

## LWVAF, Report from the Capitol, Week 1

The General Assembly has returned to the gold dome building. Week 1 is largely ceremonial, but provides an opportunity for a lot of legislation to be introduced including the budget. The governor gave his state of the state address and announced that in this year of falling revenues, teachers would still get the rest of the campaign promise of a raise, \$2000. It is proposed by cutting almost everything else. Also, employees under \$40,000 annual pay will receive a \$1000 raise. These salary increases will cost about \$326 million.

The budget will be the focus of hearings next week. More detail in this newsletter on Week 2.

Because it is the second year of a legislative term, legislation held over can get acted upon sooner. A couple are reported here.

The meeting calendar has been set through Day 14, which will be February 10. That day is also the League Day at the Capitol. Plan to attend. Reservations at lwvga.org. No cost.

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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 2020.  
**DV** = Differing Versions  
**TGFS** = To Governor for Signature

### In CHAMBERS

#### REVENUE & TAXATION

**HB 276** Harrell - 106 **PASSED House PASSED Senate TGFS**  
Marketplace facilitators [such as Amazon] and marketplace sellers must collect and submit GA sales tax if it does \$100,000 per year in business in the state. Exempts any transportation mode from sales tax. Effective 7-1-2020. *The fiscal note for an earlier version shows FY21 with \$78.4 million for a full year impact on state sales tax revenues, and a \$64.5 million impact on local sales tax revenues. The bill will be in effect only for half of that year.*

### In COMMITTEE

#### EDUCATION – PREK-12

**HB 444** Reeves – 34 **PASSED House DO PASS in S.Higher Education DV**  
The ‘Dual Enrollment Act’, formerly called ‘Move On When Ready Act’. Dual enrollment allows a high school student to take a college course at an institution that will enroll the student and earn credit for at the college and at the high school. A junior or senior, and a few exceptional sophmores, may take a maximum of 30 hours of dual credit courses for which the state will pay the tuition and will not count against any HOPE scholarship maximum. The courses must be in core areas ( English, math, science, social studies) and foreign language in college and core or chosen pathway courses in technical school. Sophmores may participate if they are Zell Miller scholarship eligible or currently enrolled in dual courses. Rising freshmen are not eligible to enroll in state paid dual enrollment courses. Currently enrolled students wh have earned 18 hours or less will also be capped at 30 hours; those who have eared 19 hours or more will be allowed 12 more hours. There are over

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20000 courses available in the core courses and over 4000 in the technical school. *HOPE provides 127 hours of college credit and a high school student can get 30 hours with dual credit, accumulating 157 hours total. Students may dual enroll with personal funds. The limits in this bill are for the state funded program.*

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**NEW LEGISLATION**

**CHILDREN**

SB 298 Untermann – 45 S.Regulated Industries & Utilities

Prohibits sale, barter, or distribution of smoking and vaping products to those under age 21, currently 18. Local boards of education shall include a unit against smoking or vaping within the drugs and alcohol unit for high school students. The course shall be ready by the fall of 2020. A person under age 21 may not purchase, attempt to purchase, or possess any tobacco or vaping products. No one can sell any vapor cartridge that is unlabeled as to content or packaged to attract minors without notifying the Department of Revenue.

**EDUCATION – PREK - 12**

SB 294 Black – 8 S.Retirement

Teachers Retirement System is authorized to invest in certain alternative investments. *Currently, TRS is specifically excluded from such investment options.*

HB 741 Belton – 112 H.Education

Each turnaround school shall have a master teacher to support and mentor teachers.. A stipend will be available if appropriated and can be converted to a permanent salary increase after 3 years. The stipend of \$2500/year would be funded half by the state and half by the local school district.

HB 745 Jones –25 H.Education

Charter schools could access unused state owned buildings without any obligation for a rental fee or lease.

HB 755 Belton – 112 H.Education

Local boards of education shall provide local charter schools with an itemized allotment sheet by July 1 every year. If adjustments must be made, they must wait for 30 days after an amended allotment sheet is provided to the local charter school. *The Department of Education does not provide allotment sheets to local schools because of the difficulty of appropriating funds for services provided by the central office. Local charter schools often receive services from the central office as well. Therefore, it seems that requiring a local school system to provide such a document will be very difficult indeed.*

**EDUCATION – POSTSECONDARY**

HB 737 Belton – 112 H.Higher Education

Teachers in turnaround schools shall be provided by the GA Student Finance Commission a loan forgiveness option for the study of math, science, special education, or any other high demand subject in a GA institution. They must teach one of these subjects for 5 years or pay back the loan in part or in full with cash.

HB 766 Scott – 78 H.Higher Education

Every postsecondary institution, public or private, which has an athletic team in post season play shall set aside 1/3 of any proceeds received from any source as a result of that participation. The pro rata funds will be paid to any student athlete who participated upon graduation. Effective 7-1-2020.

