

Legislative Days 26 - 28
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Session Week 7 Legislative Report



2024

Week 7, Legislative Days 26-28

The Georgia General Assembly met this week on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, which were session days 26 through 28. This week, the Legislature took Wednesday to have only committee meetings, having meetings from 8 AM until around 6 PM that night. The week was also notable because Thursday, legislative day 28, was Crossover day. This day is important for bills from both the House and the Senate because bills produced from their respective chambers, either House or Senate, need to be passed out of their chamber by the end of the legislative day 28, otherwise the bill dies and will not be passed. For the House, 81 bills were placed on the calendar through three rules committee meetings, although they did not have to address all of them. In the Senate, 58 bills were placed on the calendar to be addressed, not all of these bills were heard. Any bills left in the legislatures and not passed on legislative day 28 will not be able to move forward and will have to start completely over next session. Both chambers were in session well into the night, the Senate adjourning around 9 PM and the House adjourning a little after 11pm. Through these long legislative days, the Senate was able to pass 43 bills, while the House heard 74 bills, passing 73 with one bill failing on the floor. After Crossover day, the legislative session has 12 official legislative days left, and those days are busy with attempting to pass bills from the opposite chambers. Some bills will persist all the way through, progressing to the Governor's office for a potential signature, while others may not have enough time to make it all the way through the legislative process.



New General Legislation of Interest for the Week

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
HR 1254 (Rep. Eric Bell)	General Assembly; legalization and regulation of marijuana; provide - CA	House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee

Crossover, Day 28, Breakdown

On Crossover day with the Georgia General Assembly, a pivotal moment in the legislative calendar, several crucial bills made their way through the legislative process, shaping the state's policies across various sectors. Among these, SB 460 emerged as a focal point of attention. Intended to address the ratio of APRNs and PAs under the supervision of a physician at one time, SB 460 took a significant turn as it progressed through the legislative channels. An unexpected turn of events occurred when the bill was amended to incorporate language from a previously defeated bill that had failed to advance past committee discussions (SB 419). This amendment effectively granted Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) the authority to administer anesthesia without the direct oversight of a physician, with this stipulation only applying to rural counties. This effectively creates a two-tiered system within the state of CRNA regulations which could have negative effects on the industry. Despite initial reservations and debates on the implications of such a provision, the amended SB 460 ultimately secured passage during crossover, marking the potential for a significant shift in healthcare regulations within the state.

In tandem with healthcare reforms, historic preservation also took center stage with the passage of HB 1116. This bill, focused on historic tax credits, seeks to extend the sunset date for tax incentives related to the rehabilitation of historic structures. By extending these tax credits, the legislature aimed to incentivize the preservation and revitalization of Georgia's rich architectural heritage, fostering economic development while safeguarding the state's cultural legacy.

Furthering the discussion on healthcare, HB 1339 addressed the complex issue of Certificate of Need (CON). This bill proposed comprehensive revisions to existing regulations, aiming to streamline the CON process while also bolstering support for rural healthcare providers. Notably, HB 1339 included provisions to increase tax credits for contributions to rural hospital organizations, acknowledging the vital role these institutions play in serving underserved communities across the state. Additionally, the bill sought to establish the Comprehensive Health Coverage Commission, tasked with exploring innovative solutions to expand healthcare access and improve outcomes for all Georgians.

Shifting focus to property taxation, HB 1031 brought about significant reforms aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability in the ad valorem taxation process. By mandating reappraisal of parcels and requiring estimated roll-back rate information on annual assessment notices, the bill aimed to provide property owners with a clearer understanding of their tax obligations while ensuring fair and equitable taxation practices across the state.

Education Legislation

House Education Committee

The House Education Committee convened on February 28th to discuss and vote on HB 1384, presented by Representative Cox. The bill aimed to increase the number of accumulated sick leave days for teachers and other school personnel from three to five. Currently, individuals receive three personal days per school year, and the proposed legislation sought to raise this allowance to five days. After deliberation, the committee unanimously passed HB 1384. Unfortunately, the bill did not pass the House floor by the Crossover deadline on Thursday.

