

22 March 2018

LWVAF, Report from the Capitol, Week 11

This week the General Assembly met for three days, completing Day 38. Next week it will meet Tuesday and Thursday to finish the session for this year.

In practical terms, legislation must now be in the Rules Committee of the second chamber to get on a floor debate calendar. The only other option for passage is to amend the language onto another bill that changes the same law code section. A lot of legislators and staff are working long hours to 'perfect' these bills. Their spring break begins next Friday.

This week's report does not contain Friday's activity, which is considerable. It will be included in the final week's report. Next week's report will be out on the following week. Since Thursday is such a long day for staffs of the House Clerk and Secretary of Senate that they come in late on Friday or take the day off. Thus, the web site is not updated with the final version of bills until later. Our report will be available as soon as bill disposition can be verified.

The budget for the year beginning on July 1, FY19, got a DO PASS recommendation from the Senate Appropriations Committee this week. If it passes the full Senate on Friday, that leaves just two legislative days for reconciliation. This is the latest in the session this writer has ever seen a budget clear the Senate. This is the only bill that MUST pass.

The Atlanta Fulton Legislative Reception date has not yet been announced. Our final report will be available at that event.

BOLD Bill Number = 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 2018.
DV = Differing Versions
NNS = Needs No Signature
TGFS = To Governor for Signature

In CHAMBERS

CHILDREN

HB 513 Dickerson – 113 **TGFS** Hospitals are to post signs that they are a safe place to leave newborns for adoption as prescribed by the Department of Community Health.

EDUCATION – PREK – 12

SB 139 Hill – 6 **PASSED** Senate **PASSED** House **DV** **Attach HB 963** ^Author is no longer in legislature^ Schools may petition the SBOE and DOE to create specific career pathways. **House adds:** The State Workforce Development Board with Department of Education and Technical College System of Georgia shall develop annually a list of industry credentials and state licenses linked to high demand occupations with wages at least 70% of average wage in the state. DOE to distribute to all middle and high schools and put on their web site. Schools will report annually to the state the number of students earning each credential. **SBOE has approved 17 pathways, but some communities have industry that doesn't fit into those molds. This allows the educators to work with businesses to create learning that might result in a job in the community.**

HB 494 Dempsey – 13 **PASSED** House **PASSED** Senate **DV**

Early Care and Learning hearings regarding emergency closure of a program shall permit hearsay evidence. Background checks of directors and employees shall be comprehensive, not just a fingerprint check. If the person does not pass, that person cannot work nor live at the facility while children are present. **Senate:**

HB 718 Scott – 76 **TGFS** Up to 5 excused absences each year for two years are to be allowed for students of active or former military on extended active duty for the student to attend individual or group therapy as recommended by a licensed physician or psychologist.

HB 739 Williams – 168 **TGFS** Renames the law section that permits expedited certification for military spouses the Tracey Rainey Act. ***She is the wife of a military general and has publicized far and wide the GA program for military spouses.***

HB 740 Nix – 69 **PASSED** House **PASSED** Senate **DV**

Before K-3 students are to be given out of school suspension for more than five days in the school year, the student shall be enrolled in the RTI, Response to Intervention, process to determine if there are any physical reasons for the misbehavior, such as vision, hearing, or speech-language issues. Does not apply for infractions of possession of a weapon, drugs or other dangerous instruments or if the student's behavior endangered others. Requires parental permission. Special education students or those under Section 504 shall have a meeting convened to review appropriate supports for the student. ***Statewide, 2600 students in this age group receive suspensions exceeding 5 days at a time when the schools are trying to lay the foundations for literacy. RTI is a process defined at the federal level for students who have disciplinary issues and a cause, if any, needs to be determined.***

HB 759 Turner – 21 **PASSED** House **PASSED** Senate **DV**

The GA Special Needs Scholarship shall not require a prior year attendance at a public school if the parent is on active duty military **or** the student has previously qualified for the scholarship. ***If the parent goes off active duty, the student does not have to change schools and the scholarship-voucher will continue to pay for any private school tuition.***

HB 852 Smith – 41 **TGFS** Allows school systems to permit a student to finish a school year at the school enrolled if more than half the school year has elapsed even if the student's residence changes, as long as student is still living within the school system. Parent will be responsible for transportation of the student. Students with chronic disciplinary problems are excluded from this privilege. ***Currently, many school systems allow similar options, such as being allowed to finish the semester.***

HR 1414 Jasperse – 11 **NNS** **PASSED** Senate

Creates the 9-member House Study Committee on School Safety to look at various factors which can affect school safety and to curb the incidents of violence in schools and to facilitate life-saving responses to such incidents.

