georgia Coordinating Committee for Rural and Human Services Transportation.

## EDUCATION

**HB 85** Harrell – 106 **TGFS** Selling distilled alcohol within 200 yards of any school is banned; beer and wine can be sold within 100 yards in a grocery store of at least 10,000 sq. ft. Includes K-12 and colleges campuses.

**SB 89** Albers – 56 **TGFS** All instructional materials purchased or licensed by a local board of education are encouraged to be in electronic format. Local boards are encouraged to provide electronic devices to each student for use in accessing such materials by 2020. ***Costs and security of devices are major issues for those who have already tried providing devices for students.*** Student Data Privacy, Accessibility, and Transparency Act. DOE shall name a Corporate Information Officers, CIO and to have policy and operating procedures to assure that individual student data is not disclosed to unqualified recipients or privacy is not breeched. CIO to investigate issues of compliance with student data protection by DOE and LBOEs. Student data elements are to be publicly available. Content data to be available to student and parents, local school or district personnel and authorized contractors thereof, authorized staff and contractors of DOE. No student identifiable data can be published, only aggregate data. Transfer of student identifiable data can be done only under circumstances to serve the student such as transferring to another school, enrolling in post-secondary programs, for federal programs for the student, at student request. CIO to develop a detailed security plan, ensure compliance with the federal Family Education Records & Privacy Act, FERPA. CIO to report annually to governor and General Assembly changes to data elements, disclosures of student data approved, audit results. Cannot collect political affiliation, voting history, income level, religious affiliation unless required by law. Violations reported by student or parent to CIO with no right of appeal. ***Most of this proposal is long overdue. Violations, however, should be reported to an entity not involved with the rule making or operational oversight of the data security.***

**HB 131** Dickerson – 113 **TGFS** Local boards of education must include cyberbullying in their local policies prohibiting bullying. Definition of electronic communication is that in federal law. Local schools will have oversight of student cyberbullying originating from non-school equipment if directed at other students or school personnel and it has a ‘high likelihood’ of disrupting the school or threatening their safety.

**SB 132** Dugan – 30 **TGFS** The dual enrollment program called ‘Move On When Ready’ will now accept any student in high school if all criteria for college admission are met. Information must be given to grade 8 public students when the Individual Graduation Plan is being developed. There shall be no tuition fee, book fee, or other fees for these students. Course work earns both high school credit and post-secondary credit. Does not require a prior year enrolled in a high school. Now open to home schooled students. Overseen by the GA Student Finance Commission.

**SB 156** Tippins – 37 **TGFS** The State Charter School Commission may form the State Charter School Foundation.

**SB 164** Jones – 10 **TGFS** In high need schools, urges the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support, PBIS, and Response To Intervention, RTI. ***This program is research based and already funded in the budget, \$500,000.***

**HB 209** Cantrell - 22 **TGFS** LBOE shall provide notification to each parent of a special needs student at the initial IEP meeting and annually regarding availability of this voucher and inclusion of the information in the required printed handbook. ***Eligibility for this voucher requires an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which takes much effort to develop.***

**HB 313** Dickey – 140 **TGFS** Every state employee could apply for 8 hours of paid leave to promote education in the state. ***This is not restricted to public education. Could it also mean that public employees would be allowed to advocate for the governor’s Opportunity School District constitutional amendment?***

**HB 372** Coomer – 14 **TGFS** Local governments cannot require charter schools to get any additional licenses to open, such as a business license, professional license, or occupational tax certificate, if the school has passed state facility inspections and received a certificate of occupancy. Charter Schools shall give enrollment priority to educationally disadvantaged students and military students. ***Educationally disadvantaged students are those with special education needs, from poor families, English is not their first language, and migrants.***

**HB 401** Efstration – 104 **TGFS** DECAL may solicit and accept donations, grants, contributions. Defines a support center as one which solicits and provides personnel, curriculum, etc., to early care providers but does not care directly for children. Support Centers must be annually renewed by DECAL. May provide background checks on personnel it provides potential employers. Support center employees must be background checked every 5 years. Post-secondary students working at a child care facility as part of their education must also pass a criminal background check. *Bill is extensive.*

**HB 502** Dudgeon – 25 **TGFS** Education law cleanup. Repeals outdated sections and updates other sections to comply with current practice. Includes the course in American Founding Philosophy, and Celebrate Freedom Week as options, not mandates.