New Education Legislation of Interest for the Week

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
HB 1375 (Rep. Yasmin Neal)	Sales and use tax; exempt materials used in construction of capital outlay projects for educational purposes; provisions	House Ways and Means Committee
HB 1384 (Rep. Brent Cox)	Education; number of accumulated sick leave days for teachers and other school personnel; increase from three to five	House Education Committee
HB 1387 (Rep. Solomon Adesanya)	Quality Basic Education Act; history of Black Americans; provide coursework	House Education Committee
HB 1393 (Rep. Eric Bell)	Education; minimum salary schedule for Georgia's Pre-K Program lead teachers; provide	House Education Committee
HB 1395 (Rep. Eric Bell)	State tort claims; remove immunities from certain actions of law enforcement officers	House Judiciary Committee
HB 1396 (Rep. Eric Bell)	Education; public schools to implement an English and Spanish dual language immersion program for students in kindergarten through grade five; require	House Education Committee
HR 1230 (Rep. Lisa Campbell)	General Assembly; creation of Children First Trust Fund ; provide by law - CA	House Rules Committee
HR 1283 (Rep. Alan Powell)	House Study Committee on Safety and Consumer Protection of Nicotine Vapor Products; create	House Hopper

Healthcare Legislation

House Health Committee

The House Health Committee convened on February 26th, focusing on two key bills. The first, HB 1339 presented by Representative Butch Parrish, aimed to revise the certificate of need process in healthcare. A substitute bill was introduced to address technicalities aligning with departmental systems and return to the status quo in terms of ASC facilities. There was no public testimony. The committee engaged in questioning and ultimately passed the bill. The bill passed the House floor later in the week. The second bill discussed was HB 1046, presented by Representative David Clark. This bill sought to authorize advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants to order home healthcare services. There was a substitute that stripped out the ability to perform direct home healthcare services and only allows the provision allowing APRNs to execute death certificates. The committee favorably reported the substitute.

On February 27th, the House Public Health Committee convened to discuss and vote on several significant healthcare-related bills, all of which received approval. Representative Matt Hatchett introduced HB 663, which aimed to enact the "No Patient Left Alone Act," ensuring patients' rights to have a designated support person present during medical procedures. Representative Ron Stephens presented HB 1326, addressing provisions related to controlled substances under crimes and offenses laws. Representative Ruwa Romman sponsored HB 1314, which sought to designate emergency medical services, including ambulance service, as essential services within the healthcare framework. Representative Scott Hilton introduced HB 1340, focusing on the credentialing of qualified behavior analysts and autism services practitioner-supervisors to enhance professional standards. Additionally, Representative Karen Bennett proposed HB 1302, advocating for mandatory maternal mental health screening for Medicaid recipients to address perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. Lastly, the committee revisited HB 1046, sponsored by Representative David Clark, which aimed to authorize advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants to order home healthcare services, thereby expanding access to healthcare services. Following thorough deliberation, the committee passed all bills. HB 663, HB 1326, and HB 1314 passed the House chamber on Crossover day later in the week. HB 1046 also passed the House chamber with an amendment, see the above Crossover breakdown section for more details.

House Public Health Committee

During the House Public Health Committee meeting, held on February 27th, the committee deliberated on three important bills addressing various aspects of healthcare. The first bill, SB 375, sponsored by Senator Brian Strickland, aimed to enhance the Behavioral Health Coordinating Council by adding the commissioner of veterans services. After thorough discussion, the committee passed SB 375. The second bill considered was HB 1408, sponsored by Representative Jodi Lott, which proposed the inclusion of ulcerative colitis as a condition eligible for treatment with low THC oil within the Patient Registry. Recognizing the importance of expanding treatment options, the committee unanimously passed HB 1408, but it unfortunately did not pass the House floor in time for Crossover day. Lastly, the committee addressed HB 1409, sponsored by Representative Rob Leverett, which aimed to limit liability for mental health care providers under certain circumstances, focusing on protecting these providers from undue legal risks. After careful review, the committee passed HB 1409, and it was later passed on the House floor on Crossover day.