EDUCATION – POSTSECONDARY

SB 331 Henson – 41 **PASSED** Senate **PASSED** Senate **DV**

Lottery winners of more than \$250,000 may remain anonymous with a written request from winner. ***Four states currently allow total anonymity and several more offer partial confidentiality to winners.***

HB 700 Belton – 112 **TGFS** The service cancellable loan available to GA National Guard members for undergraduate degrees is extended to post graduate degrees. The Guard member must remain active in the Guard for two years following the last period of study for the degree.

GOVERNMENT – COUNTIES AND CITIES

HB 381 Corbett – 174 **PASSED** House **PASSED** Senate **DV**

Vacant mobile homes can be classified as derelict or intact for purposes of disposal or creation of liens by the local authority governing the land on which it is located. The owner of the land can have the vacant mobile home removed if derelict, or the owner of the mobile home will have a lien imposed for costs to make the home habitable.

HB 419 Silcox – 52 **PASSED** House **PASSED** Senate **DV**

Counties and cities can further regulate fireworks between 10 a.m. and midnight for noise. **Senate adds:** Governor may restrict fireworks in areas of drought. **Currently, local governments may not subject anyone to noise ordinances until 9 p.m.**

HB 876 Corbett – 174 **TGFS** Local governments cannot ban use of wood in building construction if all other requirements are met. **Part of the Rural Agenda to support GA's forestry industry and to allow farm buildings to be erected with wood. Some cities have banned the use of wood in buildings over 3 stories tall to reduce the loss of life and property in apartment house fires.**

GOVERNMENT – COURTS AND CRIMES

HB 149 Powell – 32 **PASSED** House **PASSED** Senate **DV** **Includes SB 319**

Bodily fluids and tissue, both human and animal, need to be cleaned up after serious injury, illness, or death. Law enforcement with GBI oversight and Department of Natural Resources will establish rules and regulations, and license those who clean up such trauma sites and their employees. Entities must be licensed, bonded, free of drug use, have liability insurance up to \$1 million. Temporary licenses up to 90 days for specific services can be issued in case of a public health emergency or state of emergency. **Senate:** Liability insurance is needed up to \$100,000. Creates the Department of Public Safety with a commissioner of fire safety and a 17 member Fire Safety Board. It assumes the responsibilities for much of the State Fire Marshall, the Georgia Fire Academy, GA Firefighter Standards and Training Council. Effective 7-1-19.

SB 327 Albers – 56 **PASSED** Senate **PASSED** House **DV**

A medical examiner's inquiry will now longer be required for patient deaths while unintended by a physician. **Either the coroner or medical examiner shall decide if an inquiry is needed. The GBI's morgue is behind on autopsies, so unnecessary ones will not contribute to the backlog.**

HB 732 Silcox – 52 **TGFS** Expands the offense of trafficking a person for sexual servitude to include patronizing such person in addition to solicitation of that person. **The offense will include the johns who create the demand for this service.**

HB 765 Thomas – 56 **PASSED** House **PASSED** Senate **DV**

Increases the penalties for hit-and-run so that it is a felony if a person loses a member of his/her body, loses the use of a body member, has serious disfigurement, or organic brain damage. **Senate:** Must know they hit someone.

GOVERNMENT – EMPLOYMENT

HB 701 Tanner – 9 **TGFS** Applicants for state employment are tested for illegal drugs which now include opioids and derivatives. **Opioids are synthetic opiates.**

HB 816 Gravely – 67 **TGFS** Fingerprinting and criminal records checks shall be required to become an employee of Department of Revenue, must be renewed every 10 years, and must apply to contractors and their subcontractors.

