

**Legislative Days 11 - 14**

Principal: Don Bolia

# Session Week 3 Legislative Report



# 2024

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GOVERNMENT  
RELATIONS

# Week 3, Legislative Days 11-14

This week, the Georgia General Assembly met Monday through Thursday for Legislative Days eleven through fourteen of the 2024 Session. This week there were dozens of meetings, each covering a wide range of topics. A prominent vote on the Senate floor took on sports betting. The bill passed the Senate with an amendment requiring a Constitutional amendment, and the bill is not being sent to the House to be dealt with. Taking a step back from bills, one event has trumped all that comes from the legislation. Our dear House Rules Chairman, Richard Smith, sadly passed away on Tuesday, January 30th at 78 years old. The Chairman will be missed by all, and his contributions to Georgia will not be forgotten. In honor of the late Chairman, the Legislative bodies have both passed a new calendar, adjusting the legislative days so those who want to can attend his proceedings and pay their respect on Monday. To replace this Monday's session day, the Legislature will meet on Friday, February 16th instead.



## *New General Bills of Interest*

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
<b>HB 1075 (Rep. Scott Hilton)</b>	Notaries public; state agencies shall accept certain notarial acts performed in another state; provide	House read and referred
<b>SR 538 (Sen. Carden Summers)</b>	Sports Betting; Georgia General Assembly provide by law for sports betting and casino gambling in this state by July 2, 2025; authorize and require	Senate Hopper

# Education Legislation

## *House Education Subcommittees and House Education Committee*

On January 29th of this week, the House Education Subcommittee met to discuss several bills. HB 941, introduced by Rep. Chris Erwin, focused on capital outlay construction for voluntary pre-k programs, aiming to designate specific rooms for pre-k and utilize capital funds for classroom construction. Amendments were proposed to ensure alignment with Georgia's pre-k program and address funding disparities for pre-k spaces in elementary schools. House Bill 941 eventually passed the committee as amended. Next, Rep. Leverett presented HB 846, aiming to require schools to annually inform employees about social security withholdings and benefits eligibility. Discussions included plans to develop a substitute bill for further consideration, but the bill passed the committee on Monday during the meeting. The bill was then heard in the House Education Committee on Thursday of this week where it was again passed. Lastly, HB 987, introduced by Rep. Cannon, sought to revise the definition of qualified local school system schools and enforce a reduced minimum millage rate. The meeting concluded with unanimous approval to pass HB 987. This bill was also heard in the House Education Committee on Thursday where it was passed, marking a significant step in education funding reform.

## *House Health Committee*

During the House Health Committee meeting on Monday, January 29th, the committee discussed HB 874, presented by Rep. Lee Hawkins. The bill, which aims to establish Automated External Defibrillator (AED) teams for all grades K-12, garnered unanimous support and passed out of the committee with amendments. The discussion highlighted the alarming statistic that up to 20,000 children experience a cardiac event at school annually nationwide, equating to around 30 cases per day. The proposed legislation mandates the presence of at least one AED on school premises and requires schools to conduct emergency practice plans once a semester. During public testimony, a mother of a survivor and the Georgia Association of School Nurses voiced their support for the bill. The committee then moved to pass the bill, adopting amendments that included incorporating American Heart Association (AHA) language and adjusting the timeline of the bill. Ultimately, the committee passed HB 874 unanimously as amended, demonstrating a commitment to enhancing cardiac emergency preparedness in schools.

## *Senate Education*

In the Senate Education Committee on Tuesday, January 30th, Chairman Dixon presented SB 405, a bill targeting completion of special school. This bill aims to lower the age of eligibility of students entering special schools. A superintendent of Foothills Regional high schools spoke on the bill, and after brief discussion between the committee, the bill passed the committee with a vote 5 to 1.

## *New Education Bills of Interest*

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
<b>HB 1064 (Rep. Kim Schofield)</b>	Trauma Informed School Counselors Act; enact	House read and referred
<b>HB 1082 (Rep. Mesha Mainor)</b>	Education; public schools to permit students to engage in privately initiated religious speech and activities; repeal and	House read and referred

	reenact provisions	
<b>HB 1104 (Rep. Omari Crawford)</b>	Quality Basic Education Act; address mental health risks for student athletes	House hopper
<b>SB 423 (Sen. Sonya Halpern)</b>	Education; maintenance and placement of one or more automated external defibrillators in certain public schools; provide	Senate read and referred
<b>SB 432 (Sen. Sally Harrell)</b>	"Quality Basic Education Act"; provisions; recess for students in kindergarten and grades one through eight; require	Senate read and referred
<b>SB 438 (Sen. Carden Summers)</b>	Georgia Public Schools; to operate or facilitate separate teams for members of each gender where selection for such teams is based upon competitive fairness or student safety; authorize	Senate hopper
<b>SB 440 (Sen. Matt Brass)</b>	Accelerated Career Diploma Program'; ACE Grants pilot program; establish and provide	Senate hopper

