



2025 Week 9 Legislative Update

After gaveling out for Crossover Day last Thursday night, House and Senate members returned to session this week on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday for Legislative Days 29 through 31. Wednesday served as a committee workday, allowing legislators to review and consider bills that crossed over from the opposite chamber.

The days immediately following Crossover Day are typically slower, and this week was no exception. While committees met throughout the week to evaluate measures from the opposite chamber, the House and Senate each voted on only a handful of bills on the floor.

Legislative activity is expected to ramp up next week, as lawmakers now have just three weeks to advance bills through committee and bring them to the floor for a vote before the April 4 Sine Die deadline. House and Senate members will reconvene next week on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday for Legislative Days 32 through 34, with Wednesday designated as another committee workday.

Fiscal Year 2026 Budget

On Monday morning, House Appropriations subcommittees met to review [House Bill 68](#), the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, before it was passed out of the full Appropriations Committee later that day. The FY26 budget is based on a \$37.7 billion revenue estimate, reflecting a \$1.6 billion increase (4.4%) over the original Fiscal Year 2025 budget.

On Tuesday, House Appropriations Committee Chairman Matt Hatchett (R-Dublin) presented the budget on the House floor, highlighting several key funding priorities:

- \$250 million increase for the Department of Corrections, including funding to hire more than 700 correctional officers and implement additional salary increases
- \$500 million in additional education funding, which fully funds the Quality Basic Education (QBE) program and includes:
 - \$98 million for school safety and mental health initiatives
 - \$25 million for the Department of Education to work with GEMA on school threat prevention
 - \$62 million for the Student Support Services program, providing mental health grants and programming
 - \$10 million to implement Georgia Council on Literacy recommendations, including literacy coaches
- \$19.2 million to address growth in foster care and increased care costs



- \$6.4 million for a 2% provider rate increase for childcare institutions, foster parents, and relative caregivers
- \$32 million to increase reimbursement rates for Medicaid providers
- \$8.3 million in new funding for graduate medical education, including:
 - \$5 million for a grant program supporting new and expanding residency programs
 - \$2.8 million for 150 new residency slots
- \$2 million for maternal health delivery services at state hospitals
- \$23.5 million to provide an enhanced COLA supplement for state retirees
- \$545 million in base funding for capital projects
 - The House shifted \$321 million in requested capital project funding to bonds for the Department of Education, Department of Corrections, and Department of Juvenile Justice
- Adjustments to Promise Scholarship funding, redirecting savings from unrealized usage to other education-related initiatives

The House approved the budget on Tuesday with a vote of 171 to 4. Following House passage, Senate Appropriations subcommittees met throughout the week to review the budget.

If the Senate passes a different version of the FY26 budget, a conference committee—comprised of three House members and three Senate members—will be appointed to reconcile differences before sending the final budget to Governor Kemp.

Passing a balanced budget is the only action constitutionally required of the legislature each session. Unlike other bills, the governor has the power to issue line-item vetoes. Any budget-related line-item vetoes and bill vetoes will be announced at the end of the 40-day bill review period, following the conclusion of the legislative session on April 4.

Tort Reform

This week, the House Rules Subcommittee on Lawsuit Reform held its third and fourth hearings on [Senate Bill 68](#), Governor Kemp's major tort reform bill, sponsored by President Pro Tempore John Kennedy (R-Macon).

- Monday's hearing focused primarily on Section 6, which addresses negligent security claims.
- Tuesday afternoon's hearing centered on Sections 7 and 8, which cover phantom damages, anchoring, and trial bifurcation.



Between the two hearings, members of the Rules Subcommittee on Lawsuit Reform heard testimony from dozens of witnesses over the course of approximately nine hours.

Among those who testified this week:

- John Fervier, Vice President of Risk Management at Waffle House, noted that while Georgia represents 20% of the company's locations, it accounts for 83% of its legal costs.
- Deborah Moses, Chief Risk Officer for Piedmont Healthcare, argued that phantom damages allow plaintiffs to sue for inflated amounts that do not reflect actual medical costs, significantly increasing commercial insurance expenses for healthcare providers.

