

Gold Dome



January 30, 2019

Gold Dome Report - January 30, 2019

Both the House and Senate were back at work today to round out their legislative business before adjourning ahead of the Super Bowl. While floor activity remains largely administrative and ceremonial to date, action is beginning in legislative committees. Today, the Senate Public Safety Committee voted out its first bill, which addresses an issue created last year with passing school buses on divided highways, and the House Appropriations subcommittees completed their hearings on the Amended FY 2019 budget. Details on these meetings and more are in today's [#GoldDomeReport](#).

After the Super Bowl break, legislators will return to Atlanta on Tuesday, and the House is expected to sign off on the Amended FY 2019 budget, sending it to the Senate for consideration by the end of the week.

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Senate Committee Hears School Bus Passing Measure

The Senate Public Safety Committee, chaired by Sen. John Albers (R-Alpharetta), convened for its first meeting today and also took action on its first bill. [SB 25](#), authored by Senator Bill Heath (R-Bremen), amends Title 40 to clarify the circumstances in which a driver must stop for a school bus. This bill provides that drivers must stop for a school bus except when driving the opposite direction on a divided highway separated by a grass or other prohibitive barrier. Due to the drafting of HB 978 during the last legislative session, current Georgia law is unclear and appears to exempt drivers on multi-lane roadways separated by a turn lane median from stopping. As presented, the bill will take effect immediately upon passage and receiving signature of the governor. Chairman Albers noted that the Committee has received numerous letters in support of the bill, and representatives from the Georgia Department of Education, Professional Association of Georgia Educators, Georgia Association of Solicitors-General, and Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police all spoke in favor of the legislation and asked for the legislature to act quickly to resolve this issue. The Committee voted unanimously that the bill DO PASS and be sent to the Senate Rules Committee.

The Senate Public Safety Committee will meet next Wednesday to consider [SB 15](#), Chairman Albers's "Keeping Georgia's Schools Safe Act".

Appropriations Subcommittees Complete Hearings on AFY 2019 Budget

The House Appropriations Committee completed its subcommittee hearings on the Amended FY 2019 today, paving the way for subcommittees and full committee to sign off on the mid-year budget and send it to the House floor. We expect that action to occur late next week. In addition to the Economic Development and Transportation Subcommittees, the Higher Education Subcommittee met for a second time to wrap up its part of the budget.

House Appropriations Committee -- Higher Education Subcommittee

The Higher Education Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, chaired by Rep. David Knight (R-Griffin), met for the second time to consider the Amended FY 2019 budget proposals introduced by Governor Kemp earlier this month.

The committee heard testimony from Matt Arthur, Commissioner of the Technical College System of Georgia ("TCSG"), who began by giving a profile of the average student of the TCSG: 27 years old, married with children, and a member of the workforce for nine years. Typically, TCSG trains students for the middle-skill job area of the workforce, the only area in Georgia's workforce with more jobs than workers. Commissioner Arthur noted that the HOPE Career Grant is instrumental in helping students attend TCSG institutions. According to the Commissioner, Dual Enrollment has seen a significant increase in recent years, with the highest percentage of participation in rural areas. TCSG's Last Mile Fund is designed to provide aid for students that need \$500 in assistance to remain enrolled in a program. In the past three semesters, \$80,000 was allocated for this purpose from the TCSG Foundation. The TCSG's amended FY2019 budget request totals \$35,156,182. The largest line item in this request is for a new aviation maintenance academy for Chattahoochee Technical College at a cost of \$35,147,814.

Chairman Knight expressed his appreciation for TCSG's focus on a variety of sectors and inquired into the process by which new industries are prioritized and added. Commissioner Arthur explained that many considerations are made, including costs, time, number of prospective students, and necessity for the HOPE Career Grant to keep the program full.

Rep. Mike Cheokas (R-Americus) asked what percentage of the total student body utilizes the HOPE Career Grant and its qualifications. Commissioner Arthur explained that of a total student population of 56,000, 39,000 students use the grant. Rep. Cheokas also inquired which industry partners are helping in the development of the proposed aviation program expansion. Per the Commissioner, a variety of aviation companies provide assistance in the program.

Rep. Ed Setzler (R-Acworth) asked which programs in TCSG were not in the HOPE Career Grant's purview. Commissioner Arthur explained there are not any programs that do not have access to the grant, but some specific courses will not receive funding; however, none of these special courses are taught statewide.

Rep. Barry Fleming (R-Harlem) asked about the current status of the aviation program, making sure there is a need for a new location. He was satisfied by the Commissioner's answer and assurance that any additional program spots will be filled.

