

FAMILY & POLICY



AN ADVOCACY PROGRAM OF

FEBRUARY 20, 2009

State Budget in Flux. Declining revenues have led Gov. Perdue to reduce his revenue estimate for FY 2009 by another \$450 million, meaning the deficit is now \$2.65 B. He is likely to lower the FY 2010 estimate as well. He has told state agencies to cut \$130 million more for the year ending June 30th: \$1.76 M from DCH, \$97,511 from DHR, and \$98.7 M from Education. He will issue a revised budget reflecting use of some of the federal stimulus money. House Appropriations subcommittees plan to act on the 2009 budget the week of February 23rd. Advocates say some of the federal stimulus money should be used to prevent some of the cuts that are on the table. It is also unlikely that the hospital and managed care taxes the Governor had proposed in response to expected Medicaid shortfalls (1/16 Bulletin) will be enacted now that enhanced federal Medicaid funds are at hand.

Foreclosure Abatement. The author of the original omnibus bill (1/30 Bulletin) has trimmed it down and has placed the subject matter in separate bills (Hamrick, 30th). [SB 57](#) now requires that residential loans be based on a reasonable determination of whether the person can pay and that mortgage brokers act in good faith in the client's best interests. [SB 139](#) gives courts tools for dealing with foreclosure rescue scams to prevent theft of property. [SB 140](#) protects tenants who have been paying by giving them 30 days' notice of a foreclosure and allowing them to remain on the property another 60 days if they pay rent to the court. [SB 141](#) attempts to assure that foreclosed properties will be maintained to avoid deterioration of neighborhoods. It requires banks to file deeds promptly so the local government can know who is responsible for maintaining the property. It provides for fines for not filing the deed timely. Local governments can use the proceeds for code enforcement, public safety or community development. All the bills are in the Senate Banking and Financial Institutions Committee.

Health. [HB 474](#) (Gardner, 57th) would raise PeachCare income limits from 235% of the federal poverty level to 300%. It is in the House Appropriations Committee. [HB 229](#) (Coleman, 97th), the SHAPE Act, has passed out of committee and is awaiting approval by the Rules Committee for a House floor vote. It mandates fitness assessments for students in grades 1-12 and requires schools to offer physical education. [SB 165](#) (Goggans, 7th) allows the state to ask the state Department of Revenue whether a family's income exceeds the maximum limits for Medicaid or PeachCare.

The Senate Health and Human Services Committee recommends passage. The Senate Insurance & Labor Committee postponed testimony on [SB 92](#) (Hill, 32nd), the proposal to convert PeachCare and Medicaid to premium assistance. It will hear from Rhode Island's Human Services Director about that state's program on Tuesday, February 24th, 2:00 p.m., Mezzanine Room 1 in the Capitol. A number of advocacy groups plan to testify against implementing such a plan in Georgia.

Children. [HB 237](#) (Lindsey, 54th) regarding assistance payments for families adopting children with special needs (2/13 Bulletin) has passed the House and is in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. [HB 193](#) (Graves, 12th) would allow the 180 day requirement for a school year to be defined as an hourly equivalent. School districts would have the flexibility to adopt longer school days and shorter school weeks. It has been favorably reported by the House Education Committee and is in House Rules awaiting approval for floor debate. *How much does it take to raise a family where you live?* See the updated [Self-Sufficiency Standard for Georgia Families](#). It shows earnings required for supporting a family by geographic area and family configuration.

Highlights

- The General Assembly has completed 21 legislative days, slightly over half of the session.
- Gov. Perdue has lowered revenue estimates and ordered more budget cuts. The federal stimulus funds could help restore these and other cuts.

Action needed! You can help!

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

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)