HEALTH

SB 370 Wilkinson – 50 **TGFS** Medicaid recipients who die shall have the first \$25,000 of their estate waived from recapture by Medicaid. **Currently, if the estate is valued under \$25,000, there is no recapture, but if it is above**

\$25,000, Medicaid takes all of it up to the Medicaid liability. Generally, this is the home, as eligibility for Medicaid limits other assets to \$2000.

REVENUE & TAXATION

SB 328 Albers – 56 **TGFS** Repeals as of 12-31-18 these income tax exemptions:

- Federal qualified transportation fringe benefits
- Private drivers education courses
- Diesel particulate emission reduction technology equipment.

Bills raising revenue must start in the House, but bills decreasing revenue may start in either chamber.

HB 793 LaRiccia – 169 **TGFS** A sales tax exemption for an aquarium is extended to 2022 and requires an annual report to the Department of Revenue who will share it with the House Ways & Means and Senate Finance committees. The report is to include the total number of visitors admitted, average monthly number of full time employees, and total amount of exempt purchases made in the prior year. ***GA Aquarium in Atlanta.***

HB 820 Beskin – 54 **PASSED** House **PASSED** Senate **DV**

Establishes the procedure to be used by a county when their tax digest is not approved in 2017. ***All signers are from Fulton County which encountered little guidance when the 2017 tax digest was rejected by DOR.***

HB 886 Watson – 176 **TGFS** The sales tax exemption for agriculture purchases is increased to \$5000, from \$2500. Adds 'livestock' to the products grown over several years where the amount of sales can be averaged for tax purposes. Fees increased to \$150 for a three year exemption certificate. Requires greater oversight to insure the exemption is not misused.

TRANSPORTATION & DRIVING

SB 342 Harbin – 15 **PASSED** Senate **PASSED** House **DV**

An owner of a motor vehicle cited for not having a revalidation decal attached to the license plate is to be fined only \$50 if the decal is displayed on the vehicle when appearing in court.

LOCAL – FULTON and its CITIES

SB 485 Parent – 42 **PASSED** Senate H.Local Legislation

A homestead exemption for Atlanta for municipal purposes of \$50,000 of assessed value (\$125,000 of fair market value). A local referendum is required on the Nov. 6, 2018 ballot.

SB 486 Parent – 42 **PASSED** Senate H.Local Legislation

A homestead exemption for Atlanta Public Schools for educational purposes of \$100,000 of assessed value (\$250,000 of fair market value) for owners age 65 and older. A local referendum is required on the Nov. 6, 2018 ballot.

HB 1056 Bazemore – 63 **PASSED** House S.State & Local Government Oversight

A homestead exemption for the City of South Fulton for the increase in assessment over the base year for school tax purposes, but not bonded indebtedness interest or retirement. The base year is lowest of 2016, 2017, or 2018, times 1.0423 which is the inflation rate average from December 2015 to December 2017, or the previous year the exemption is first granted to the current owner. The base year assessment can be increased annually by the lesser of 3% or the CPI for urban consumers. The exemption will not apply to improvements or additional land. An unremarried surviving spouse will retain the exemption as long as the spouse occupies the homesteaded property. Applies to 2019 and beyond. Local referendum is required, to be held in conjunction with the general election on Nov 6, 2018. ***Critics of the huge assessment increases for 2017, which were rolled back by Fulton County Commission to those of 2016, will not be satisfied. Assessments will rise in 2018. January 1 of each year is the date for determining fair market value.***

In COMMITTEE

CHILDREN

SR 681 Harbin – 16 **PASSED** Senate DO PASS in H.Juvenile Justice

The GA General Assembly urges Congress to propose the Parental Rights Amendment. The bill being referred to is HJR 121 by Hultgren of Illinois. It states:

- The liberty of parents to direct the upbringing, education, and care of their children is a fundamental right;
- The parental right to direct education includes the right to choose public, private, religious, or home schools, and the right to make reasonable choices within public schools for one's child;
- Neither the United States or any state shall infringe upon these rights without demonstrating that its governmental interest as applied to the person is of the highest order and not otherwise served;
- The parental rights guaranteed by this article shall not be denied or abridged on account of disability;
- This article shall not be construed to apply to a parental action or decision that should end life.