# Healthcare Legislation

## *House Health Committee*

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## *House Insurance Subcommittee on Life and Health*

The House Insurance Committee met on Monday, January 29th, of this week to hear two bills. HB 945, presented by Rep. Hawkins, focuses on the State health benefit plan, ensuring that if a network undergoes changes during the year, such as dropping a provider, the insurer will still honor the plan. The Georgia State Retirees Association expressed support for the bill. It's noted that this hearing is for discussion only, with no voting scheduled.

HB 924, presented by Chairman Balenger, addresses healthcare and the "white bagging" practice, prohibiting insurance companies from requiring patients to obtain medication from a specific location for infusion. Discussion delved into patient choice, regional practices, and potential impacts on insurance rates and patient safety. Testimony from Kaiser Permanente highlighted concerns with the bill's language and its potential effects on their integrated network. Questions probed the current situation regarding white bagging practices, while the GA Hospital Association voices support for the legislation, clarifying its scope.

## *Senate Insurance Committee*

In the Senate Insurance Committee on January 31st of this week, Senator Albers presented SB 334. This bill revises qualifications for insurance coverage for firefighters diagnosed with cancer. Specifically, it mandates legally organized fire departments to provide and maintain insurance coverage for firefighters diagnosed with cancer, subject to certain conditions and lump sum benefits. This bill was looked on very favorably by the committee, and it passed the committee unanimously.

## *House Regulated Industries Subcommittee*

During the House Regulated Industries Licensing Subcommittee meeting on Monday, January 29th, the hearing centered on several bills without taking a vote, with an emphasis on public testimony. Representative Al Williams presented HB 650, proposing the allowance of specified licensed barbers to operate mobile barber shops, subject to conditions mirroring the inspection process for food trucks. Advocates, highlighted potential industry growth and improved accessibility to hair care. However, concerns were raised regarding cleanliness and apprehensions about monitoring due to insufficient funding and safety issues. Representative Matt Barton presented HB 793, which seeks to authorize applicants enrolled in a master's degree program to take the master's social work licensing exam. The Georgia Society of Clinical Social Workers expressed support during

public testimony. Lastly, Representative Sandra Scott introduced HB 154, advocating for Georgia's entry into the Cosmetology Licensure Compact. Researchers for the Council of State Government, encouraged increased state partnership with the industry, emphasizing that the compact requires seven states for implementation with three currently in the compact, potentially making Georgia the fourth. The Cosmetology Licensure Compact, if implemented, would allow cosmetology licenses to be valid across state lines allowing cosmetologists moving into the state to immediately start working without having to wait several weeks for state approval. Public testimony featured the Cosmetology Board, the Future of the Beauty Industry Coalition, Sports Clips, and Great Clips, all endorsing the proposed compact.

#### *House Floor*

On Monday, January 29th, HB 455, sponsored by Rep. John LaHood, successfully passed out of the Senate chamber. The bill specifically addresses career fatigue and wellness in healthcare professionals. It stipulates that professional programs established for these purposes are not obligated to report to licensing boards, except in specific circumstances, and includes provisions for immunity and confidentiality of certain documents and information related to these programs. The bill will now go to the Governor's Office to be signed into law.

#### *New Healthcare Bill of Interest*

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
<b>HB 1072 (Rep. Sharon Cooper)</b>	Health; drug repository program; revise definitions; provide for pharmacist to pharmacy technician ratios	House read and referred
<b>SB 419 (Sen. Larry Walker III)</b>	Nurses; provision relating to the administration of anesthesia by certified registered nurse anesthetists; revise	Senate read and referred
<b>SB 426 (Sen. Blake Tillery)</b>	Motor Vehicles and Traffic; requirements for joining of a motor carrier and motor carrier's insurer to a cause of action; revise	Senate read and referred
<b>SB 428 (Sen. Blake Tillery)</b>	Torts; a cap on damages recoverable against foster parents in personal injury actions involving the use of a motor vehicle by a child; provide	Senate read and referred
<b>SB 431 (Sen. Blake Tillery)</b>	Civil Practice Act; certain factors from consideration in discovery determinations; remove	Senate read and referred
<b>SB 441 (Sen. Nikki Merritt)</b>	Controlled Substances; notification requirements for prescribers prescribing opioids; revise	Senate hopper

# Local Legislation

## *House Insurance Subcommittee on Life and Health*

The House Insurance Committee met on Monday, January 29th, of this week to hear two bills. HB 945, presented by Rep. Hawkins, focuses on the State health benefit plan, ensuring that if a network undergoes changes during the year, such as dropping a provider, the insurer will still honor the plan. The Georgia State Retirees Association expressed support for the bill. It's noted that this hearing is for discussion only, with no voting scheduled.