**SR 564** Black – 8 **NNS** Creates the 5 member Senate Study Committee on School Construction to look at options for financing, costs in various school systems on a per square foot basis and on an FTE basis. Will also look at architect fees. Report due 12-1-15. *Several studies on this subject have been done in the recent past. If committee focuses on state costs, the variances are quite narrow. Choices made by local school systems cause wider variances and land costs alone in different places can make the same building far more expensive here than there.*

**HR 620** Drenner - 85 **NNS** Urges LBOEs to make students aware of renewable energy by making the building more energy efficient through the lighting system and controls, the mechanical systems such as HVAC and water heating equipment, and the building envelope including walls, floor, and roof.

**HR 765** Chandler - 105 **NNS** Creates the 6 member House Study Committee on School Counseling and the Role of School Counselors. Report due 12-1-15.

## **ELECTIONS/ETHICS**

**SB 127** Jeffares – 17 **CCR PASSED** House **FAILED** Senate

Local candidates who received notice from the GA Government Transparency & Campaign Finance Commission, previously State Ethics Commission, required between 1-1-10 and 1-10-14 who had in fact filed on time, the commission is authorized to waive late fees, fines, and civil penalties for such late, incomplete or non-filing of campaign disclosure reports and personal finance disclosure reports. Such fines will be refunded if application is made by the candidates. This provision is automatically repealed on 1-31-19. Write-in candidates must provide a written authorization for others to file required reports for them. Reduced number of days of advanced voting. Multiple other changes are made to the election code, most of them minor. *Department of Audits and Accounts found software problems caused the incorrect fines to be assessed. This may be a blank check for fine forgiveness. LWVGA OPPOSES reduction in advanced voting days.*

## **GOVERNMENT - GENERAL**

**SB 59** Hill – 6 **TGFS** Partnership for Public Facilities and Infrastructure Act. The state or any local government or school district with a qualifying project which meets a public purpose or need (excludes electrical energy generation, communication services, cable and video services, and water resources) may enter into a partnership with a private entity to effect the project over several years. The annual cost shall be treated as bond indebtedness is treated for purposes of any funding cap.

**SB 63** Hill – 6 **TGFS** Licensed brewpubs and licensed malt beverage manufacturers may sell malt beverages for either on or off-premise consumption. Quantities for off-premises consumption limited to 72 ounces. On-premise consumption limited to 32 ounces. Prices shall be consistent with those in the same county and purchases shall be taxable. Distillers may offer tours for pay or not and provide a 'souvenir' of 750 ml of distilled spirits. No alcoholic beverages may be sold on the premises. *Currently, brewpubs can sell only on-premises and malt beverage brewers can only sell for off-premise consumption.*

**HB 70** Hugely – 136 **TGFS** Designates the white tailed deer as Georgia's official state mammal. *A first grade Boy Scout troop recommended the gray fox after learning GA is one of three states without a state mammal. After the Commission of Natural Resources spoke with them, their recommendation changed to the white tailed deer, which lives in all parts of the state.*

**HB 95** Tanner – 9 **TGFS** Expands the options for investing the funds in the local government investment pool. The state treasurer may place the funds in a separate trust fund administered by the treasurer under policies developed by the State Depository Board.

**SB 95** Williams – 27 **TGFS** Real estate brokers may deposit funds into a federally insured account. *Current law requires it to be a checking account.*

**HB 99** Lumsden – 12 **TGFS** When joint tenants with right of survivorship divorce or have their marriage annulled, joint tenancy with right of survivorship is usually disposed of in the final order of divorce or annulment. If not and either party files an affidavit in the county where the property is located, attaching a divorce or annulment final decree, they become tenants in common owners of the property.

**HB 180** Kidd – 145 **TGFS** The eligibility for admission to the GA War Veterans Nursing Home shall be a resident for the last 2 years or a current resident for 5 years in the last 15 years. *Currently, applicants must be a GA resident for the most recent 5 years.*

**SB 203** Hill – 6 **TGFS** Establishes the 6 member World War I Centennial Commission to plan, develop and execute programs, projects, and activities to commemorate the centennial of WWI and Georgia's role in it, to encourage private organizations and local governments to organize and participate, and to serve as a clearing house for the collection and dissemination of information about events and plans in GA for the WWI centennial. No state moneys are to be spent.