The courts have already established these rights. The sponsor feels that putting it into the constitution will insure these rights are never negated.

EDUCATION – PREK-12

HB 763 Nix – 69 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Education & Youth **DV**

Improvement in school climate shall become a focus of the student attendance committee for each school system. Student discipline data is to be included in the annual report to the state board of education.

HB 787 Hilton – 95 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Education & Youth **DV**

State charter schools may be members of RESAs, Regional Education Service Agencies, and utilize any services provided to membership. **House:** Changes the state charter school funding in lieu of a local tax digest to be based on a state-wide average, currently an average of the 5 lowest wealthy school systems. Forward funding for expected enrollment over 2%. Virtual charters will get funding for the hardware provided to students and the servers to handle them, 25% of capital that goes to brick and mortar students. **Senate:** The state charter school funding in lieu of a local tax digest will get the state-wide average if the charter school meets the state average of academic achievement in the CCRPI; else they will get funding on the current formula. Forward funding will not be granted at the beginning of the school year, but at the end of it. Capital funded assets revert to the state board of education if a school closes, not to the charter school operators. Also contains SB 405, the higher education grant for low income students not eligible for HOPE.

Traditional schools must wait until the midterm budget to get paid for the number of students who have enrolled over the previous year and get no money for computer hardware. A fiscal note for the House version indicates the cost of changing the funding basis will cost \$17 million in the first year. The Senate version may have a somewhat lower cost. There are 90,000 students enrolled in charter schools, 33,000 in the 32 state charter schools; traditional schools have 1.7 million. Three state charter schools are virtual schools, one of which is to close at the end of May 2018.

HB 853 Dempsey – 13 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Education & Youth **DV**

No student placed in a psychiatric residential treatment facility by the parent pursuant to a physician's order can be charged tuition. ***There are 6 facilities in the state. A student who is admitted will continue the student's educational program. If there is an IEP, it will also follow the student. Funds will be supplied by the home school district for the duration of the stay.***

EDUCATION – POSTSECONDARY

SB 339 Ligon – 3 **PASSED** Senate DO PASS in H.Judiciary **DV**

Requires University System of GA and its institutions to adopt policies to allow free speech on any subject and any speaker invited by students, student groups, or faculty to orate in public areas of the campus. Restrictions of speech are

allowed if it achieves a compelling government interest, is the least disruption means of furthering such governmental interest, leaves open other opportunities to engage in expressive conduct, and provides for spontaneous assembly and distribution of literature. Restrictions of student speech allowed only for activity not protected by the First Amendment, such as violations of state or federal law, defamation, harassment, threats, invasion of privacy, or action that unlawfully disrupts the function of the institution.

SB 348 Harper – 7 **PASSED** Senate DO PASS in H.Public Safety & Homeland Security **DV**

Gives arrest powers to POST certified Technical College System of GA campus police in the manner that USG campus police have it.

HB 713 Chandler – 102 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Higher Education **DV** **Includes SB 405**

Student eligibility for HOPE Zell Miller Scholarship (which pays 100% of tuition) for home schoolers or those graduating from an ineligible high school is changed to a score in the 92nd percentile on ACT (score of 29) or SAT (score of 1310), currently the 93rd percentile. Effective 7-1-18 for home schoolers and 7-1-20 for those graduating from an ineligible high school. **Currently, HOPE Zell Miller Scholarships pay for the first 30 hours for these non-public school students after the student has completed them and earned a 3.7 or higher. From then on it will front the money for year 2. This bill would allow those with the high scores to get the first year paid up front like students from public schools.** **House adds:** A grant for students in an institution of the University System, if appropriated by the General Assembly, of \$1500/semester if several conditions are met: family income is \$48,000 or under, students is receiving a federal PELL grant but not a HOPE scholarship, has a high school GPA of at least 2.3, and either ACT scores of 21 or higher, SAT scores of 480 or higher on the reading-writing portion and 530 or higher on math, earned a 3 or better on at least 2 Advanced Placement courses, 4 or higher on at least 2 International Baccalaureate exams, or passed an end-of-gateway assessment under the Carl Perkins Act. Additionally, the student must work 15 hours/week during the semester and maintain a GPA of at least 2.3.