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HB 769 Scott – 78 H.Defense & Veterans Affairs

The Department of Veterans Services shall establish an educational assistance program to provide tuition assistance and housing to disabled Georgia veterans attending graduate school in GA.

HB 771 Scott – 78 H.Higher Education

Military personnel, their spouses and dependents, in GA for active duty shall qualify for in-state tuition. Such assistance shall continue when the person retires or is reassigned out of state if the service member is continuously enrolled at the time of reassignment or retirement. If an honorable discharge is received and the veteran continues to reside in GA and is enrolled at the time of discharge, the veteran remains eligible for in-state tuition assistance. The student has the burden of proof for eligibility for in-state tuition.

## ELECTIONS & ETHICS

HB 757 Fleming – 121 H.Government Affairs

Special Elections are to be changed as follows:

- Federal and state office candidate filing dates will be determined by the Secretary of State for at least 2 ½ days.
- Local candidate filing dates will be determined by the county election superintendent for at least 2 ½ days.
- Voter Registration deadline for a special election runoff shall be different from that of the special election and the 5<sup>th</sup> Monday prior to the runoff date.

*It will be possible for a voter to be ineligible to vote in a special election because the voter registration was later than the registration cutoff date but becomes eligible to vote in the runoff of that special election because the voter registration was submitted prior to the runoff registration cutoff date. This brings the voter registration requirements in line with those of the general primaries and elections.*

HR 893 Scott – 76 H.Government Affairs

CA to allow 16 year olds to vote in school district elections and elections affecting school funding such as bond issues and ESPLOST referenda. ***When research shows the brain does not mature until age 25 or thereabouts, why would we feel confident in lowering the right to vote for any election?***

## GOVERNMENT – GENERAL

SR 537 James – 35 S.Rules

Asks Georgia to apologize for the practice of slavery and the subsequent 'Jim Crow' laws and practices

HB 726 Taylor – 173 H.Public Safety & Homeland Security

Requires law enforcement to enter missing persons reports into a data base of the National Institute of Justice of the US Department of Justice.

HB 768 Scott – 76 H.Judiciary

Bans discrimination in housing towards a current or former veteran.

## GOVERNMENT – COUNTIES AND CITIES

SB 292 Harrell – 40 S.Agriculture & Community Affairs

Repeals the requirement that local government must allow construction in wood.

## GOVERNMENT – COURTS AND CRIMES

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### HB 727 Anulewicz – 42 H.Regulated Industries

Domestic violence and sexual abuse recognition shall become part of the continuing education requirements for barbers and cosmetologists. There is no requirement that barbers and cosmetologists must report such findings.

### HB 772 Scott – 78 H.Defense & Veterans Affairs

GBI shall develop a green alert program for veterans or active military personnel who are missing and known to have a physical or mental health condition or who are at risk of self-harm.

## **GOVERNMENT – EMPLOYMENT**

### HB 773 Turner – 21 H.Regulated Industries

Military personnel and their spouses may be licensed in GA in the disciplines applied for if currently licensed in another state or territory, are in good standing with no complaints outstanding, and all applicable fees are paid. The veteran or spouse may be asked to pass a criminal background check, pass a test specific to GA and will not be eligible for a license established by an interstate compact.

## **GOVERNMENT – ENVIRONMENT**

### SB 280 James – 35 S.Economic Development & Tourism

Plastic bags are prohibited to be used in retail to contain purchases of customers. Effective 1-1-21. Every distribution of a plastic bag is a misdemeanor violation separate offense. Exempted are bags used for: uncooked meat, fish, or poultry, bulk items such as fruit, vegetables, grains, or candy, food sliced or prepared to order, newspapers, trash collection, storage of food in a refrigerator, garment bags, carryout food bags, or used for prescription drugs.

### SB 297 Jordan – 6 S.Natural Resources & Environment and

### HB 756 Trammell – 132 H.Natural Resources & Environment

Permitting of any solid waste landfill that accepts fly ash, bottom ash, boiler slag, or flue gas desulfurization materials (coal combustion residuals) generated from burning coal to produce electricity must have the landfill designed, constructed, operated, and maintained with a liner and leachate collection system that are equal to that required of new municipal solid waste landfills.

### HB 774 Allen – 40 H.Natural Resources & Environment

The unpermitted release of ethylene oxide must be reported to the Environment Protection Division of the Department of Natural Resources within 24 hours and the information is to be posted on EPD's website as soon thereafter as possible.

### HB 843 Blackmon – 146 H.Energy, Utilities & Telecommunications

Urges Congress to oppose the Green New Deal because doing so would lower the standard of living, cost a lot, and not do the job.