**HB 217** Maxwell – 17 **TGFS** Public retirement systems may invest in mutual funds and other collective funds and trusts. *They are already doing it, especially the smaller retirement funds because they do not have the investment personnel of the larger funds. This makes it legal.*

**HB 245** Dollar – 45 **TGFS** Condominium special assessments are limited to 1/6 of the annual common expense assessment for that unit. *Currently, the maximum is \$200 per year.*

**HR 395** Greene – 151 **TGFS** Creates the Joint Georgia-Alabama Study Committee to study with counterparts in Alabama issues of joint interest. Members are 10 legislators, 5 from each chamber, whose districts touch the Georgia-Alabama border. Report due 12-1-16.

## **GOVERNMENT – COURTS AND CRIMES**

**HB 71** Tanner – 9 **TGFS** Provisions of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles are modified to provide input and transparency to granting a pardon or commutation of a death sentence. Victims, prosecuting attorneys, family members to receive additional consideration.

**HB 72** Willard – 51 **TGFS** Expands and clarifies the protections of disabled adults and older persons, over age 65. Good Samaritan protection is provided to anyone rescuing an incapacitated person from a locked motor vehicle.

**SB 94** Bethel – 54 **TGFS** Police entities must have a written policy for identifying suspects in a line-up, show-up, or other witness identification methods. The policy must be available to the public. Effective 7-1-16. Authorizes body cameras on peace officers but shields the information gained thereby if the images are taken in a non-public area, a private place. Access to these images in a private place is restricted to legal representation, heirs, parties to a civil or criminal case. *Prevents nosy neighbors from finding out why the cops came to the house next door, etc.*

**SB 99** Kennedy – 18 **TGFS** In a criminal case, if a judge expresses an opinion during the trial, an objection must be made immediately and either the judge can make a curative statement to the jury or declare a mistrial. Else the verdict may be reversed upon appeal or a new trial granted by the appellate court. *Judicial resources may be saved by not having trials overturned and/or defendants set free because of the remark by the trial judge.*

**HB 153** Weldon – 3 **TGFS** Any person damaged by the unlicensed practice of law is entitled to file a civil action to recover damages, reasonable attorney fees, and expenses of litigation.

**HB 279** Powell – 171 **TGFS** The state supported salaries of judges of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, superior courts, public defenders and district attorneys are increased. The Supreme Court justices will receive nearly \$180,000 per year, Court of Appeal judges to get \$178,000/yr. Caps local supplements at \$50,000/year. Creates the Judicial Compensation Commission to review all judicial pay. Judges get a daily expense allowance for official business in Atlanta as do GA legislators if living more than 50 miles from Atlanta.

## **GOVERNMENT – COUNTIES AND CITIES**

**HB 89** Bruce – 61 **TGFS** Extends until 7-1-15 for city or county ordinances to be adopted and reported to Department of Community Affairs relating to manufacturing, distributing, dispensing, or possessing with intent to distribute controlled substances or marijuana in, on, or within drug-free commercial zones.

**HB 110** Roberts – 155 **TGFS** Consumer fireworks may be used and sold in GA to those 18 and over. Licensing of vendors by Safety Fire Commissioner. Two fireworks outlets per licensed distributor per county. Locate any fireworks stand within 1000 feet of a fire hydrant. Fireworks cannot be transported on the interstates. Excludes fireworks from school zones and school buses. Imposes a 5% excise fee/tax on each item sold. ***Consumer fireworks are any small fireworks devices containing restricted amounts of pyrotechnic composition designed primarily to produce visible or audible effects of combustion and manufactured to the standards defined in the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1124, 2006 edition.***

**HB 432** Raffensperger – 50 **TGFS** Local acts which deannex property from one city and annex it to another does not create a prohibited unincorporated island.

## **GOVERNMENT - EMPLOYMENT**

**SB 88** Jones – 25 **TGFS** Wages can be paid with a debit card if the employee accepts that option. If not, wages will be paid by check or direct deposit. ***Another option for employees who do not have a checking account.***

**HB 117** Hamilton – 24 **TGFS** Employer experience to be used to receive unemployment and reconcile overpayments by Department of Labor is further defined. DOL may require electronic application for benefits.