New Legislation

The following legislation of interest was introduced in the House today:

- **HB 79**, authored by Rep. Carl Gilliard (D-Garden City), amends Title 30 to create protections for blind children in courts, the Department of Human Services, and child placement agencies. This bill was referred to the House Juvenile Justice Committee.
- **HB 80**, authored by Rep. Bill Werkheiser (R-Glennville), is the "Child Support Cooperation Act of 2019." The bill amends Title 49 to require parents to cooperate with the child support enforcement program as a condition of eligibility for federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This bill was referred to the House Judiciary Committee.
- **HB 81**, authored by Rep. Todd Jones (R-South Forsyth), amends Title 13 to make any restrictive covenant between an employer and information technology employee, as defined in the bill, void, unlawful, and unenforceable. This bill was referred to the House Judiciary Committee.
- **HB 83**, authored by Rep. Demetrius Douglas (D-Stockbridge), amends Title 20 to require elementary schools to schedule recess for children in grades K-5 and provides definitions for acceptable forms of recess. This bill was referred to the House Education Committee.
- **HB 84**, authored by Rep. Richard Smith (R-Columbus), amends Title 33 to provide for consumer protections regarding health insurance. Specifically, the bill requires providers to disclose participation agreements, affiliated hospitals, costs of services, and affiliated providers to patients upon request. The bill also requires hospitals to publish standard charges for DRGs, in-network health care plans, and providers with which they have contracted. Under the bill, insurers must provide enrollees with a variety of information regarding care access, out-of-network services, and claims processes. The bill also provides an arbitration process for patients to dispute hospital or provider bills. This bill was referred to the House Insurance Committee.
- **HB 86**, authored by Rep. Tommy Benton (R-Jefferson), amends Title 20 to provide that performance ratings for certain teachers, procedural deficiencies on the part of the local school system or charter school in conducting an evaluation under O.C.G.A. 20-2-210, and job performance shall be subject to complaint under the statutory complaints policy. The bill also adds that complaints can be investigated by independent third parties at the discretion of the school district. This bill was referred to the House Education Committee.
- **HB 87**, authored by Rep. David Clark (R-Buford), amends Title 20 to allow home study students to participate in extracurricular and interscholastic activities in their residential school district. This bill was referred to the House Education Committee.

- **HB 89**, authored by Rep Chuck Martin (R-Alpharetta), amends Title 31 to provide an exemption from Certificate of Need requirements for integrated ambulatory surgery centers. The bill defines such a surgery center narrowly as “a single specialty neuromuscular orthopedic ambulatory surgical center that is an essential and fundamental supporting component of a comprehensive sports medicine complex operated together with an integrated athletic training and medical educational facility for youth, amateur, and professional athletes.” This legislation would benefit Legacy Sports Institute if passed and signed into law. This bill was referred to the House Special Committee on Access to Quality Health Care.
- **HB 91**, authored by Rep. Andy Welch (R-McDonough), amends Title 31 to allow the Department of Community Health to retain fingerprints collected as part of the Georgia Long-Term Care Background Check Program. The bill was assigned to the House Judiciary Committee.

The following legislation of interest was introduced in the Senate today:

- **SB 4**, authored by Sen. Jen Jordan (D-Atlanta), amends Title 28 to provide for a private lactation room, open to the public, in the Georgia State Capitol. This bill was referred to the Senate State Institutions and Property Committee
- **SB 35**, authored by Sen. Lester Jackson (D-Savannah), amends Title 42 to prohibit sex offenders from residing within 2,000 feet of their former victim or their former victim’s immediate family. This bill was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.
- **SB 36**, authored by Sen. Steve Henson (D-Stone Mountain), amends Title 49 to authorize appropriations for the purpose of obtaining federal financial participation for medical assistance payments to Medicaid providers pursuant to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This act will not allow appropriations for this purpose unless federal payments provide for 90% or more of the funding. This bill was referred to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.
- **SB 37**, authored by Sen. William Ligon Jr. (R-Brunswick), amends Title 13 to add any agreement to modify, alter, cancel, revoke, or rescind a promise, contract, agreement, or commitment to the list of items that must be submitted in writing to make the obligation binding in a case of fraud. This bill was referred to the Senate Banking and Financial Institutions Committee.
- **SB 38**, authored by Sen. William Ligon Jr. (R-Brunswick), amends Title 15 to exclude pleadings or documents related to the enforcement of child support orders or recovery and documents made physically at a courthouse by an attorney or their designee from electronic filing requirements. This bill also exempts pleadings or filings made by the Attorney General, district attorney, or public defender from electronic filing fee requirements. This bill was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.
- **SB 40**, authored by Sen. Lester Jackson (D-Savannah), amends Title 16 to add a new subsection clarifying that any person above the age of 18 that engages in sexual conduct with a person enrolled in the school commits sexual assault regardless of whether that person has a supervisory or disciplinary authority over the student. This bill was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.
- **SR 52**, authored by Sen. Elena Parent (D-Atlanta), proposes an amendment to the Constitution that requires legislative and congressional reapportionment be done by an independent commission instead of the General Assembly. This resolution was referred to the Senate Reapportionment and Redistricting Committee.

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