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## *Senate Finance*

During the Senate Finance hearing on Monday, January 29th, SB 364, led by Senator John Albers, focused on the Ad Valorem Taxation of Property with a specific emphasis on revising provisions related to setting millage rates. Senator Albers highlighted the issue of people being taxed out of their homes and the disincentive for property improvement due to reassessment. He shared his experience in North Fulton County, proposing a floating homestead exemption capped at 3%, aiming to address the concerns raised. The reset proposed in SB 364 would set property values at the lowest point in 2020, 2021, or 2022, bringing transparency to the system. The bill suggests capping increases at 3% or the Consumer Price Index (CPI), whichever is lower. Senator Albers argued for the need to provide flexibility to local governments similar to how the state budget handles increases without explicitly labeling them as tax hikes. However, the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) expressed concerns during the hearing, particularly regarding the proposal to rewind property values and implement a three-year lock on these values. The discussion highlighted the tension between addressing property tax burdens and ensuring stable revenue for local governments.

## *House Judiciary*

On Tuesday, January 30th, several bills were discussed and passed through the House Judiciary committee. HB 992, presented by Rep. Blackmon, aimed to establish courtship, and this bill passed out of committee. HB 158, led by Rep. Mitchell, dealt with the judges of the Stone Mountain judicial circuit. HB 158 also passed the committee. Representative Irwin then introduced HB 368 that offered revisions including a change in effective date and involvement of DA elections, and this bill did pass committee also. HR 302, proposed by Representative Camp, was retained on behalf of needing further discussion with the Attorney General's office. Next, HB 370 was presented by Rep. Reeves, and it focused on coastal marshlands restoration, incorporating a specialized quiet title process and extending decision periods. With a 6-5 vote, the motion to pass HB 370 from committee succeeded. HB 456, concerning terms and municipal judges, received unanimous approval with added language supported by the GMA and Legislative Council. Additionally, HB 845 was added to the calendar for the following week's session.

In the committee meeting on Thursday, February 1st, Rep. Leverett introduced HB 947, a bill extensively worked on by the Judicial Council, aiming to restructure compensation for judges statewide without

altering salaries. The bill targets restructuring the pay system to ensure consistency and eliminate disparities. HB 947 bill establishes a base salary structure, maximum salary concept, and locality pay, with provisions for opting in and grandfathering. Questions from the committee addressed concerns about minimum salary, retirement benefits, and the impact on retention. Despite discussions, the motion to pass the bill out of committee succeeded unanimously, reflecting broad support for the proposed changes in judicial compensation.

### *Senate Ethics*

On January 30th, the Senate Ethics Committee deliberated on SB 189, introduced by Sen. Max Burns. The bill pertains to primaries and elections, specifically proposing that the text portions of ballots generated by ballot marking devices should be the basis for vote tabulation and recounts, superseding any machine coding, such as QR codes. During the committee meeting, members discussed the implications of this shift and ultimately voted to pass the bill with a substitute. The substitute, proposed by Chairman Burns, added language from the Secretary of State's office to allow for ballot tabulation through an additional ballot marker, given that it is not a QR code. This was implemented due to the time and price constraints of moving to a language readable to humans. The decision indicates a move toward prioritizing the human-readable portions of the ballots for accuracy in vote tabulation and recount processes.

### *Senate Public Safety*

During the Senate Public Safety Committee on January 31st of this week, Senator Dixon introduced SB 406, which focuses on providing first responder building mapping information and funding for school mapping data creation. Senator Robertson inquired if the program required a specific operating system device, which was clarified as not necessary. A motion to pass the bill from the committee was made and passed unanimously. SB 402, which would have been presented by Senator Ginn, was not addressed due to the senator's absence.

### *House Infrastructure and Innovation Committee*

On Wednesday, January 31st, the House Infrastructure and Innovation Committee engaged in a discussion on HB 986, a novel piece of legislation relating to elections and primaries, addressing the emerging threat of deep fakes in the electoral process. Deep fakes are AI generated pictures or videos that often contain a person doing or saying something that they did not actually do in reality. The bill aims to establish the criminal offense of election interference using deep fakes and the solicitation of such acts. Recognizing the complexity and the unprecedented nature of the concept, the committee opted not to take a vote at that time, choosing instead to dedicate further deliberation to fully comprehend the intricacies of the bill next week.