ELECTIONS & ETHICS

HB 973 Jones – 47 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Ethics **DV**

Lobbyists shall acknowledge and agree to abide by the sexual harassment policy of the General Assembly.

GOVERNMENT – GENERAL

SB 402 Gooch – 51 **PASSED** Senate DO PASS in H.Ways & Means **DV**

Broadband and other communications technologies may be deployed on interstate highway rights of way if enabled by DOT. DOT in consultation with Georgia Technology Authority will plan for, establish, and implement a long-term policy regarding use of interstate highway rights of way and state owned roads for such purposes. The Department of Community Affairs will establish a Georgia Broadband Ready Community Site designation. Grants, if appropriated, will be available for broadband underserved communities. Creates a sales tax exemption for purchase of broadband equipment to serve these underserved communities. **This proposal is for expansion of the 5G technology which can move data through boxes mounted on existing utility poles. It does not need the height of existing cell towers.**

HB 809 Hitchens – 161 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Public Safety

Georgia State Patrol vehicles may be painted in a solid color. **Currently, they must be two-toned, light grey and dark blue. The single color is not identified in this bill.**

GOVERNMENT – COUNTIES AND CITIES

HB 189 Nelson – 125 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.State & Local Government Oversight **DV**

Contracts entered into with any county, city, or other political subdivision shall contain specific performance and cost measures. The contract shall also provide that it can be cancelled by the government entity if projected annual costs exceed the contracted amount.

GOVERNMENT – COURTS AND CRIMES

HB 258 Powell – 32 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Public Safety **DV**

Persons committing assault with a gun on a peace officer in the line of duty shall not have any portion of the sentence suspended, stayed, probated, deferred, or withheld, reduced by any earned time, early release, work release, leave or any other measure. Increases penalties for a second and third conviction.

HB 703 Hitchens – 161 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Public Safety **DV**

Creates the Governor’s Office of Public Safety Support to provide counseling and support to those and their family members in law enforcement, firefighters, prison guards, first responders. The director is appointed by the governor and shall have experience as a public safety officer. The office shall respond to requests to provide counseling services or any other critical incident support services for any incident including death or other tragedies. May use chaplains, mental health professionals and trained public safety officer personnel. The office shall develop and hold training courses in critical incident stress management. **Sponsor, a former GA State Patrol officer, indicates there is data to show that such support provided within the first 24 to 72 hours can keep officers from getting PTSD. The suicide rate among first responders is 10 times that of the general population. Counseling may improve that rate.**

HB 803 Willard – 41 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Health & Human Services

Prohibits trafficking of a disabled adult, elder person or resident or of any taking of the property or money of such person for use by someone other than such person. Establishes penalties for such felonies.

HB 890 Fleming – 121 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Judiciary

Using an emergency exit after shoplifting shall be a misdemeanor. **If caught, the shoplifters will be charged with one more crime. Emergency exits frequently have audible alarms which causes people to vacate stores to determine the cause of the signal. First responders then have far more obstacles to navigate in trying to find the shoplifters.**

GOVERNMENT – ENVIRONMENT

SB 191 Jeffares – 17 **PASSED** Senate DO PASS in H.Game, Fish & Parks **DV** ^Author is no longer in legislature^

~~A new petroleum pipeline or an extension of an existing one requires a permit from the director of Environmental Protection Division of Department of Natural Resources. No permit will be issued within the GA coastal zone management program. The process for application of a permit is outlined which includes notifying landowners and counties of the route. A hearing is to be held. Eminent domain cannot be used until a permit is issued. Rules and regulations to be issued by 7-1-18.~~ **House substitute:** Designates the shoal bass as the official state native riverine sport fish. This species lives in the Flint, Chattahoochee and Ocmulgee rivers in abundance. **The original language was passed in 2017 under a different number. The House utilized this bill number to pass its shoal bass proposal one more time over to the Senate.**

HEALTH

HB 40 Turner – 21 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Agriculture & Consumer Affairs

A veterinarian shall disclose the rabies vaccination of an animal within the veterinarian’s care within 24 hours of a written request by a doctor of any person bitten by the animal. **Currently, medical records of an animal must be kept confidential just as those for a person.**

HB 65 Peake - 141 **PASSED** House DO PASS in H.Health & Human Services **DV**

House: adds 8 conditions for which THC (marijuana) oil can be prescribed. Requires that the oil be in a prescription bottle and that the THC oil registry card be on the person when in possession of the oil. **Senate:** creates a 10-member joint study committee to look at all aspects of in-state access to THC oil from acquiring the seeds to plant to destruction

of any unused parts of the plant, security, training, distribution. The members will be 3 legislators from each chamber and 2 citizens appointed by each presiding officer. Report is due 12-1-18.

SB 81 Unterman – 45 **PASSED** Senate DO PASS in H.Health & Human Services **DV**

Naloxone, which reverses opioid related overdoses, can now be dispensed by the state health officer per an executive order by the governor in December 2016. This bill codifies the executive order. Other provisions include requiring pharmacists to report prescriptions for schedule II, III, IV, and V drugs, collection of stats on neonatal abstinence syndrome, and on-site inspections of drug abuse treatment and education programs.

HB 161 Price – 48 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Health & Human Services **DV**

Exempts persons employed by or are agents of a harm reduction organization from laws prohibiting distribution of hypodermic syringes or needles. A harm reduction organization works to reduce the spread of HIV and other infectious diseases among intravenous drug users. Pharmacists and their interns and externs are already exempted. **There are 38 states that have some sort of needle exchange service. It slows down the transmission of diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C, both of which can be costly to treat.**

SB 325 Kirkpatrick – 32 **PASSED** Senate DO PASS in H.Health & Human Services **DV**

Interstate Medical Licensure Compact Act is to be administered by the Georgia Composite Medical Board. The compact allows expedited licensure of doctors licensed by other state within the compact. Outlines the authority of the compact board on the member states.

SB 437 Payne – 54 **PASSED** Senate DO PASS in H.Juvenile Justice **DV**

A minor child candidate for non-resuscitation may have such an order issued with parent consent either written or oral. The consent of the minor is also required if the attending doctor finds the minor to be sufficiently mature to understand the impact.

HB 647 Dempsey - 13 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Health & Human Services **DV**

Treatment program for obesity. Two year pilot for up to 1000 members of the state health plan. Requires a complete health assessment, body mass index, BMI, greater than 27 with comorbidities related to obesity or greater than 30 without such comorbidities, and an agreement to enroll in an approved wellness plan. A final report will be issued to the General Assembly at the end of the pilot program.

REVENUE & TAXATION

HB 59 Stephens – 164 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Finance **DV**

Revises the income tax credit for rehabilitation of historic structures. The limit on credits is removed for historic structures which are not homes, currently \$5 million. The credits may be sold and resold, currently limited to one transfer of ownership. Effective 1-1-18 and automatically repealed 12-31-27, but the General Assembly could repeal earlier when the law would revert to its current state. **If the General Assembly repeals, it can refashion these credits as it chooses and not be limited to a prior definition.**

HB 93 Corbett – 174 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Finance **DV**

A sales tax refund will earn no interest if purchaser had a certificate or exemption letter and did not use it for the purchases.

HB 118 Kelley – 16 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Regulated Industries & Utilities **DV**

Requires licensing, registration, and taxation of fantasy contest operators by the state. Players must be over 18. No betting on college sports. **Taxes the game operators, not the players. Fantasy football, fantasy basketball, fantasy baseball, etc. Sponsor considers these games of skill, thus the players are not taxed, except on winnings.**

HB 327 Powell – 171 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Finance

The title tax fee on automobiles is 6.75%, down from 7%; the fee for vehicles brought into the state is 4%, currently 7%; leased vehicles are valued at the amount to be paid under the contract; used cars are valued at the price paid, not the wholesale book value which is usually lower. The fees are remitted to the county tag agent in the county the vehicle is to be housed, which withholds its share and forwards the rest to the state. The schedule for what is retained for the county and school district, and city if there is one, is outlined in the bill. Effective 7-1-18.