New Healthcare Legislation of Interest for the Week

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
HB 1390 (Rep. Eric Bell)	Crimes and offenses; sale of low THC oils; revise penalties	House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee
HB 1428 (Rep. Viola Davis)	Health; prohibit pelvic and rectal examinations on unconscious patients; provisions	House Hopper
SB 565 (Sen. Elena Parent)	Health; human egg or human embryo is not considered an unborn child, a minor child, or a person for any purpose under law; provide	House Hopper

Local Legislation

House Ways and Means Committee

During the House Ways and Means meeting on February 26th, several bills and amendments were discussed and voted upon. Representative Williamson presented HB 1023, proposing an amendment to match the tax rate imposed on corporations with that on individual taxpayers, which passed unanimously and passed the House on Crossover. Similarly, Representative Stephens introduced HR 1021, offering a state-wide homestead exemption option from ad valorem taxes, with an amendment to set the exemption at \$10 or the state's minimum wage, whichever is higher; both the amendment and the bill passed unanimously and passed the House floor on Crossover. Representative Camp's HB 284, concerning changes to health care sharing ministry definitions, passed with one dissenting vote and was not taken up on the House floor. HR 1041, presented by Representative Washburn, allows counties to use an alternative property valuation method, and this measure passed with some opposition but was not taken up on the House floor before the Crossover deadline. Representative Martin's HB 1225, with a new section proposed by ACCG, allows municipalities to redistribute their LOST rollback, and this measure passed unanimously but also did not pass through the House chamber. Finally, Representative Blackmon's HR 1115, aiming to create a separate class for qualified low-income housing, also passed the committee but was not taken up on the House floor.

Senate Finance Committee

On February 27th, during the Senate Finance Committee meeting, HR 804, sponsored by Rep. Martin, regarding local government temporary loans was discussed and ultimately passed. The bill proposed a change in the repayment period for such loans, extending it from the end of the calendar year to 12 months from the initial funding date. This modification aims to provide local governments with more flexibility in managing their finances and meeting their obligations. The Senate Finance Committee deliberated on the implications of this change, considering factors such as fiscal responsibility and the impact on local communities. After thorough discussion and consideration, the committee voted in favor of passing HR 804, signaling their support for the proposed adjustment to the repayment timeline for local government temporary loans.

House Economic Development Committee

On February 27th, the House Economic Development Committee convened to discuss HB 1329, presented by Representative Stephens of the 164th district. The bill aimed to authorize and regulate the taxation of fantasy contests. The discussion generated considerable debate centered on whether fantasy contests constitute gambling. Opposition from the far right stemmed from concerns about expanding gambling, while opposition from the far left focused on the perceived inadequacies of funding the HOPE scholarship, particularly for lower and middle-class families whose children may not directly benefit from fantasy football participation. Despite the vigorous debate, no action was taken during the meeting.

House Governmental Affairs Committee

On February 27th, the House Governmental Affairs Committee addressed three key bills pertinent to local government and election procedures. Firstly, HB 1407, presented by John LaHood of the 175th district, focused on revising provisions related to establishing service delivery strategies for local government entities. The committee unanimously passed this bill, indicating widespread support for the proposed revisions. The bill also passed the House on Crossover day. Secondly, HB 1121, introduced by Bethany Ballard of the 147th district, aimed to regulate short-term rental units and encountered discussions concerning grandfather language,

particularly with concerns raised by the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA). Despite efforts to find compromise, consensus was not reached, leading to the bill being scheduled for a hearing only. Lastly, HB 559, presented by Saira Draper of the 90th district, addressed election procedures, specifically proposing preferential treatment during advance voting for voters accompanied by children. The bill was introduced via committee substitute, with amendments including changing the age requirement from 5 years old to 3 years old, based on recommendations from the Speaker's Office. After deliberation, the committee unanimously passed the bill with the revised age requirement, but the bill was not taken up on the House floor before the Crossover deadline.

Senate Regulated Industries Committee

During the Senate Regulated Industries meeting on February 28th, HB 1077 presented by Representative Cooper addressed the shortage of mental health workers in Georgia and proposed a grant program to fund additional behavioral health workforce training positions, with discussions centered around fiscal concerns and the inclusion of Medicaid patients. HB 73, reintroduced by Representative Gullett, aimed to regulate door-to-door sales of solar products, with proposed changes addressing licensing and consumer protections, although concerns were raised by stakeholders regarding PSC regulation. Finally, HB 904, presented by Representative Vance, sought to update provisions for contractors, including grammar corrections, clarity improvements, and updates to modernize language and fines, receiving support from relevant professional groups. Questions were raised regarding the duration of license transfers and potential conflicts with other proposed legislation. No votes were taken in committee on any of the bills as Crossover day was the next day, and House bills will not likely be acted on in the Senate on Crossover day.

House Floor

On February 29th, amid the hustle of crossover day in the Georgia General Assembly, HB 1017 successfully passed the House floor. This bill, an integral part of the anti-squatter initiative, aims to fortify property rights and address pertinent legal loopholes. HB 1017 broadens its purview to encompass instances where individuals unlawfully enter land or premises with the intention to reside. This legislation introduces essential measures such as property affidavits in magistrate court proceedings, streamlining legal processes while ensuring adequate protection for property owners. Moreover, it clarifies that jury trials are unnecessary for writs of possession, expediting justice in cases of unlawful occupation. This legislative victory should help to bolster property rights and combat the adverse effects of squatting within the state.

New Local Legislation of Interest for the Week

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
HB 1395 (Rep. Eric Bell)	State tort claims; remove immunities from certain actions of law enforcement officers	House Judiciary Committee
HB 1415 (Rep. Houston Gaines)	Law enforcement officers; cooperate with federal authorities on enforcement of immigration laws; provisions	House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee
HB 1418 (Rep. James Beverly)	Community Affairs, Department of; create Office of Urban Affairs	House Special Rules Committee
HR 1257 (Rep. Eric Bell)	Joint Study Committee on Combating Homelessness Among Veterans; create	House Defense and Veterans Affairs Committee

AIA Legislation

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
HB 575 (Rep. Joseph Gullett)	Professions and businesses; licensee may request review of an occupational regulation; provide	House withdrawn
HB 1096 (Rep. Dale Washburn)	Professional licensing boards; continuing education tracking solution to monitor compliance of licensees with applicable continuing education requirements; establish	House passed
HB 1116 (Rep. Debbie Buckner)	Income tax credit; rehabilitation of historic structures; home portion; extend sunset date	House passed
HB 1134 (Rep. Ron Stephens)	Income tax credit; rehabilitation of historic structures; extend sunset date	House Ways and Means Committee
HB 1152 (Rep. Beth Camp)	The Georgia Homegrown Solar Act of 2024; enact	House Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Committee
HB 1182 (Rep. Clint Crowe)	Income tax; low-income housing tax credits; revise	House passed
HB 1190 (Rep. J. Collins)	Secretary of State; division director to issue licenses in certain instances ; authorize	House passed
HB 1197 (Rep. Penny Houston)	Income tax; expand revitalization zone tax credits to include rehabilitation of historic residential structures	House passed
HB 1199 (Rep. Clay Pirkle)	State government; auditor produce certain monthly and annual reports ; replace requirement	House passed, Senate Government Oversight Committee
SB 471 (Sen. Rick Williams)	Professions and Businesses; certain licenses and certificates issued by certain professional licensing boards; change the expiration and renewal dates	Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities favorably reported