

FAMILY & POLICY



AN ADVOCACY PROGRAM OF

APRIL 2, 2010

Revenue and budget. So far, legislators have taken only limited steps to address the large budget deficit resulting from declining revenues. Last week the House voted to generate about \$263 M bypassing [HB 307](#) (Cole, 125th) requiring a temporary 1.45% tax on hospital net revenues to help fund Medicaid as well as several bills increasing various fees (3/26 Bulletin).

Thursday, after a long day of bitter wrangling to get the necessary votes, the Senate passed HB 307. The bill remains mired in controversy, however, because the Senate amended it to eliminate the state portion of the insurance premium tax. Speaker of the House Ralston says the House will reject that plan. On the same day the Senate voted for a tax increase under HB 307, it passed [HB 1023](#) (Graves, 12th) which would permanently cut taxes (mainly for the wealthy) by \$380 M a year when fully implemented. Tax cuts under HB 307 and HB 1023 would be triggered when the amount in the revenue shortfall reserve (RSR) reaches \$500 M. Experts say, though, that the RSR should be funded up to \$1.5 B to protect against future economic stresses. Gov. Perdue has not said whether he will veto HB 1023. There is no report yet of the direction the House will take on the FY 2011 budget; House Appropriations Subcommittee meetings originally set for the week of 3/29 were cancelled abruptly due to the dispute with the Senate over HB 307.

Budget transparency. The House passed a somewhat amended version of [SB 206](#) (Goggans, 7th) requiring a tax expenditure budget as part of the Governor's budget report. For the first time, the Department of Audits and Accounts will prepare an analysis showing the cost to the state of tax breaks for three-year periods that include the prior budget year, the current year, and a future year.

Child welfare and safety. [HB 1085](#) (Dempsey, 13th) was favorably reported by Senate Judiciary. The bill brings Georgia into compliance with the federal Fostering

Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (2/5 Bulletin). The House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee favorably reported a substitute to [SB 299](#) (Jones, 10th) which makes changes in the zero tolerance law for certain weapons in schools. [SB 332](#) (Jones, 10th) requiring boards of education to report annually on

weapons-related disciplinary proceedings against students passed the Senate and is in House Education. [HB 927](#) (Jacobs, 80th), the anti-bullying bill, failed to pass the House by crossover day but contents of the bill were amended onto [SB 250](#) (Hamrick, 30th) and passed the House on 3/30. SB 250 makes it a

misdemeanor to knowingly and intentionally or recklessly disrupt a school or school bus. A House Judiciary Non-Civil Subcommittee discussed a substitute to [SB 308](#) (Seabaugh, 28th), the gun bill that passed the Senate last week. The substitute kept firearms out of houses of worship but retained language regarding guns in colleges and universities. Subcommittee Chair, Ed Setzler, adjourned the meeting suddenly without taking a vote, perhaps due to opposition from university officials.

Immigrants. [SB 67](#) (Murphy, 27th) requires, with some exceptions, that tests for drivers' licenses be administered only in English. The bill passed both the Senate and the House in different forms in 2009, and now requires the House's agreement to a Senate amendment. Supporters of the bill call it a safety measure. Opponents say it creates a hostile environment, increases barriers to making a living for refugees and other immigrants who are legally present, and may violate federal civil rights laws. Drivers already must be able to recognize traffic signs. At present, Georgia and most states offer tests in multiple languages or allow applicants to use a translator.

There will be no Family & Policy Bulletin for the week of April 5th because the legislature is on spring break.

Highlights

- The General Assembly has completed 33 days of its 40-day session. With the exception of great drama over HB 307, there was little action during the week.
- Few meetings are scheduled for the coming week as the legislature is in adjournment until April 12th.

You can help!

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