## **GUNS**

**HB 492** Jasperse – 11 **TGFS** Gun carry licenses and permits shall be issued if fee paid, background check is done, and oath sworn to. No license needed for current or honorably discharged members of the U.S. armed forces.

## **HEALTH**

**SB 109** Orrock – 36 **TGFS** When a patient has an incurable or irreversible condition, health care providers may act as directed in a Physician Order for Life-Sustaining Treatment, POLST, personally executed by the patient and the attending physician which directs providers regarding end of life care. No liability shall occur if death ensues and health care personnel act in good faith and according to the patient's stated wishes. POLST forms available from Department of Public Health.

**SB 111** Stone – 23 **TGFS** 'Continuing Care at Home' is furnishing service at home according to an agreement which includes nursing care, assisted living care or personal care, home services, and may also include an obligation of lodging or food. ***Currently, care had to be provided in a non-home facility.***

**SB 126** Hufstetler – 52 **TGFS** Authorized entities may each get a prescription for auto-injectable epinephrine, an epy pen, to have on hand if a client or customer needs it to combat an allergic response. Entities are authorized by the Department of Public Health as places where allergens may be present causing anaphylaxis, such as recreational camps, colleges and universities, day care facilities, youth sports leagues, amusement parks, restaurants, places of employment, sports arenas. ***This is the same provision K-12 schools currently have.*** Albuterol sulfate, which is used in a nebulizer or compressor device or inhaler for respiratory distress, asthma, may be prescribed for a school by a doctor or other

authorized licensed health practitioner, and pharmacists may fill the prescription. School personnel shall be trained to recognize respiratory distress and can provide the albuterol sulfate to the student without a prescription. The drug may be stockpiled at the school. SBOE and DPH to adopt regulations and LBOEs to adopt a policy for use and provide training. ***In Georgia, 298,000 children have asthma and 10 die each year.***

**HB 232** Carter – 175 **TGFS** State Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Dispensers shall have one member not in the business. The chair and vice chair shall be licensed hearing aid specialists. Dispenser license applicants must have a criminal records check and after 1-1-16, 20 hours of continuing education. ***Currently, 14 hours of continuing education is required.***

**HB 385** Nimmer – 178 **TGFS** The annual cost adjustment for copying and mailing medical records is transferred to the Department of Community Health. ***Currently, it is calculated by the Office of Planning and Budget.***

**HB 409** Taylor – 173 **TGFS** Coverage for treatment of burns for skin substitutes utilizing cryopreserved cadaver derived skin tissue shall not be limited or excluded because it is experimental or investigational medical treatment.

**HB 429** Stephens – 164 **TGFS** Health benefit plans shall not restrict prescribed treatment for terminal conditions, defined as expectation of death within 24 months. Requires insurance coverage for autism related disorders for children under the age of 6 and up to \$30,000/year unless insurance provided by an employer with 10 or fewer employees. Mandate will be review annually. If rates increase more than 1% due to this requirement, revisitation will result. If the state adopts a comprehensive plan for autism, this provision is repealed.

**HB 436** Clark – 101 **TGFS** Pregnant women shall be offered HIV and syphilis tests in the third trimester. She may refuse. ***Testing before the birth can cause treatment before delivery and possibly prevent the HIV or syphilis from infecting the baby.***

**HB 505** Cooper – 43 **TGFS** Revises the licensure and regulations of physical therapists and physical therapy assistants. Physical therapists may treat patients for up to 8 visits over 21 days before requiring a doctor's referral.

**SR 560** Unterman – 45 **NNS** Creates the 4 member Senate Women's Adequate Healthcare Study Committee. Report due 12-1-15. ***The statistics are alarming. There are about 130,000 births in GA per year with 60% covered by Medicaid and 45% are to unwed mothers and 7% have had no prenatal care. GA ranks highest in the nation in syphilis and 6<sup>th</sup> highest in newborns getting syphilis. Forty counties have no OBs and 31 hospital delivery units have closed. GA has five OB-GYN residency programs which do not produce enough doctors. This study is needed.***

**HR 618** Clark – 101 **NNS** Creates the 5 member House Study Committee on Adult Day Services. . Two of the members are non-legislators – one is an owner of an adult day care facility and the other is a consumer or a family member of a consumer of such facility. Report due 12-1-15. ***Alzheimers patients currently take 40% of all slots.***