At this point, the House committee has not taken a formal vote on the bill. Subcommittee Chairman Rob Leverett (R-Elberton) stated that he will announce next steps for the legislation at a later date.

Meanwhile, [Senate Bill 69](#), the *Georgia Courts Access and Consumer Protection Act*, which would regulate third-party litigation financing, has not yet received a hearing in the Rules Subcommittee on Lawsuit Reform.

Tax Relief

On Wednesday, the Senate Finance Committee reviewed two key tax relief measures—House Bill 111 and House Bill 112—both of which are legislative priorities for Governor Brian Kemp this session.

- [House Bill 111](#), sponsored by Governor's Floor Leader Soo Hong (R-Lawrenceville), would accelerate the reduction of the state income tax from 5.39% to 5.19% in 2025. Under previously enacted legislation, the state income tax rate is set to decrease by 0.1% annually until it reaches 4.99%. The measure passed out of committee 9 to 2 and now moves to the Senate Rules Committee.
- [House Bill 112](#), sponsored by Governor's Floor Leader Lauren McDonald (R-Cumming), proposes a one-time tax credit for all Georgia taxpayers who filed tax returns in 2023 and 2024. Under the bill:
 - Single taxpayers would receive \$250
 - Married taxpayers filing jointly would receive \$500
 - Taxpayers filing as heads of household would receive \$375

The measure passed the Finance Committee and is now eligible for selection by the Senate Rules Committee.

Both bills are expected to advance as the legislative session nears its final weeks.



School Safety

This week, the House Education Policy Subcommittee reviewed [Senate Bill 17](#), also known as *Ricky and Alyssa's Law*, sponsored by Senator Jason Anavitarte (R-Dallas). The measure would:

- Require all Georgia schools to implement mobile panic alert systems
- Mandate accurate mapping of school facilities to improve emergency response coordination with law enforcement

During his presentation in subcommittee, Senator Anavitarte estimated the measure would cost approximately \$10,000 per school but noted that most schools already have a mobile panic alert system in place.

Meanwhile, the House's comprehensive school safety bill, [House Bill 268](#), sponsored by Representative Holt Persinger (R-Winder), passed the House last week by a vote of 159 to 13. The legislation, which is a priority for Speaker Jon Burns (R-Newington), was initially reviewed by the House Education Committee and has now been assigned to the Senate Judiciary Committee for further consideration.

Immigration

This week, the House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee reviewed [Senate Bill 21](#), sponsored by Senator Blake Tillery (R-Vidalia). The measure, which previously passed the Senate 33 to 18, would:

- Waive sovereign and governmental immunity for local governments, officials, and employees if they violate the prohibition on sanctuary cities
- Require custodial authorities—including sheriffs, wardens, and police chiefs—to honor immigration detainer requests issued by the Department of Homeland Security

During the committee hearing, stakeholders proposed several amendments:

- The Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) recommended allowing a 15-day correction period for cities and local governments to address compliance issues. They also proposed a declaratory judgment provision, allowing individuals to request a legal ruling on whether a city is following state law.
- The Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) urged lawmakers to delay further immigration-related legislation until the effects of [House Bill 1105](#) from last session can be evaluated. ACCG also proposed:
 - Clarifying that the waiver of immunity applies to the violating local government, not the county
 - Specifying the requirements for honoring a detainer request



The bill was scheduled for a hearing only and did not receive a vote by the Public Safety Committee this week.

Truck Weights

This week, the Senate Transportation Committee reviewed [House Bill 164](#), sponsored by Representative Steven Meeks (R-Screven). The legislation would:

- Remove the sunset provision from [House Bill 189](#) (2023), which allows large trucks carrying agricultural and forestry products to weigh up to 88,000 pounds outside of the metro Atlanta nonattainment area
- Explicitly grant local law enforcement officers the authority to enforce truck weight limits on county roads and municipal bridges
- Require local law enforcement officers to receive proper training in commercial motor vehicle weight laws

Earlier this session, the bill passed the House 164 to 9. This week, the Senate Transportation Committee approved the measure by a vote of 5 to 3, making it eligible for selection by the Rules Committee for a Senate floor vote.