

# FAMILY & POLICY



AN ADVOCACY PROGRAM OF

JANUARY 30, 2009

**Both houses of Congress have passed the SCHIP reauthorization!** To review a summary and the differences between the two versions that now must be resolved in conference, see [CHIPRA Side-by-Side](#). Georgia will benefit from new dollars, a revised funding formula for PeachCare, and options for covering more children. Nationwide, 4 million additional children are expected to gain coverage.

**Below are a few of the bills the General Assembly is considering that affect families and children:**

*Commercial sexual exploitation of children.* [SB 69](#) (Unterman, 45<sup>th</sup>) Expands the definition of child abuse to include "sexual exploitation" by any person (not just a parent or caretaker) who allows, permits, encourages, or requires a child to engage in prostitution, or any sexually explicit conduct. [SB 74](#) (Unterman, 45<sup>th</sup>) prohibits employment of anyone under age 21 in an adult entertainment establishment as a dancer, server, bartender, etc. Both of these bills are in Senate Judiciary. A third bill expected next week will require a \$5 surcharge for entry in an adult entertainment establishment to pay for services for sexually exploited children and youth.

*Agency accountability.* [HB 20](#) (Oliver, 83<sup>rd</sup>) requiring DHR and the Trauma Commission to adopt formal regulations regarding public benefits and grants (1/23 Bulletin) will be heard in a House Governmental Affairs subcommittee at 3:00 p.m. February 3<sup>rd</sup>, Room 216 CAP.

*Foreclosures.* [SB 54](#) (Thompson, 33<sup>rd</sup>) prohibits a variety of abusive home loan practices that have mired many families in debt and have led to foreclosures. [SB 57](#) (Hamrick, 30<sup>th</sup>), among other things, allows tenants with valid leases to remain in foreclosed properties for 60 days if they pay rent to the court. Both bills are in the Senate Banking and Financial Institutions Committee.

*Safety.* [HB 155](#) (Mills, 25<sup>th</sup>) allows issuance of lifetime licenses to carry a pistol instead of requiring 5-year renewals. [HB 182](#) (Austin, 10<sup>th</sup>) preempts local governments from restricting discharge of firearms on tracts of property of at least 5 acres. These bills are in House Judiciary Non-Civil. [SB 9](#) (Douglas, 17<sup>th</sup>) removes the requirement that a concealed weapon be carried in a holster. In Senate Judiciary. [SB 5](#) (Thomas, 54<sup>th</sup>) requires use of seatbelts in non-farm pickup trucks and SUVs. In Senate Public Safety. [HB 22](#) (Oliver, 83<sup>rd</sup>) is similar, but also requires

seatbelt use in rear seats of vehicles. In House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs. [HB 19](#) (Oliver 83<sup>rd</sup>) sets penalties for driving while distracted by using a wireless communications device. Her [HB 21](#) prohibits cell phone use by drivers with instructional and graduated licenses. [HB 23](#) Ramsey, 72<sup>nd</sup>) is similar to the previous two bills. All are in House Motor Vehicles. [HB 163](#) (Harbin, 118<sup>th</sup>) removes the statute of limitations on prosecution of crimes against children under 16 such as rape, molestation or incest. In House Judiciary Non-Civil.

*DHR reorganization.* The 192-page legislation to reorganize functions now under the DHR umbrella is [HB 228](#) (Butler, 18<sup>th</sup>), and it is assigned to the House Appropriations Committee. Chairman Harbin (118<sup>th</sup>) has appointed a special subcommittee on DHR Governance: Channell, 116<sup>th</sup> (Chair); Houston, 170<sup>th</sup> (V. Chair); Cole, 125<sup>th</sup>; Smyre, 132<sup>nd</sup>; Coan, 101<sup>st</sup>; Scott, 153<sup>rd</sup>; Gardner, 57<sup>th</sup>; Heard, 114<sup>th</sup>; Manning, 32<sup>nd</sup>; Oliver, 83<sup>rd</sup>; and Ehrhart, 36<sup>th</sup>. HB 228 creates a new Department of Health to replace the Department of Community Health and to incorporate what is now DHR's Division of Public Health as well as many functions of the Office of Regulatory Services. A new Department of Human Services will include Aging, Developmental Disabilities, Family and Children's Services, and Child Support.

## Highlights

- The General Assembly has completed 10 days of its 40 day session.
- Budget subcommittees have begun their reviews of agency proposals and may begin holding public hearings as early as the week of February 2.

**Action needed! You can help!**

Locate your Representative and Senator: [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

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