

## Week 9 Legislative Update



The legislature convened this week Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday for Legislative Days 29 through 32, and Wednesday served as a committee work day. House and Senate members will be back next week Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday for Legislative Days 33 through 35 of the 40-day session.

The universe of legislation became much smaller this week for House and Senate members under the Gold Dome—following Crossover Day last Thursday, the number of bills that can still move this session has been reduced to a fraction of number of bills that were still eligible for action ahead of the Crossover Day deadline. It is not uncommon for members who did not get their bills passed out of their chamber of origin by Crossover Day to now seek out vehicles to which they can attach their own bill's language.

The several legislative days immediately following Crossover Day are typically much quieter than the hustle and bustle of Legislative Day 28 as the two chambers enter into negotiations about which bills from the other chamber they will consider. Committees, however, remained very busy this week—members now have less than three weeks to get their bills through the committee process and passed by the opposite chamber for their bills to make it to Governor Kemp's desk for consideration.

Following *Sine Die* on March 28, Governor Kemp and his team will begin the 40-day bill review process, during which they will assess all legislation passed by the General Assembly to determine which measures the governor will sign and which measures he will veto.

### Qualifying

Although it was a slower week under the Gold Dome, it was still an important one for legislators—this week all members of the General Assembly were required to formally file to seek reelection if they wish to run for their seats again this year in the May primary election and November general election.

Several members have already announced they will not be qualifying to run for reelection this year:

- Senate Minority Leader Gloria Butler (D-Stone Mountain);
- Representative Penny Houston (R-Nashville);
- Representative J Collins (R-Villa Rica);
- Representative Clay Pirkle (R-Ashburn);
- Representative Roger Bruce (D-Atlanta); and
- Representative Mandisha Thomas (D-South Fulton).

## Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

On Wednesday afternoon, the House passed [House Bill 916](#), the House's Fiscal Year 2025 budget recommendations, by a vote of 172 to 1. Highlights of the FY25 budget that Appropriations Chairman Matt Hatchett (R-Dublin) presented on the House floor include:

- A four percent salary increase for state employees;
- An additional \$3,000 salary increase for law enforcement and correctional officers;
- \$15.2 million to increase salaries in District Attorney offices to reduce turnover among assistant district attorneys;
- \$10.6 million to phase in the salary increases for judges following the passage of [House Bill 947](#);
- An additional \$2,500 pay increase for teachers;
- \$104 million to fund ongoing school security needs, \$45,000 per school;
- \$6.3 million for the Department of Education to cover the cost of meals for students in need;
- \$146 million for the full funding of three provider rate studies for the NOW/COMP Waiver, Independent Care Waiver, and Elderly and Disabled Waivers;
- \$27 million in Medicaid provider rate adjustments, including the Georgia Pediatric Program, speech therapists, obstetricians, primary care physicians, and more;
- \$9.6 million to include dental care as a covered service for the Medicaid population;
- \$3.2 million for DBHDD to operationalize a new crisis stabilization unit in Macon to help adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities;
- \$1.5 million to establish the David Ralston Center for Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities at the University of Georgia;
- Fully funding the HOPE Scholarship; and
- \$2.4 billion for transportation projects throughout the state.

Senate Appropriations subcommittees have already begun meeting to craft the Senate's FY25 budget recommendations. After the Senate approves its own version of the budget, a conference committee will be appointed so that the House and Senate can come to an agreement on the version of the budget they would like to send to Governor Kemp's desk for his consideration.

## Immigration

This week the Senate Public Safety Committee considered a substitute version of [House Bill 301](#) by Representative Jason Ridley (R-Chatsworth). The underlying bill would have changed the fees for improperly passing a school bus or speeding in a school zone. The substitute version of the bill addresses the enforcement of the state's existing ban on sanctuary policies for local governments. The bill would bolster Georgia's law against sanctuary cities by rescinding sovereign immunity and immediately ceasing state funding and federal funding that is handled by the state for local governments that engage in sanctuary policies. Funds used for emergencies, disaster relief, and emergency healthcare would be exempt and would not be impacted. The bill would also allow residents to sue local governments they believe are not following immigration laws.

The measure passed the Public Safety Committee 4 to 1 and is now eligible for selection by the Rules Committee for a Senate floor vote.

## **Prosecuting Attorneys Qualifications Commission**

Last session the legislature passed [Senate Bill 92](#), creating the Prosecuting Attorneys Qualifications Commission. Under the law, prosecutors who display willful misconduct in office, persistently fail to perform the duties of their office, are personally convicted of a crime of moral turpitude, or who display conduct that brings the office in disrepute would be subject to review by the commission, including possible removal from office. The legislation included the requirement that the state Supreme Court approve the rules that would govern the commission, but since the bill's passage, the Supreme Court has expressed concerns about its constitutional authority to do so.

To fix the constitutional problem that has prevented the Prosecuting Attorneys Qualifications Commission from getting up and running, Representative Joseph Gullett (R-Dallas) and Senator Randy Robertson (R-Catula) both introduced legislation, [House Bill 881](#) and [Senate Bill 332](#), respectively, to remove the requirement that the Supreme Court review and approve the rules and regulations for the commission.

The House passed Representative Gullett's House bill earlier this session 95 to 75, and on Tuesday, the House took up Senator Robertson's version of the bill. After a lengthy debate on the House floor the measure passed 97 to 73, and it is now on its way to Governor Kemp's desk for his consideration.

## **Tax Credit Legislation**

Several pieces of legislation out of the House this session seek to amend a number of Georgia's existing tax credits and exemptions.

This week the Senate Finance Committee considered [House Bill 1181](#) by Chairman Chuck Martin (R-Alpharetta). The measure would reduce the carryforward period for dozens of tax credits—those that currently have a 10-year carryforward period would be reduced to a 5-year carryforward, and credits that currently have a 5-year carryforward period would be reduced to a 3-year carryforward period. The measure would also place a December 1, 2029 sunset on a number of Georgia's smaller and underutilized tax credits. The bill passed out of the Finance Committee and is now eligible for selection by the Rules Committee for a floor vote. Senator John Albers (R-Roswell) will carry the bill in the Senate.

Two other bills that would amend tax credits, [House Bil 1192](#), which seeks to amend Georgia's data center tax exemption, and [House Bill 1180](#), which seeks to make changes to Georgia's film tax credit, have not yet received hearings in the Senate Finance Committee.