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

**HB 3** Fleming – 121 **TGFS** Persons who entice college athletes to violate the terms of their participation in college sports by entering into or soliciting a transaction therefrom shall be subject to fines and/or jail consequences. ***The Todd Gurley bill, named for the UGA football player sanctioned for getting money for signing memorabilia, while the person who paid him was not.***

**HR 71** Gordon – 163 **NNS** Creates the 7 member House Study Committee on the HOPE Scholarship Program Award for Critical Fields of Study. Report due 12-1-15. ***Sponsor feels full tuition should not be paid for students trying to become prepared for careers in critical fields.***

**HR 304** Cooper – 43 **TGFS** Encourages GAs colleges, universities, and technical colleges to expand gerontology and dementia education and training. ***GA population has 1.5 million over age 60 and expects to increase that 66% by 2030. Alzheimers affects 130,000 over age 65.***



## REVENUE/TAXATION

**HB 63** Tanner – 9 **TGFS** Georgia Employer GED Tax Credit Act of 2015. Employers who pay for employees to take the GED test through the Technical College System are granted an income tax credit of \$400/employee and \$1200/employee who passes the test paid for by the employer. State aggregate amount is \$1 million. Individual employer cap is \$100,000. Effective 1-1-16. Repealed 1-1-20.

**HB 94** Williams – 119 **TGFS** GA residents who voluntarily cancel the registration of a motor vehicle will not be liable for any late fees for payment of taxes due thereon. The tax remains payable.

**SB 122** Mullis – 53 **TGFS** County SPLOST funding may pay for repairs of capital projects damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster. This category must be on the project list to be voted upon, although without a dollar amount as natural disasters cannot be predicted and the amount of damages even less certain. Projects may be state owned, operated, or administered. *Another source of funding for providing governmental services in a time of great need. Cited were the tornadoes in north GA four years ago.*

**HB 202** Battles – 15 **TGFS** An extensive revision of property tax processes, some example of which are:

- Local tax commissioners may permit taxpayers to receive property tax bills electronically.
- The property tax rate must be put on the website of the governmental entity in addition to putting a notice in the newspaper of general distribution.
- The tax digest submission deadline to DOE changed to Sep. 1, currently Aug 1.
- Fines increased for late filing.
- Two or more counties may combine tax assessors and commissioners offices. The agreement shall be in writing.
- Taxpayers may receive copies of documents used to set the value of their real property. A description of the methodology used in setting its fair market value and testing for uniformity shall be included.
- Superior courts given jurisdiction over actions against the Board of Assessors to enforce compliance with law.
- Clerk of Superior Court shall be the ‘appeals administrator’ and receive any complaint to forward to the grand jury which may find grounds for removal of a member of the Board of Equalization for failure to perform required duties.
- Members of the Board of Equalization must be property owners within the jurisdiction and complete 20 hours of training each year.

**HB 215** Jacobs – 80 **TGFS** Allows a second HOST tax in a county to pay for infrastructure throughout the county. The sales tax in the county rises to 8%. Modifies the existing HOST to be dedicated 100% to property tax relief. Each measure will need a local referendum and both must pass to become effective, else the existing HOST stays as it is, 80% property tax relief and 20% infrastructure. *DeKalb County. The second HOST will act like a SPLOST, except that it will not sunset. Only Atlanta City and Clayton County currently have an 8% sales tax rate.*

**HB 234** Rutledge – 109 **TGFS** Tax return deadline for vehicle licensing will be extended a day if the Federal Reserve Bank is closed in addition to legal holidays and Saturdays and Sundays.

**HB 275** Strickland – 111 **TGFS** Adds the GA Lottery Corporation as an agency which may settle debts from lottery winnings. *Nine state entities may collect from taxpayers by claiming part of the winnings or income tax refund.*

**HB 308** Stephens – 164 **TGFS** The income tax credit for rehabilitation of historic structures is revised extensively. It caps the credit at \$60 million/year statewide and \$5 million/year per structure. Structure must be in service by 1-1-17. If abandoned within 5 years, the credit must be repealed. *Extensive bill. Has some job creation requirements.*

**HB 319** Nimmer – 178 **TGFS** Ratifies the governor’s suspension of sales tax increase on motor fuel.

**HB 339** Burns – 159 **TGFS** The income tax credit for film, video, or digital production in GA is extended until tax year 2018.

