

9 February 2018

## LWVAF, Report from the Capitol, Week 5

The General Assembly met for four days this week, completing Day 18. They will return Monday for another four-day week.

Several organizations presented at a hearing in the House Reapportionment committee on a bill to establish a nonpartisan commission for redrawing electoral lines. No vote was taken on either HR 2 or HR 3.

The House has begun its work on the FY19 budget, the only bill that is required of the General Assembly to pass. The amended budget is in the Senate, and it is anticipated that few changes will be made. The adoption bill is on the governor's desk for signature, and the Mimosa Bill is getting lots of publicity. All is looking good in GA.

LWVGA Legislative Day is Tuesday, Feb 13, in Room 307 of the Legislative Office Building. Free. Open to all. Y'all come.

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**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

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**In CHAMBERS**

### EDUCATION – PREK – 12

HB 217 Carson – 46 **PASSED** House **PASSED** Senate **DV** **In Conference Committee**

Income tax credits for expenses of attending a private school are increased to \$68 million for 2018, and an additional 10% more for each year thereafter up to \$100 million. Any state credits not used can be carried forward. The carried forward credits are allocated at 25% for C corporations, and the rest as first come first served. ***Senate: The state cap is \$65 million with no escalator in future years. The administrative fee is limited to 3%, not the 10% desired.***

HB 655 Williams – 145 **PASSED** House S.Education & Youth

Public schools must post a sign with a toll free phone number to DFCS, Department of Family and Children Services, to receive reports of child abuses and neglect. The State Board of Education may adopt rules about the size and location of such a sign. ***Sponsor wants students to know they can self-report sexual abuse. Adults in the school, both employees and volunteers, are already mandatory reporters to a designated administrator in the school who passes on these reports to DFCS.***

HB 728 Coleman – 97 **PASSED** House

The Public Education Innovation Fund Foundation income tax credit is applicable beginning in the 2018 tax year with no sunset. The tax credit is \$1000 for single taxpayers and \$2500 for joint taxpayers. The proceeds are used for public schools that need financial help in increasing their student achievement. ***This bill removes the 3-year sunset.***

### EDUCATION – POSTSECONDARY

SB 331 Henson – 41 **PASSED** Senate H.Higher Education

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

HB 700 Belton – 112 **PASSED** House S.Veterans, Military, & Homeland Security

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 – GENERAL**

**SR 711** Miller – 49 **NNS PASSED**

The Senate recognizes the handoff from the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee to that of Atlanta which is hosting Super Bowl LIII in February 2019.

## **HEALTH**

SB 118 Unterman – 45 **PASSED** Senate H.Insurance

Autism must be covered by insurance up to age 12, currently age 6. **Currently, GA has the lowest age for capping coverage in the nation. Medicaid and the State Health Plan cover autism until age 21.**

## **REVENUE & TAXATION**

SB 328 Albers – 56 **PASSED** Senate H.Ways & Means

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.**

## **In COMMITTEE**

## **CHILDREN**

HB 654 Beskin – 54 DO PASS in H.Judiciary

Reintroduction of the recommendations of the Georgia Child Support Commission which were developed over three years. **A similar bill has passed in 2018 and is on the governor's desk for signature. It has elements in it that were not in the recommendations. This is a Plan B.**

HB 668 Price – 48 DO PASS in H.Judiciary

Outlines how an adult guardian can be appointed for a ward who is 17 and still a minor. Guardianship will not be effective until the ward has turned 18.

## **EDUCATION – PREK-12**

SB 362 Tippins – 37 DO PASS in S.Education & Youth

The State Board of Education shall establish an innovative assessment pilot program of 3 to 5 years to examine one or more alternative assessments (tests) and accountability systems aligned with state academic standards. Up to 10 school districts may participate, selected by the SBOE. Participating local school systems would be excused from using the state testing instruments. SBOE will handle any necessary approvals or waivers needed from USED. The SBOE and DOE will demonstrate comparability between innovative assessments chosen and state-wide assessments. Effective 2018-19 school year. **DOE worked closely with author to develop this program as did some school districts.**

HB 418 Benton – 31 DO PASS in H.Retirement

Educators who have taught overseas may purchase 2 years of creditable service in TRS as long as the educator pays all actuarial costs.

HB 722 Casas – 107 DO PASS in H.Education

For Move On When Ready or dual credit courses, adds to the definition of eligible postsecondary institution as ‘any non-profit, baccalaureate degree granting post secondary institution in existence for at least 10 years in Georgia and is accredited by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation or the United States Department of Education’. **Thirteen schools meet this criteria now. While most of the schools are sectarian, the Student Finance Commission will only approve general education courses for payment through the dual enrollment program.**

HB 739 Williams – 168 DO PASS in H.Education

Renames the section that permits expedited teaching certification for spouses of military 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 DO PASS in H.Education

Before K-3 students are to be given out of school suspension for the fifth or subsequent day 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 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 4 days at a time when 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 DO PASS in H.Education

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 763 Nix – 69 DO PASS in H.Education

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 781 Tanner – 9 DO PASS in H.Education

