

# FAMILY & POLICY



AN ADVOCACY PROGRAM OF

JANUARY 29, 2010

**Appropriations subcommittees are reviewing the FY 2010 amended budget.** They began questioning agency heads about proposed cuts in funding.

**House committees are considering safety issues.** [HB 615](#) (Bearden, 68<sup>th</sup>) was heard in a packed meeting of the Ramsey subcommittee of House Judiciary Non-Civil on 1/27.

Introduced in 2009, the bill seeks to allow concealed weapons almost anywhere, including schools and churches, eliminate all obstacles to speedy processing of permits, remove the

Governor's emergency power over firearms in a state emergency and limit the authority of any law enforcement agent to seize a firearm. No action was taken and further hearings are anticipated. [HB 927](#) (Jacobs, 80<sup>th</sup>) which seeks to strengthen current law on bullying in schools was heard in Judiciary Non-Civil on 1/28. Discussion focused on how bullying should be defined, how to recognize it, and what the penalties should be. No action was taken. Rep. Hugley (133<sup>rd</sup>) has also introduced a bullying bill, [HB 940](#), which has been referred to House Education.

**Senate bills would lengthen mandatory school attendance.** The Senate Education and Youth Committee met on 1/26 and debated two bills that would raise the mandatory school attendance age from 16 to 17 or older, [SB 60](#) (Jackson, 2<sup>nd</sup>) and [SB 132](#) (Fort, 39<sup>th</sup>). The committee took no action.

**The federal health reform debate has sparked Georgia bills.** Several new measures would prohibit any person from being required to purchase insurance: [SB 317](#) (Hill, 32<sup>nd</sup>), [SR 794](#) (Hill, 32<sup>nd</sup>) (both in the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee); [SR 795](#), (Harp, 29<sup>th</sup>) (in the Senate Judiciary Committee), and [HR 1086](#) (Hill, 21<sup>st</sup>) (in the House Health and Human Services Committee). The last three are proposed Georgia constitutional amendments. [SR 830](#) (Hill, 32<sup>nd</sup>) urges the state attorney

general to prepare a challenge to the constitutionality of Congress's HR 3590; it is in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Other measures would alter health insurance practices. [SB 309](#) (Hill, 32<sup>nd</sup>) would allow out-of-state insurance companies to sell policies in Georgia that do not include mandated coverage the law requires of in-state insurers. It is in the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee. [SB 330](#) (Smith, 52<sup>nd</sup>) would prohibit insurance companies' practice of rescinding policies and refusing to pay claims when they find misstatements or omissions of information not relevant to the

condition being treated. It also would prohibit annual or lifetime limits. It is in the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee. [SB 331](#) (Smith, 52<sup>nd</sup>) would allow businesses with 2-50 employees to band together to purchase health insurance and would require insurers to sell policies to them. It is in the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee.

**The Division of Public Health has a new Director.** Dr. Rhonda Medows, Commissioner and State Health Officer of the Department of Community Health (DCH), announced the appointment of Dr. M. Rony Francois, MD, MSPH, PhD, as the new Director of the Division of Public Health. (Recall that in July, 2009, public health moved from the Department of Human Resources to DCH.) Dr. Francois formerly served the states of Florida and Louisiana. The announcement credits him with achieving high immunization rates for young Louisiana children, reducing smoking among Florida middle-schoolers by 60%, and reducing perinatally-acquired HIV. Dr. Francois is a Haitian-American who speaks three languages.

**The Budget transparency bill passed by the Senate is moving in the House.** [SB 206](#) (Goggans, 7<sup>th</sup>), requiring creation of tax expenditure budgets, passed a House Appropriations subcommittee. The full committee is making a few changes, but is expected to move it forward.

## Highlights

- Legislative subcommittees are examining the 2010 amended budget.
- New health insurance bills have been introduced.
- DCH has a new Director of Public Health.

## You can help!

Locate your State Representative and Senator: [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org) (Check your driver's license for 9-digit zip code.)

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