HB 357 Stephens – 164 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Finance **DV**

All water vessels are to be titled unless exempted. If hull is damaged, the title shall be so marked. Caps tax at \$600 for each vessel, \$15,000 in value. Those worth more are not taxed more.

HB 658 Ehrhart – 36 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Finance **DV**

Excise tax on rooms and lodging by counties and cities shall have no sunset date and can be collected until repealed.

HB 696 Kelley – 16 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Finance **DV**

A sales tax exemption until 2028 for computer equipment sold or leased for use in high-technology data centers if the firm does not get a tax abatement, if there is a \$20 million bond filed, and if the business does not leave the state or cease to exist during the period. A high-technology data enter means \$250 million in aggregate costs for design, construction, and equipment over 10 years.

HB 735 Bentley – 139 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Finance **DV**

An income tax credit for expenditures on the maintenance of a railroad track owned or leased by a Class III, short line, railroad as of 1-1-18. Credit is 50% of the total expenditures up to \$3500 per mile of track owned or leased by that railroad. Any credit claimed reduces the costs basis of the track. Effective 1-1-2019. Repealed 1-1-29.

HB 749 Blackman – 146 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Finance

Excludable from income taxable net income is any income received by a surviving family member of a deceased veteran when such income is based on the veteran's service record. ***GA is one of 9 states that does not exclude military retirement income. It is to be treated much like the Social Security exemption -- taxpayer must be 62 if disabled or 65 to claim the exemption.***

HB 871 LaRiccia – 169 **PASSED** House DO PASS in S.Finance **DV**

A sales tax exemption for manufactured homes up to 50% if it is to be converted to real property, when it will no longer be eligible for a Certificate of Removal from Permanent Location.

TRANSPORTATION & DRIVING

SB 89 Shafer – 48 **PASSED** Senate DO PASS in H.Transportation **DV**

Authorizes the commissioner of DOT to take over the GA Freight Railroad Program to enhance the state's investment in freight rail projects for public benefit and to support a safe and balanced transportation system for GA. ***The Savannah Harbor expansion means more cargo containers have to be transported throughout the state. Doing it by rail keeps some traffic off our roads.***

SB 386 Beach – 21 **PASSED** Senate DO PASS in H.Transportation **DV**

Creates the 11-member Atlanta-region Transit Link 'ATL' Commission to plan and coordinate transit services, establish facilities, and fund throughout the region. Members include the governor as chair, DOT commissioner, CEO of MARTA, Atlanta mayor, county commission chair and one mayor from Clayton County, DeKalb CEO and one mayor, Fulton County Commission chair and one additional mayor. It shall determine and prioritize transit projects throughout the region and shall administer the payment of such projects through a sales tax of up to 1% levied by the county in which projects are to be located. The county must call the referendum and levy the tax. Operations will be under MARTA.

SB 391 Beach – 21 **PASSED** Senate DO PASS in H.Transportation

Vehicles owned or operated by a transit authority are exempt from requirement for identification and regulations of motor vehicles.

NEW LEGISLATION

LOCAL – FULTON and its CITIES

HB 1063 Bruce - 61 H.Local Legislation

City of South Fulton mayor and council members shall be limited in any authority they can exercise over personnel. The charter is changed to give that power to the city manager over department and agency heads, who will then have the authority over personnel within their departments, offices, or agencies. The mayor and council members may hire/fire only the city manager.

HB 1064 Martin - 49 H.Local Legislation

A Fulton County homestead exemption for persons over 65 in the amount of \$60,000 of assessed value, \$150,000 of market value, effective in the 2019 tax year. A local referendum is required on the Nov. 6, 2018 ballot. This exemption is in lieu of any other homestead exemption on the property and must be applied for.

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League of Women Voters – Atlanta/Fulton

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