



**Session Week 5 Report
Legislative Days 13-16**



Week 5 Legislative Days 13-16

This week the Georgia General Assembly met Monday through Thursday for Legislative Days 13-16. Committees passed out many bills this week as we enter into the heart of session. Several key issues are beginning to arise such as sports betting, Buckhead cityhood attempts, and increased vaping legislation. Several bill advances were also made in healthcare committees, tax subcommittees, and education committees. Keep reading for the breakdown of the week and a list of pertinent legislation!



Sports Betting Returns

Sports betting has been illegal in Georgia for as long as anyone can remember. For the past three years, attempts have been made to finally legalize this controversial issue, but no bills have been passed by the General Assembly. This year, an attempt to legalize sports betting has been submitted again in the form of SB 57, carried by Senator Billy Hickman. The bill was read and referred to the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism. Strong opposition still stands in the Georgia General Assembly to legalizing sports betting, but the passing of SB 57 may still be possible. This bill would authorize 18 online Georgia sportsbooks and would also allow limited in-person sports betting that fits within certain requirements.

Issues of the Week: Buckhead Cityhood Attempts and Increased Vaping Legislation

The push for Buckhead cityhood has come back to life this week for the 2023 Legislative Session. Attempts for the creation of Buckhead as its own separate city were effectively tabled last session by the former Lt. Governor as it did not garner enough support from the GOP. Supporters have come back this session to drop SB 114, carried by Sen. Randy Robertson. The bill currently has nine Republican co-sponsors. The new Lt. Governor, Burt Jones, has not signaled his stance on this issue yet, so it's unclear what the future holds for the Buckhead breakaway from Atlanta.

This week, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee met to discuss legislation restricting vaping inside enclosed public spaces. SB 47 would require that vaping in restricted areas be considered a misdemeanor punishable through fines. To accomplish this, the bill would update the codes of the Smoke-Free Air Act of 2005, which was originally catered to cigarettes and other tobacco products, to reflect vaping products as well. This legislation aligns with support from the Department of Public Health to update the Smoke-Free Air Act. On the House side, HB 191 and HB 192 both propose to raise the state tax on vaping and other tobacco products, and use the proceeds to improve health care. HB 191 states a \$0.57 tax per pack of 20 cigarettes and a \$0.05 per fluid milliliter for vapor products in a closed system. HB 192 states a \$0.37 tax per pack of 20 cigarettes and a 15% on vapor products at the wholesale cost.

HB 189 Impact: State and Local Infrastructure

HB 189, carried by Rep. Steven Meeks, deals with the gross vehicle weight for heavy trucks, between 6K to 10K pounds. The bill would increase vehicle weights for these trucks while removing some restrictions and overweight fines. This could potentially double the amount of load restricted post bridges so that 1 out of every 3 bridges in Georgia will be load restricted. This would force trucks to continuously find alternate routes which will create longer routes for the drivers. Pavement life could also potentially decrease by 40% with the increased weight of these trucks which will increase maintenance needs and cost the state, and thus taxpayers, more money.

The Week Under the Gold Dome

Overarching Legislation

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
HB 191 (Rep. Ron Stephens)	Revenue and taxation; pack of cigarettes; increase rate of tax	House read and referred to the Committee on Ways and Means
HB 192 (Rep. Ron Stephens)	Revenue and taxation; consumable vapor products; increase rate of tax	House read and referred to the Committee on Ways and Means
SB 57 (Sen. Billy Hickman)	Georgia Sports Betting Integrity Act'; regulation and taxation of sports betting in this state; authorize and provide	Senate read and referred to the Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
SB 61 (Sen. Brian Strickland)	Sick Leave for Care of Immediate Family Members; sunset provision relating to such sick leave requirements; repeal	Senate read and referred to the Committee on Insurance and Labor
SB 113 (Sen. Randy Robertson)	Municipal Corporations; the transition of services and facilities from an existing municipality to a newly incorporated municipality; provide	Senate read and referred to the Committee on State and Local Governmental Operations
SB 114 (Sen. Randy Robertson)	City of Buckhead City; incorporate	Senate read and referred to the Committee on State and Local Governmental Operations

Bills of Interest

- **HB 26 (Rep. Mandisha Thomas):** Right to Breath Act - so as to require the Department of Community Affairs to include certain indoor air quality provisions in applicable state minimum standard codes
 - House read and referred to Committee on Public Health
- **HB 251 (Rep. Kim Schofield):** Clean Energy Act; enact
 - House read and referred to Committee on Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications