**2025 Legislative Update – January 21**

Legislators from all corners of the state were back under the Gold Dome last week to be sworn in for the first session of the 158th Georgia General Assembly, including almost two dozen new House and Senate members. Lawmakers were in session Monday through Friday for Legislative Days 1 through 5. As they have done in recent years, House and Senate leaders came to an agreement on an adjournment resolution and released a calendar for the entire 2025 session—Crossover Day, which is Legislative Day 28, has been set for Thursday, March 6, and the legislature will *Sine Die* on Friday, April 4. Legislators were not be in session this week for budget hearings. Legislative Day 6 will be Monday, January 24.

All 236 legislators were officially sworn in on Monday, Jan. 13. Speaker Jon Burns (R-Newington) was re-elected by his House peers to serve as Speaker, and Senator John Kennedy (R-Macon) was re-elected by his Senate colleagues to serve as President Pro Tempore. House and Senate members also received their committee assignments last week, and committee chairmanships were announced.

Much of the first week of the legislative session is ceremonial, but the remarks given by state leaders at many of last week’s events provide a great deal of insight into their priorities for the session.

**Governor Brian Kemp’s Legislative and Budget Priorities**

Last week Governor Kemp released his Amended Fiscal Year 2025 and Fiscal Year 2026 budget recommendations. Additionally, in his remarks this week, Governor Kemp was unequivocal about his top priority for the session: tort reform. He announced he would be releasing a package of tort reform legislation to bring parity with Georgia’s neighboring states. Although specific provisions of the legislative package have not yet been released, the governor went as far in his State of the State remarks as to introduce the possibility of calling a special session if tort reform is not sufficiently addressed by the end of the session.

Another legislative priority Governor Kemp announced was the Top State for Talent Act, which would incorporate the Georgia MATCH program into individual graduation plans for students beginning in 9th grade; align existing career-tech and academic credentials with the high demand career list; and include a return on investment analysis measuring the effectiveness of the state’s secondary and postsecondary programs.

Governor Kemp also announced a legislative package focused on enhancing K-12 education and securing Georgia’s classrooms. The AFY-25 and FY-26 budgets and the proposed package of legislation includes fully funding K-12 education; funding for additional school safety grants; enhanced mental health support and crisis counseling in schools; and increased technical education and transportation funding. The package also seeks to improve benefits for teachers and other school faculty and provides funding for capital projects.

Governor Kemp also announced a proposed change to the Georgia Pathways program that would provide Medicaid coverage to parents and legal guardians in households with incomes at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level who have children ages 0 to 6. This proposal would extend Medicaid coverage for new mothers after their one-year postpartum period expires and would provide previously unavailable coverage to eligible new fathers.

On top of the proposed additional $1 billion tax rebate back to Georgia’s taxpayers that Governor Kemp announced in October, last week he announced he will be seeking to accelerate the cut in the state income tax down from 5.39 percent to 5.19 percent.

Highlights from his budget recommendations released last week include:

* Between AFY-25 and FY-26, more than $603 million for the Georgia Department of Corrections to provide additional resources to recruit staff, improve facilities, expand bed space, and provide for inmate health needs

AFY-25:

* $1.6 billion for water and transportation infrastructure development projects, including $743 million for GDOT capital construction and freight infrastructure projects
* $1.1 billion to local communities for projects with direct local economic development impact, including $250 million for local road assistance grants and $250 million to the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority for water infrastructure development grants and loans to local governments
* $50 million in one-time funds for additional school security grants
* More than $600 million for damage caused by Hurricane Helene and other storms

FY-26

* $141 million to fully fund the first year of Georgia’s new Promise Scholarship
* $324 million to fully fund projected Medicaid enrollment and utilization growth
* $150 million to Georgia’s medical schools to support the physician pipeline
* $118 million for capital projects at state universities and $76 million for capital projects at TCSG institutions
* $20 million to replace 227 school buses

**Speaker Jon Burns’s Legislative Priorities**

Speaker Jon Burns outlined several of his legislative priorities for the session including tax cuts, child literacy initiatives, protections for IVF, and ensuring the protection of gender-specific sports participation. He also highlighted the need for investments in medical workforce residency programs to retain talent trained in Georgia, especially in rural areas.

He also discussed addressing safety and conditions in Georgia’s prisons, requiring revenue generated from school zone cameras to be dedicated to school safety, and streamlining the professional licensing process. Speaker Burns also announced plans to develop a statewide energy management plan, which will be accomplished through the newly created House Special Committee on Resource Management, chaired by Representative Brad Thomas (R-Holly Springs).

**Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones’s Legislative Priorities**

Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones announced one of his top legislative priorities for the session, the ‘Fair and Safe Athletic Opportunities Act,’ which is [Senate Bill 1](https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/69274). The legislation would require middle schools, high schools, and colleges to designate interscholastic sports teams as male, female, or co-ed, based on the participant’s sex at birth. Under the law, males would not be allowed to participate in any competition or on any team that is designated for females. The bill, which is sponsored by Senator Greg Dolezal (R-Cumming), would also require separate restrooms and changing areas at athletic events.

The Lieutenant Governor also highlighted lessening costs and regulations for small businesses; increasing access to childcare, which he noted is also important for workforce development; and promoting technical colleges and career academies to help grow the state’s workforce.