

# FAMILY & POLICY



AN ADVOCACY PROGRAM OF

MARCH 27, 2009

**The Senate Appropriations Committee has waited to vote on its version of the FY 2010 budget until Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>.** This leaves only two legislative days to get a final bill agreed to by both the House and Senate. Negotiators have been working behind the scenes, so it is unclear how much time will be spent in a public conference committee or whether lawmakers may put off the last day of the session beyond Friday. The Senate may be proposing teacher furloughs and requiring workers covered by the state employee health plan to pay 30% instead of 25% of their premiums.

**A few bills affecting families passed this week and are on their way to the Governor:** HB 237 (Lindsey, 54<sup>th</sup>) on financial assistance to families adopting “hard to place” children with physical, mental or emotional disabilities; SB 69 (Unterman, 45<sup>th</sup>) defining child abuse to include sexual exploitation by any person who allows or encourages a child to engage in prostitution or any sexually explicit conduct and expanding the mandate for reporting child abuse to include any person; and HB 149 (Jones, 46<sup>th</sup>), the “Move On When Ready Act,” allowing 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to attend post-secondary colleges and schools for high school credit.

**Many significant bills are running up against the deadline.** HB 228 (Butler, 18<sup>th</sup>) reorganizing DHR is now in a conference committee. (3/20 Bulletin) HB 385 (Hill, 180<sup>th</sup>) making permanent the Commission on Family Violence was favorably reported by its committee, but was not put on the Senate calendar for a vote Monday. There is only one more day for the Rules Committee to move it to the floor. Without the bill, this key Commission will expire at the end of the year. HB 254 (Peake, 137<sup>th</sup>) making Ga. law consistent with the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 by allowing DFCS 30 days instead of 90 days to identify adult relatives of children

removed from their homes needs House approval of a Senate change. HB 123 (Ramsey, 72<sup>nd</sup>) expanding the definition of child molestation to include contact by electronic device such as cell phone or internet also passed the Senate in different form. HB 193 (Graves, 12<sup>th</sup>) requiring students to attend school for an hourly equivalent of 180 days (perhaps allowing 4-day school weeks) is on the Senate calendar for Monday, 3/30. HB 160 (Cole, 125<sup>th</sup>), the Governor’s super-speeder bill that could generate \$23 M in fines for trauma care passed the Senate, but needs House agreement to changes. SB

165 (Goggans, 7<sup>th</sup>) on verifying Medicaid and PeachCare applicants’ income through the tax system passed the House with an amendment allowing DCH latitude on whether to request that verification in every case., so it needs Senate agreement. HB 245 (Lindsey, 54<sup>th</sup>) addressing low-income child support deviations and setting a \$100/month minimum award for one child is on the Senate floor Monday. HB 581 (Coan, 101<sup>st</sup>), on the Senate floor Monday, removes obstacles to unemployment insurance (UI) for part time workers, offers UI while certain workers retrain for growing industries, and allows workers to receive temporary federally funded UI for 13 extra weeks. A substitute to HB 481 (Graves, 12<sup>th</sup>) cutting taxes by \$600 M passed the Senate; it would phase out the corporate income tax beginning in 2012 if the rainy day fund contains 5% of the prior year’s revenues and grants tax credits for job creation. Analysts say most of the jobs would be created without the tax break, so the cost per incentivized job is \$265,000. Advocates continue trying to attach to another bill language that would enable people laid off by small firms to receive 9 months of health insurance premium subsidies under the federal stimulus plan. An *Atlanta Journal & Constitution* editorial cited this as one of a few important pieces of legislation that must be passed.

## Highlights

- Only 3 legislative days remain. Sine Die is set for Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, but that could change.
- The Senate put off acting on the budget until the week of March 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Many key bills still hang in the balance.

## Action needed! You can help!

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

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