**HB 374** Nix – 69 **TGFS** Adds ‘forestry’ equipment in the definition of the agriculture property for tax exemption purposes when held in dealer inventory. Farm equipment acquired with a lease-purchase agreement by a family owned qualified farm products producer and used in the production of agriculture products shall be property tax exempt.

**HB 374** Nix – 69 **TGFS** Adds ‘forestry’ equipment in the definition of the agriculture property for tax exemption purposes when held in dealer inventory. Farm equipment acquired with a lease-purchase agreement by a family owned qualified farm products producer and used in the production of agriculture products shall be property tax exempt.

**HB 426** Taylor – 173 **TGFS** A sales tax exemption for non-profit health centers for 3 years, until June 30, 2018. Annually, each health center shall report to the Revenue Department the number of patients served, average monthly full-time employees, total amount of exempt purchases. Also exempts sales tax for food and food ingredients to charities that feed the hungry or provide meals after a disaster.

**HB 428** Stephens – 164 **TGFS** A sales tax exemption for construction projects at: zoological institution (Zoo Atlanta) to be extended until June 30, 2018 up to \$350,000; an aquarium (GA Aquarium) until January 1, 2017 up to \$750,000; a museum of natural history (Fernbank) until January 1, 2017 up to \$300,000. Sales tax shall be paid at purchase and refunded by the Department of Revenue up to the limit specified.

**HB 457** Hawkins – 27 **TGFS** Watercraft which is self propelled or capable of being self-propelled and held for sale in inventory is exempt from property tax until December 2019.

**HB 464** Williamson – 115 **TGFS** An income tax credit for water conservation facilities and a shift from ground-water usage is repealed effective Dec. 31, 2016.

## **LOCAL**

**HB 213** Jacobs – 80 **TGFS** MARTA’s use of sales tax revenues permanently relieved of any statutory spending requirements. Allows a tax rate of 1.5% in any of its jurisdictions with approval in a local referendum, with revenues from the increase to be used for capital projects within that jurisdiction. The 1% tax rate will continue until 2057 when it will reduce to .5%. Provides authority for MARTA to enforce its rules for patrons who violate them by suspending the use of its services to them or imposing a civil fine or both. ***Currently, 50% of sales tax revenues must be spent on operating expenses and the rest for capital projects, although temporarily lifted in legislation passed in 2014. This makes it permanent.***

**HB 476** Fludd – 64 **PASSED** House **TABLED** in Senate  
CA to repeal the constitutional amendment which created the Fulton County Industrial District. Requires a state wide vote. ***This would remove the current restriction that the area cannot be annexed by any city. The proposed City of South Fulton will include this area if the bill passes and a local referendum passes. Local constitutional amendments were permitted prior to the adoption of the 1983 Constitution. Any in force at that time were continued.***

**HB 514** Bruce – 61 **PASSED** House **FAILED** in Senate **RECONSIDERED** Remains alive for 2016  
Creates the City of South Fulton which will include all unincorporated areas of Fulton County including the Fulton County Industrial Park if the local constitutional amendment which created it is repealed. Local referendum is required. ***Local constitutional amendments were allowed before the 1983 constitution was adopted. Any local referendum in force at that time is still valid, but no more can be adopted. If this city is formed, Fulton County will be 100% incorporated, the first in the state.***

**HB 633** Beskin – 54 **FAILED** in House **RECONSIDERED** **FAILED** in House **DEAD**  
A property tax exemption for Atlanta City school taxes for those age 70 and over for the full value of their home. Includes both annual budget and bonded indebtedness millage. Local referendum required to be held concurrently with the Presidential Preferential Primary in 2016.

**HB 650** Waites – 60 **TGFS** Atlanta CFO annually will recommend to the City Council for approval a fee for 911 services.

**HB 655** Willard – 51 **TGFS** Fulton County chief magistrate or designee will be the court administrator with budget oversight. Unexpended funds at year end will lapse into the Fulton County general fund.

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Sally FitzGerald, [sallyfitz@bellsouth.net](mailto:sallyfitz@bellsouth.net)

Capitol Observer

League of Women Voters – Atlanta/Fulton

[www.lwvaf.org](http://www.lwvaf.org)

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