

# FAMILY & POLICY



AN ADVOCACY PROGRAM OF

FEBRUARY 5, 2010

**Revenues.** Although revenues have continued to decline and state programs are threatened with ever-deeper cuts, legislators have introduced a major new tax-cutting measure, [HB 1023](#) (Graves, 12<sup>th</sup>). The bill, which has been assigned to a new Special Committee on Small Business Development and Job Creation instead of to Ways and Means, is very similar to one Gov. Perdue vetoed in 2009 as too costly. On the other hand, several bills would increase revenues. [HB 928](#) and [HR 1109](#) (Sims, 169<sup>th</sup>) and [SR 939](#) (Goggans, 7<sup>th</sup>) would remove the sales tax exemption from lottery tickets. The House versions dedicate the funds to K-12. [HB 1066](#) (Fludd, 66<sup>th</sup>) would add a temporary one percent surcharge on income over \$400,000. [HB 1065](#), [HB 1067](#), and [HB 1068](#) (Fludd, 66<sup>th</sup>) would temporarily reduce the value of tax credits by 15 percent.

**Health Care Coverage.** [HB 955](#) (Marin, 96<sup>th</sup>) would allow income-eligible children and pregnant women who are legal immigrants to qualify for Medicaid or PeachCare without the current 5-year wait. Recently enacted federal law permits states to make this change. The bill is in the House Health and Human Services Committee. Two bills would allow dependent children to remain on their parents' insurance through age 25 whether or not they are students: [SB 329](#) (Hill, 32<sup>nd</sup>) and [SB 330](#) (Smith, 52<sup>nd</sup>). Both are in the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee. [SR 795](#) (Harp, 29<sup>th</sup>) would put a constitutional amendment on the November ballot to prohibit passage of laws requiring any person to have health insurance. [SR 830](#) (Hill, 32<sup>nd</sup>) urges the state attorney general to prepare a challenge to the constitutionality of HR 3590, the federal health reform bill. Both passed out of Senate Judiciary on party-line votes.

**Child Welfare.** [HB 1085](#) (Dempsey, 13<sup>th</sup>) would bring the Department of Human Services into compliance with

provisions of the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. It is in House Children and Youth. The bill requires:

- Reasonable efforts to place siblings in foster care together or to allow ample visitation where that is not possible;
- Assurance of full-time school attendance;
- Reasonable transportation costs to be included in the foster care board rate;
- Initial and follow-up health care and procedures for sharing medical records and monitoring medications;
- A written transitional living plan for each child at least 90 days prior to age 18;
- Information for potential adoptive parents on the Adoption Tax Credit.

In other news, the Department of Community Health FY 2011 budget shows savings from including adoptive foster children among those who are required to enroll in a Care Management Organization (CMO) instead of being covered by fee-for-service Medicaid.

**Budget.** The House is trying to move the FY 2010 Amended budget along and may set a floor vote the week of February 8<sup>th</sup>. The Senate Appropriations Human Development Subcommittee chaired by Sen. Renee Unterman questioned the Department of Human Services about its budget. One area of concern is that DHS is having trouble keeping up with food stamp applications. The number of households receiving benefits is up by a third from last year. Georgia is under a corrective action plan because of slow application processing, yet DHS is slated to lose 137 food stamp, Medicaid and TANF eligibility workers in the FY 2011 budget. Advocates are also concerned that lower-than-expected Medicaid enrollment may be due partly to DFCS workload pressure.

## Highlights

- The House may vote on the 2010 amended budget within the next few days.
- The General Assembly will be in session Monday-Thursday the week of 2/8. After that, it will be in session Tuesday-Thursday for the rest of the month.

## 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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