

18 January 2019

LWVAF, Report from the Capitol, Week 1

The Georgia General Assembly is back in town. Hold tight to both your wallet and your spouse, for efforts will be made to take both from you.

This first week of a new session saw all constitutional officers installed. The House has reelected David Ralston as its Speaker. The Senate has formed its committees and named its chairs while the House has completed neither task. Only the Rules Committee chair has been named to replace John Meadows who died just days after being reelected. That is Jay Powell, former chair of Ways & Means; yet another vacancy to be filled. The Senate Committee chairs and members may be found at www.senate.ga.gov.

The calendar has been set for the first 11 days. Next week will have no legislative days, but the Appropriations Committees will meet jointly to look over the budget. Typically, they start with the budget for the current year, the amended budget. All legislators will return for Legislative Day 5 on Monday, January 28.

As in past years, this report will be posted weekly on the League of Women Voter's web site, www.lwvaf.org.

CA = constitutional amendment. Requires a 2/3s vote in each chamber and a majority vote in the next general election scheduled for November 2020.

NEW LEGISLATION

EDUCATION – PREK - 12

HB 1 Petrea – 166 H.Education

Renames the GA Special Needs Scholarship to the Senator Eric Johnson Scholarship. ***Eric Johnson is a former President Pro Tem of the GA Senate, currently a lobbyist, and a strong proponent of school choice at taxpayer expense.***

HB 10 Bazemore – 63 H.Health & Human Services

The sex education curriculum may include for female students the best practices for and risks associated with the use of tampons. Encourages all doctors and nurses providing tampons to provide information to the patient on best practices for and risks associated with the use of tampons and avoidance of toxic shock syndrome.

SR 12 Albers – 56 S.Finance

CA to allow educational SPLOST proceeds to be used for school security projects. ***Currently, SPLOST funds may be used for capital projects but not annual expenses. This proposal would allow hiring of personnel to provide building and campus security or mental health services.***

SB 15 Albers – 56 S.Public Safety

Keeping Georgia's Schools Safe Act. Every public and private school, K-12, shall conduct a threat assessment, an evaluation to effectively respond, prevent or reduce, the threat of violence, mass casualty incidents, and other acts of violence, natural disasters, and hazardous materials or radiological accidents. The first shall be done by August 1, 2019, prior to the opening of school for students, and every 2 years thereafter. Additional Inclusions are safety issues: in school safety zones, for school functions in non-instructional hours, and in school transportation of students. GEMA shall train school safety coaches for schools who shall be current or former members of the armed forces, law enforcement, or fire departments. Coaches shall be granted a homestead exemption for property taxes for schools for the full value of the property if approved in a statewide referendum in November 2019. ***Currently, private schools 'may' conduct an assessment. The public schools are already required.***

SB 21 James – 35 S.Education & Youth

Requires a course in cybersecurity for every grade, K-12. Effective 7-1-20.

SB 25 Health – 31 S.Government Oversight

Clarifies when a motor vehicle must stop for a school bus approaching from the opposite direction.

EDUCATION – POSTSECONDARY

ELECTIONS & ETHICS

HR 2 Turner – 21 H.Judiciary

Ratifies the U.S. Constitutional Amendment to prohibit the use of a poll tax. ***GA has not ratified this amendment. Doing so will make no change in federal law, but will have a record of GA's ratification.***

SR 18 Lucas – 26 S.Government Oversight

CA to require the office of Secretary of State to be declared vacant when the holder qualifies for any other elected office. ***The Secretary of State is the chief election officer. Some feel that person should not oversee an election if which that person is a candidate.***

SB 22 James – 35 S.Ethics

Absentee ballots will not require any identifying information from the voter on the outside of the mailing envelope but instead on another envelope enclosed therein.

