

FAMILY & POLICY



AN ADVOCACY PROGRAM OF

FEBRUARY 6, 2009

The House and Senate agreed to extend the state legislative session to June. They plan to meet Tuesdays through Thursday until March 25th and then return for the last five days of the session on June 22nd. This will give them a very short time to adopt a budget before FY 2010 begins on July 1st. The leadership decided to extend the session so they could determine what Georgia can expect from the federal stimulus plan before deciding on appropriations.

As lawmakers ponder budget options, state revenue has dived again. Revenue collections for January were 14% lower than in January 2008, a bigger drop than many analysts had expected. This decline could provoke even deeper budget cuts. The House Appropriations Human Resources subcommittee held a lengthy public hearing in which advocates for health and social services sought to protect vital programs slated for harmful reductions. Some groups urged legislators to consider the proposed tobacco tax and other potential sources of revenue as alternatives. Without waiting for the House version of the amended 2009 budget, Senate Appropriations subcommittees presented their proposals to their Senate “green door” panel on Friday. Advocates are watching for details.

Brief Update on Legislation. [HB 20](#) (Oliver, 83rd) requiring rulemaking by DHR on public benefits (1/23 Bulletin) was recommended for passage by a House Governmental Affairs subcommittee. [SB 91](#) (Murphy, 27th) will require a \$5 surcharge for entry in an adult entertainment establishment to pay for services for sexually exploited children and youth. It is in Senate Finance. [HB 351](#) (Loudermilk, 14th) would mandate parental consent for unemancipated minors to receive contraception. It is not yet assigned to committee. ([HB 145](#) (Lindsey, 54th) would make certain changes in child support, including raising the minimum from \$75 to \$100

per month. It is In House Judiciary. Gov. Perdue’s House Floor Leader has introduced his controversial legislation to cover the \$200 M gap in Medicaid funding by charging fees of 1.6% of revenues to hospitals and care management organizations (1/16 Bulletin). [HB 307](#) (Cole, 125th) is in the House Appropriations Committee.

Public Hearing on DHR Reorganization. The House’s special subcommittee (1/30 Bulletin) is holding a public hearing on Wednesday, February 11th on [HB 228](#) (Butler, 18th), the legislation to reorganize functions now under the DHR umbrella. The hearing is from 1:00-4:00

p.m. in Room 406 LOB. Sign up in Room 245 of the Capitol. Oral testimony is limited to 5 minutes.

Threats to Medicaid and PeachCare. [SB 92](#) (Hill, 32nd) would attempt to change Georgia’s cost-effective Medicaid and PeachCare coverage into premium assistance, forcing the state to purchase “benchmark” plans for members. This would reduce the proportion of taxpayer money that is actually spent on care, decrease public accountability, and add to confusion and administrative burdens for providers. The ideas reflected in SB 92 are being promoted by Newt Gingrich’s organization. The bill is in the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee. Advocates also have learned of another measure that may be introduced in the House. Similar to a bill that died in a previous session, it apparently would cut income eligibility limits, increase premiums and impose them on children ages 2-5 for the first time, and make families pay extra for comprehensive dental care children need. Besides hurting children, for every dollar Georgia cuts in state spending for PeachCare (whether by cutting enrollment or services or by raising premiums) will cost our economy \$3.00 in federal funds. Please shore up support for PeachCare with your legislators!

Highlights

- The General Assembly has completed 15 legislative days and has set a new schedule for the rest of the session.
- President Obama signed the federal SCHIP legislation offering additional money and options for covering children under PeachCare. (1/30 Bulletin)

Action needed! You can help!

Locate your State Representative and Senator: www.votesmart.org (Check your driver’s license for 9-digit zip code)

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