

Legislative Report #5, February 16, 2014

The House and Senate were in session Monday and Tuesday of last week. Because of the weather the General Assembly was recess the remaining days. A new adjournment resolution was passed that takes the General Assembly through the 40th day. Click [here](#) to view HR 1333.

The House and Senate will reconvene on Monday, February 17th at 10:00 am.

State Budget – The House is scheduled to vote on the FY2015 budget on Tuesday, February 17, 2014.

House Recommendations to HB 744 (FY 2015 Budget) were:

*House 15 Budget Recommendation: Added 13 awards at the \$20,000 level for a total of \$260,000 – GME (recommendation from the Primary Care Summit)

*House 15 Budget Recommendation: Provide \$300,000 the Statewide Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) for increased housing. (Recommendation from the Primary Care Summit)

*House 15 Budget Recommendation: \$463,536 (this would provide a \$333 per resident increase for 66 slots that are eligible for federal match, and \$1000 increase per resident for 1,326 slots not eligible for federal match). (Recommendation from the Primary Care Summit)

*Governor recommended 3,225,000 in new funds to support creation of new residency slots in Georgia with a goal of funding an eventual 400 new residency slots in the state. The House recommendation was for 2,225,000.

Some other Highlights of HB [744](#) include:

*\$500,000 added for Federally Qualified Health Center start-up grants for one integrated behavioral health center (Gilmer County) and one community health center (Clay County).

*\$250,000 to increase contract funds for services for medically fragile children who do not qualify for the "Katie Beckett" TEFRA/Deeming waiver.

*\$3.6 million to extend the Planning for Healthy Babies (P4HB) waiver, including prenatal care for Medicaid eligible members at risk of delivering low birth weight babies.

[Amended FY 2014 Budget Tracking Document](#)

[FY 2015 State Budget Tracking Document](#)

Don't forget about Rural Health Day at the Capitol March 5th! – [SR 846](#), which is sponsored by State Senator Tim Golden (R-Valdosta), and [HR 1245](#), which is sponsored by state representative Debbie Buckner (D-Junction City), recognize March 5th as Rural Health Day at the State Capitol. These

resolutions applaud the Georgia Rural Health Association, which is a nonprofit advocate for rural healthcare consumers and dedicated healthcare professionals who serve rural Georgia.

Thank you Senator Golden and Representative Buckner for sponsoring these resolutions! Please join us March 5th at the State Capitol for what is going to be a great day!

Community Based Faculty Tax Credit - [HB 922](#) was introduced in the Georgia House of Representatives this week by State Representative Ben Harbin (R-Augusta). The legislation creates a tax credit for community based faculty and is a recommendation from the 2013 Primary Care Summit. Additionally, it is a legislative priority of GRHA.

The legislation is supposed to be heard Monday in the House Ways and Means Income Tax Subcommittee.

Bills to Watch

[HB 363](#) – provides for Licensure of Lactation Consultants – In House Health and Human Services Committee

[HB 404](#) - provides that freestanding pediatric emergency facilities are exempt from certificate of need requirements – In the House Health and Human Services Committee

[HB 707](#) - relating to general provisions regarding health, to the state or any political subdivision, from engaging in an activity that aids in the enforcement of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010; to endow the Attorney General with authority to bring suit to enjoin violations of such prohibition and issue advisory rulings – House Judiciary Committee

[HB 839](#) - would revise provisions relating to hospital authority board members to require increased oversight and control by the Local County or municipality governing body – In House Health and Human Services Committee

[HB 853](#) - would allow an exemption from Certificate of Need for private mental health facilities – In House Health and Human Services Committee

[HB 885](#) - allow the medicinal use of marijuana extracts for patients who suffer from seizures - In House Health and Human Services Committee

[HB 969](#) - provides a new exemption from state sales and use tax only for a limited period of time regarding the sale or use of tangible personal property to certain nonprofit health centers and certain nonprofit volunteer health clinics – In the House Ways and Means Committee

[HB 990](#) – Requires legislative approval to expand Medicaid in Georgia – In the House Hopper

[SB 298](#) – would require a submission of a doctor's prescription with an application for a special parking decal for persons with disabilities in lieu of an affidavit when a notary public is not available – In the the Senate Public Safety Committee

[SB 291](#) - would move the Division of Aging Services out of the Department of Human Services and create a separate agency – In the House Human Resources Committee

[SB 292](#) - would launch a registry of Georgians with Alzheimer’s disease and related disorders, tracking their prevalence in the state – In House Human Resources Committee

[SB 273](#) - would require the Department of Public Health to establish a committee to review maternal deaths and to report on their causes – In the House Health and Human Services Committee

[SB 308](#) - provides for the authorization of appropriations for the purposes of obtaining federal financial participation for medical assistance payments to providers of Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act – In the Senate Appropriations Committee

[SB 338](#) - provide that stabilization centers in rural counties are exempt from certificate of need requirements; to provide for licensure by the Department of Community Health of stabilization centers – In the House Health and Human Services Committee

Articles of Interest

Another rural hospital closing

By Andy Miller

February 13, 2014

Lower Oconee Community Hospital in southeast Georgia has closed due to financial problems, becoming the state’s fourth rural hospital to do so in the past two years.

The 25-bed “critical access” hospital in Glenwood, in Wheeler County, is looking to restructure, its CEO said in a statement.

Some of the hospital’s 100 employees have been laid off, CEO Karen O’Neal said, as reported by WMAZ. “This restructuring is being done to provide sustainable medical services in the Glenwood area.”

She told the television station Wednesday that the hospital’s owners are contemplating “some kind of urgent care center.”

The closing of Lower Oconee reflects the financial struggles facing rural hospitals across Georgia.

[Read more](#)