HB 24 Jones – 91 S.Government Affairs

All members of state and local boards, authorities, commissions, & similar entities shall be appointed by an elected official or officials of the state or a political subdivision. ***This language seems to ignore the fact that some boards, commissions, etc., are elected.***

HB 27 Belton – 112 S.Government Affairs

Cities with population of 2500 or less may shorten the advanced voting period for elections if approved in a local referendum. The advanced voting period would be two weeks. Staff would be 1 manager and 1 assistant manager and any other poll workers the city may direct. The absentee ballot clerk may serve as the a manager or assistant manager.

GOVERNMENT – GENERAL

SB 2 Gooch – 51 S.Regulated Industries & Utilities

HB 23 Houston – 170 H.Economic Development & Tourism

Authorizes electric membership corporations to offer broadband services. Prohibits cross-subsidization between the corporation's broadband and natural gas services or electric services.

SB 17 Gooch – 51 S.Regulated Industries & Utilities

HB 22 Houston – 170 H.Economic Development & Tourism

Authorizes telephone cooperatives and their broadband affiliates to provide broadband services.

HB 25 Belton – 112 H.Judiciary

A military service member with orders to relocate for 90 days or more may cancel services for television, video, or audio programming or internet access or membership in a health spa without penalties.

GOVERNMENT – CAPITOL AND GROUNDS

HR 1 Ralston – 7 H.State Properties

Names the new judicial building being constructed on Capitol Avenue the Nathan Deal Judicial Center. ***This building is being built on the site of the former Archives building.***

GOVERNMENT – EMPLOYMENT

HB 5 Cannon – 58 H.Industry & Labor

GA Prospective Employer Act. Bans an employer from relying upon salary history information when hiring. Internal transfers or promotions with the applicant's current employer can continue to salary history information for evaluation.

GOVERNMENT – FEDERAL ISSUES

HR – 4 Turner – 21 H.Judiciary

Ratifies the U.S. Constitutional 18th amendment repealing prohibition. ***Federal law is not changed but the ratification will be recorded.***

HR 16 Mitchell – 88 H.Judiciary

Ratifies the U.S. Constitution 27th amendment establishing Equal Rights for All. ***Georgia's constitution declares equal rights for all, but the state never approved the federal constitutional amendment.***

HR 17 Turner – 21 H.Judiciary

Ratifies the U.S. constitution 25th amendment regarding presidential succession and disability. ***Georgia has never ratified this amendment. If this proposal passes, the records will be updated to indicate GA has acted on it.***

GUNS

HB 20 Bazemore – 63 H.Public Safety & Homeland Security

A person convicted of family violence cannot possess or carry a firearm.

HEALTH

SB 3 Rhett – 33 S.Health & Human Services

To provide for a program of premium assistance to enable eligible individuals to obtain health care coverage. Eligibility means a US citizen or legal resident, ages 19-65 with incomes at 138% of the federal poverty level or less but not eligible for Medicaid. The insured must contribute up to 5% of annual income to premiums. Creates a 8-member Legislative Oversight Committee for Health Care Premium Assistance.

HB 9 Mathiak – 73 H.Judiciary

Chiropractic doctors may impose a lien on proceeds from a third party to pay for health care costs of a person for injuries arising from an accident. ***Currently hospitals and nursing homes may do this now.***

SB 12 Rhett – 33 S.Health & Human Services

Health clubs with 3000 or more clients must have an automated external defibrillator on site at all times by 7-1-19.

SB 16 Kirkpatrick – 32 S.Health & Human Services

The Georgia Composite Medical Board shall administer the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact Act which permits granting an expedited license to those licensed in other states which are members of the compact. This proposal contains terms of the compact.

SB 18 Kirkpatrick – 32 S.Health & Human Services
Direct primary care agreements between a physician and patient are not insurance.

REVENUE & TAXATION

HB 7 Petrea – 166 H.Ways & Means
Military retirement benefits including survivor benefits will not be subject to state income taxes for years 2020 through 2030.

HB 8 Buckner – 137 H.Ways & Means
A sales tax exemption for certain menstrual products.

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