The ESPLOST may be used for annual maintenance and operations up to 50% of the projected revenues. The sales tax portion for education purposes on motor fuel shall not be imposed on amounts over \$3 per gallon. Enabling legislation for HR 992. **Currently, ESPLOST funds may be used only for capital projects. Many school systems need additional funds for their annual budgets and the state QBE funding still has an austerity cut of \$167 million/year. This provides some flexibility to use the sales tax money to offset part of the annual budget for the duration of the ESPLOST, IF it is listed in the ballot referendum which enabled the collection of the sales tax.**

HR 898 Coleman – 97 DO PASS in H.Education

Creates the 15 member Joint Study Committee on the Establishment of a State Accreditation Process. Members include 3 legislators from each chamber, the state school superintendent, the state board of education chair, the state Charter School Commission chair, the Office of Student Achievement director, the chancellor of the University System, and five appointees of the governor to include a local board of education member, a local school superintendent, a principal, a teacher, and a parent. The group is to study the resources and structure needed, any impediments, the interaction with existing private accreditation agencies, aligning accreditation reviews with charter or contract renewals for charter systems and strategic waiver systems, establishment of a state process for annual review of system charters and contracts including student achievement, local board of education governance and financial management, possible consequences of losing state accreditation and the possibility of establishing a school board review commission. Report

due 12-1-18. **Called for in legislation passed last year. Current accreditation looks at local school governance but not academics.**

HR 992 Tanner – 9 DO PASS in H.Education

CA to allow ESPLOST funds to be used for school district annual operating budgets, known as maintenance and operations expenses, up to 50% as long as the use is listed on the referendum for the ESPLOST. Enabling legislation is HB 781. **Currently, ESPLOST funds may be used only for capital projects or retirement of debt for capital expenditures.**

## **EDUCATION – POSTSECONDARY**

SB 82 Jackson – 2 DO PASS in S.Higher Education

Creates a needs-based HOPE scholarship and grant for students in families with less than \$75,000 annual income. This is in addition to a HOPE scholarship or grant and would be enough to cover all of the tuition.

SB 354 Jackson-2 DO PASS in S.Higher Education

Active duty service members shall be classified as in-state for tuition purposes at the Technical College System of GA.

HB 713 Chandler – 102 DO PASS in H.Higher Education

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 91<sup>st</sup> percentile on ACT or SAT, currently the 93<sup>rd</sup> percentile. Effective 7-1-18 for home schoolers and 7-1-20 for those graduating from an ineligible high school.

## **GOVERNMENT – GENERAL**

HR 943 Morris – 2 DO PASS in H.Interstate Cooperation

Creates the 6 member Joint Georgia-North Carolina and Georgia-Tennessee Boundary Line Commission, 3 legislators from each chamber. The boundary is to lie at the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel, north of the southernmost bank of the Tennessee River. A flawed survey of 1818 erroneously marked the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel south of its actual location and the survey was never accepted by Georgia. Several attempts have been made to adjust the borders to the true location of the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel but none have been successful. **Georgia wants the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel accurately defined so it can access water from the Tennessee River.**

## **GOVERNMENT – COURTS AND CRIMES**

SB 315 Thompson – 14 DO PASS in S.Public Safety

Unauthorized computer access is defined as a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature.

## **GUNS**

HB 657 Petrea – 166 DO PASS in H.Public Safety & Homeland Security

Knowingly and intentionally providing a gun to a person on probation or as a felony first offender is a felony. But such provider is not required to inquire if the person receiving the gun is a felon.

## **REVENUE & TAXATION**

HB 302 Nix - 69 DO PASS in H.Ways & Means

For entities that levy a property tax (ad valorem) and which keep the millage the same even as the tax assessments increase, will no longer have to advertise the millage rate as a tax increase. The required notice wording is changed to simply state the amount of the tax levy and whether it will result in increased dollars to the entity.

HB 793 LaRiccia – 169 DO PASS in H.Ways & Means

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?**

## TRANSPORTATION & DRIVING

HB 352 Martin – 49 DO PASS in H.Ways & Means

Annual motor vehicle license fees shall not be charged to low-speed vehicles or electric powered personal transportation vehicles (golf carts). **Currently, alternative fuel vehicles are exempt and would remain so. They are powered by compressed natural gas, liquefied natural gas, or liquefied petroleum gas.**

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## NEW LEGISLATION

### GUNS

SB 390 Jackson – 2 S.Judiciary

Public assemblies during a St. Patrick's Day holiday shall be unauthorized locations for carrying a weapon or long gun. **Author is from Savannah with one of the largest St. Patrick's Day celebrations in the country.**

### REVENUE & TAXATION

HB 820 Beskin – 54 H.Ways & Means

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

HB 824 Mosby – 83 H.Ways & Means

Allows state income tax filers to used itemized deductions for state returns even if the federal return for those taxpayers used the standard deduction. **Currently, the methods used for offsets to income must be identical between federal and state tax returns.**

## TRANSPORTATION & DRIVING

SR 715 Jackson – 2 S.Transportation

HR 1054 Stephens – 164 H.Government Affairs

Honors Juliette Gordon Low for creating the Girl Scouts program and directs the Department of Transportation to rename the bridge between Savannah and Hutchinson Island the Juliette Gordon Low Bridge. **The bridge is currently named the Talmage Bridge after Eugene Talmage who was a former governor and a segregationist.**

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League of Women Voters – Atlanta/Fulton

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**Know the issues. Join the conversation. Make a difference.**

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