

FAMILY & POLICY



AN ADVOCACY PROGRAM OF

APRIL 30, 2010

The General Assembly (finally!) ended its 2010 session near midnight on April 29th after a busy 40th day. As usual, much legislation was held to the end. A number of representatives and senators announced their retirements or plans to run for other offices. All office seekers had to qualify by noon April 30th. See the [Candidate Database](#).

Legislators waited until the 40th day to adopt a final budget for FY 2011. See the [FY 2011 Conference Report](#) for full details.

The big picture is that despite about \$300 M generated by the hospital tax and fee increases, state general fund spending is set to be some 18% lower than the FY 2009 budget. Children's education is suffering from larger class sizes and teacher layoffs, fewer workers are on the job to help struggling families get health care and food stamps, children placed for adoption are losing services, and public health services, including prenatal care, are severely curtailed to name a few of the cuts with long-term consequences. Below are results for a number of items where the House and Senate-passed versions had differed (4/23 Bulletin). [Community Health](#). The final budget calls for a graduated scale of PeachCare premium increases (rather than a flat amount which could have penalized lower income children), and would only have to generate the smaller amount of funds set by the House. The budget cuts \$6 M from health department grant-in-aid, plus another \$821,846 (instead of \$2.25 M), cuts \$387,396 from Babies Born Healthy prenatal care, reduces Area Health Education Centers by \$191,236, but restores all except \$14,244 to St. Joseph Mercy Care. CMOs' monthly payments are cut by \$8 M in state funds instead of \$29.4 M. [Human Services](#). The EMBRACE line item says state and federal funds of \$495,000 will be used for foster care supportive services, but does not clarify whether or not EMBRACE will be funded. There is a \$1.34 M cut in adoption services. [Education](#). The final budget restores migrant education, cuts Communities

in Schools affiliates by \$242,994, cuts \$1.6 M (instead of \$2.3 M) from school nurses, restores \$893,000 of a \$2.2 M cut to the Preschool Handicapped Program, and restores funds for the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Revenue and tax issues stayed in the spotlight. A proposal to repeal the refundable part of the Low-Income Tax Credit for taxpayers earning less than \$20,000 was stripped out of HB 1198, but was added to the conference report on [HB 1069](#). (Georgia is one of only a [few states](#) that levy income taxes on families in severe poverty.) By contrast, legislators adopted a last-minute tax break for tourism

attractions in [HB 1251](#) on top of others they enacted this session. In future, it will be possible to review the cost of tax breaks under [SB 206](#) creating a tax expenditure budget. A special council will examine Georgia's revenue structure under [HB 1405](#).

Bills that passed: [HB 1040](#) allowing unlicensed caretakers to perform some home health care activities, [SB 308](#) making it easier to carry guns in public places, [HB 866](#) permitting state matching grants to organizations for doctors who move to rural areas, [HB 1268](#) allowing people laid off by small firms to benefit from extensions of federal COBRA insurance premium subsidies, [SB 316](#) offering Medigap to people who have Medicare based on disability, [SR 277](#) asking voters to approve a \$10 fee on license plates to fund trauma services, [SB 299](#) easing zero-tolerance on weapons in schools, [SB 458](#) requiring seatbelt use in pickups, [SB 360](#) prohibiting texting while driving, and [SB 367](#) expanding the list of persons who may consent to treatment on behalf of another and providing for medical consent guardians. **Bills that did not pass:** [HB 1184](#) and [SB 407](#) eliminating health insurance mandates and several proposed constitutional amendments attempting to nullify federal health reform.

Highlights

- The General Assembly adjourned *sine die* on April 29th, ending the second year of a two-year term.
- Gov. Perdue has 40 days (until June 8th) to sign or veto legislation.

You can help!

Watch for more information, including news on whether Gov. Perdue signs or vetoes bills. Please thank legislators who helped!

This news bulletin is prepared for Family & Policy by Linda Smith Lowe and Mary Frances Williams.

If you have questions: smithlowe@earthlink.net (404-274-1746) or mfwilliams@speakeasy.net (404-395-3485)