### HR 895 Allen – 40 H.Natural Resources & Environment

Creates a 10 member Joint Ethylene Oxide Study Committee to evaluate current state laws and any proposed legislation regarding the health risks associated with the release of ethylene oxide into the environment and to reduce the amount of such emissions.

## **HEALTH**

### SB 291 Henson – 41 S.Health & Human Service

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Physicians may prescribe medication to terminally-ill patients for end-of-life options. The patient must be fully informed, be 18 or over, have a diagnosis with 6 months or less to live, a GA resident, mentally capable, and know fully the effect of the medication. The physician may not use lethal injection or any other method, only medication. The patient must sign a witnessed informed consent and may revoke the consent at any time.

### SB 296 Heath – 31 S.Regulated Industries & Utilities

Cremation of human remains is expanded to include a vat or container in addition to a furnace.

### SR 546 Ligon – 3 S.Health & Human Services

Encourages local law enforcement, psychiatric facilities, doctors, and therapists to freely distribute Mental Health Alert Wristbands to those suffering mental illness. More than 1 in 4 fatal police encounters involve someone with mental illness which was unknown to the police. Two million people with mental illness are booked into jails yearly; 15% of men and 30% of women booked have mental health issues.

### HB 725 Taylor – 173 H.Health & Human Services

Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids will have two or more dental service organization administrators for dental services.

### HB 745 Thomas – 56 H.Health & Human Services

Georgia Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act. The Department of Public Health shall collect and track data on pregnant and post partum women who suffer severe maternal morbidity or obstetric hemorrhage, hypertension, preeclampsia and eclampsia, venous thromboembolism, sepsis, cerebrovascular accident and amniotic fluid embolism. Data is to be published every three years disaggregated by racial and ethnic deaths. ***Sponsor is trying to document the disparity of maternal morbidity of black women, and thinks it might be due to some kind of discrimination.***

### HB 746 Kindrick – 93 H.Health & Human Services

Women's Right to Know. A female awaiting an abortion may decide not to receive or review informational materials, not to certify receipt or review of such materials, not see the fetal image or hear the fetal heartbeat. The attending doctor shall sign that the information was offered but refused, and the document kept with the patient files.

### HB 752 Belton – 112 H.Regulated Industries

Physical therapists will be subject to a national background check through the GA Crime Information Center and the FBI. Applicants for a license also agree to provide all necessary information to run a background check including fingerprints. Applicant pays any fees.

### HB 760 Cooper – 43 H.Public Safety & Homeland Security

Any health care official or peace officer ay transport a person to a health care facility will be immune from any liability. The peace officer must have probable cause for believing the person has mental illness, may harm himself or another, or is unable to care for himself or herself.

### HB 767 Scott – 76 H.Defense & Veteran Affairs

Suicide statistics are to be collected by the Department of Public Health on veterans. Annually, a report is to be submitted to the Speaker, President of the Senate, and Commission on Veteran Suicide Prevention within the Department of Veteran Services. The commission shall study these data and make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly for preventing veteran suicides.

### HB 770 Scott – 76 H.Defense & Veteran Affairs

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The Department of Veteran Services is to provide a grant for service animals for veterans with post traumatic stress depression. The grant is to be available after 1-1-2022.

HR 894 Scott – 76 H.Defense & Veteran Affairs

Creates a 10 member Joint Study Committee on Veterans Suicide to study the high rate of same. Report due 12-1-2020.

## REVENUE & TAXATION

SB 289 Mullis – 53 S.Finance

Mobile homes no longer have to display a decal indicating the tax has been paid.

SB 290 Harrell – 40 S.Finance

Overpayments of income tax for which a refund is to be paid begin earning interest on day 30 after filing, currently day 90. ***The Department of Revenue may be incented to process income tax returns more quickly.***

HB 730 Stephens – 164 H.Ways & Means

A sales tax exemption for everything sold or used by a host committee for a major nonrecurring sporting event. This option is repealed on 12-31-2028.

HB 731 Stephens – 164 H.Ways & Means

An excise tax increase on tobacco products: cigarettes, \$1.87/pack, (currently \$.37); cigars, except little cigars, 42% of the wholesale price, (currently 23%); and loose or smokeless tobacco, 42% of the wholesale price, (currently 10%).

HB 735 Blackmon – 146 H.Ways & Means

An income tax exemption for military retirement income for those ages 62 to 65. ***At age 65, retirement income is exempted up to \$65,000 per year regardless of source.***

## TRANSPORTATION & DRIVING

HR 844 Anulewicz – 42 H.Transportation

Urges Congress to pass the Transit Worker and Pedestrian Protection Act. Secretary of Transportation is to issue rules to address protection of public transportation operators from risk of assault.

## LOCAL – FULTON and its CITIES

HB 728 Martin – 49 H.Local Delegation

A homestead exemption for Fulton County Schools of \$5000 assessed value (\$125,000 fair market value) for those aged 65 and older. Local referendum required.

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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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