### *House Governmental Affairs and House Government Affairs Elections and Local Government Subcommittees*

During the House Government Affairs Elections and Local Government Subcommittee meetings on January 30th, three bills were discussed. HB 974, presented by Rep. John LaHood, aimed to establish a permanent state-wide system for posting scanned paper ballots with higher resolution requirements. The subcommittee engaged in discussions about potential enhancements, including increasing the brightness of scanning lighting, and ultimately, the bill passed unanimously, proceeding to the full committee. Another bill, HB 977, also sponsored by Rep. LaHood, focused on expanding risk-limiting audits in elections. It proposed including the top-of-the-ballot race and mandated one statewide race for auditing, with the decision made through a 5-person vote. Concerns were raised about the type of audit, distinguishing between Risk Limiting Audit (RLA) and Tabulation Audit. The bill passed unanimously, advancing to the full committee. Additionally, Rep. Victor Anderson presented HB 1044, seeking to increase the dollar value of public works contracts exempt from retention payment provisions. Following the bill's veto, the Governor's Office advocated for its application



to state-level and state agency contracts, receiving full support from the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) and the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) during public testimony. These bills were subsequently heard in the House Government Affairs Committee on January 31st, though no votes were taken, indicating a deliberate approach to further understanding before progressing.

### *Ways and Means*

During the Ways and Means Committee meeting on February 1st, HB 461 presented by Representative Thomas aimed to align regulatory fees with the actual cost of permitting processes, including clarifications regarding contracting workers and defining extensive renovation projects. The motion to pass the bill from the committee was unanimously approved. Additionally, HB 1019, introduced by Representative Reeves, proposed doubling the statewide homestead exemption, marking the first such increase since 1978. The committee unanimously passed the motion to advance this bill as well.

### *New Local Legislation of Interest*

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
<b>HB 1055 (Rep. Yasmin Neal)</b>	Georgia Eviction Records Restriction Act; enact	House read and referred
<b>HB 1060 (Rep. Sandra Scott)</b>	Elections; revise certain definitions; provisions	House read and referred
<b>HB 1065 (Rep. Sandra Scott)</b>	Public Health, Department of; Temporary Youth Behavioral Health Services Program; create	House read and referred
<b>HB 1073 (Rep. Dale Washburn)</b>	Local government; zoning; repeal additional hearing and notice provisions regarding halfway houses, drug rehabilitation centers, or other facilities for treatment of drug dependency	House read and referred
<b>HB 1077 (Rep. Sharon Cooper)</b>	Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce; grant program to provide funding to eligible institutions for additional behavioral health workforce training positions; create	House read and referred
<b>HB 1078 (Rep. Jesse Petrea)</b>	Community Health, Department of; Georgia Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE); establish and implement	House read and referred
<b>HB 1083 (Rep. Bruce Williamson)</b>	Community Health, Department of; adult residential mental health services licensing; extend grace periods	House read and referred
<b>HB 1090 (Rep. Mark Newton)</b>	Income tax; contributions to foster child support organizations; expand tax credit	House read and referred
<b>HB 1105 (Rep. Jesse Petrea)</b>	The Georgia Criminal Alien Track and Report Act of 2024; enact	House hopper
<b>HB 1108 (Rep. Spencer Frye)</b>	Housing authorities; deemed to be political subdivisions of this state; provide	House hopper
<b>SB 411 (Sen. Rick Williams)</b>	Elections; preferential treatment during advance voting to voters accompanied by children five years of age or under;	Senate read and referred

	provide	
<b>SB 413 (Sen. Randy Robertson)</b>	Elections; provisions relating to dates for certain special elections related to sales and use taxes; revise	Senate read and referred
<b>SB 435 (Sen. Frank Ginn)</b>	Infrastructure and Community Development Act'	Senate read and referred
<b>SB 443 (Sen. Ben Watson)</b>	Abatement of Nuisances; inclusion of claims against promoters and organizers for costs incurred by local governments due to unpermitted events: provide	Senate hopper
<b>SB 444 (Sen. Jason Anavitarte)</b>	Alcoholic Beverages; retail dealers to offer discounts to consumers through premiums, coupons, or rebates; authorize	Senate hopper
<b>SR 533 (Sen. Frank Ginn)</b>	Community Development Districts; provide general law for the creation and comprehensive regulation; authorize General Assembly -CA	Senate read and referred

# AIA Legislation

## *New Legislation of Interest*

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
<b>HB 1096 (Rep. Dale Washburn)</b>	Professional licensing boards; continuing education tracking solution to monitor compliance of licensees with applicable continuing education requirements; establish	House hopper