

Legislative Report #6, February 23, 2014

The House and Senate were in session Monday, February 17th – Friday, February 21st of last week.

An adjournment resolution takes the General Assembly through the 40th day. Click [here](#) to view HR 1333.

The House and Senate will reconvene on Monday, February 24th at 10:00 am for day 27 of the 40 day session.

State Budget – On Monday, February 17, 2014 the House voted to adopt [HB 744](#) by a vote 169-4. This is the \$20.8 billion state budget for fiscal year 2015 which begins July 1st of this year.

The following increases were added to the Georgia Board for Physician Workforce budget for medical education:

- An increase of \$1.8 million to the Mercer School of Medicine Operating Grant Budget
- An increase of \$5 million to the Morehouse School of Medicine Operating Grant Budget
- An increase in funding of \$333 per resident for all capitated residency slots (\$463,536)
- Funding for 13 additional physician loan repayment awards for physicians practicing in rural areas (\$260,000)
- Funding for 6 family medicine slots at Houston Healthcare (\$123,924)

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

*\$1 million to enhance trauma care services statewide

*\$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](#) sponsored 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 was heard in the House Ways and Means Income Tax Sub-Committee this week but was not voted on because the fiscal note is not yet completed.

Medical Student Scholarships - [HB 998](#), sponsored by Representative Matt Hatchett (R-Dublin), unanimously passed out of House Health and Human Services Committee, by substitute, on Thursday afternoon. This bill revises the powers of the Georgia Board for Physician Workforce as it relates to medical student scholarships. It allows students who are accepted into an accredited medical school to repay the scholarships awarded by the GBPW by working in rural and underserved communities, as determined by the Board, which lack primary care and other critical need specialty physicians.

Georgia Rural Medical Care Joint Study Committee – [HR 1528](#) sponsored by State Representative Rusty Kidd (I-Milledgeville) creates the Georgia Rural Medical Care Joint Study Committee.

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 Judiciary Committee

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

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

[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 Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Articles of Interest

Lucas rural ER bill hits speed bump

By Maggie Lee

February 19, 2014

ATLANTA -- Opening tiny emergency rooms in underserved rural communities might be a good idea, and a key Senate committee is pondering a study committee on the question.

But state Sen. David Lucas wants quicker movement on a legal change.

"We are not a Third World country," said Lucas, but "somehow we've done everything in this state for economic development, airline tax breaks, folks who make planes get tax breaks, but we're talking about the average Georgia citizen."

That is, rural residents who live dozens of miles and more from an emergency room, possibly hours from stabilization if someone in their family has a heart attack, stroke or accident.

[Read more](#)

Rural Health Care Issue Much Deeper Than Medicaid Expansion

By Charlie Harper

February 17, 2014

On Thursday of last week, the "news" was focused on melting snow in Georgia and the lingering problems of power outages from south metro Atlanta to Augusta. During a briefing on the matter from Governor Nathan Deal, the AJC's Jim Galloway managed to slip in a question about a problem that will linger long after the lights were turned back on.

The Governor was asked about a move within the legislature to require their authorization before committing the state to Medicaid expansion (and the long term funding commitment that comes with it). The Governor replied "I'm fine with that".

Instantly, the answer was crystalized as a campaign issue. Democratic presumptive nominee Jason Carter charged the Governor with passing the buck. Governor Deal's campaign responded with a suggestion that Carter would prefer a backroom Deal with President Obama rather than to give the representatives of the people a say in how their tax dollars are spent.

[Read more](#)

Republicans debate minibailouts for hospitals

By Ray Henry and Christina A. Cassidy

Associated Press

February 9, 2014

ATLANTA - Republican governors scored easy political points by rejecting President Barack Obama's plan to enroll more poor people in government health insurance.

Now Republican leaders in Georgia and Mississippi may be bailing out hospitals that will lose funding they would have gotten from Obama's health care law. South Carolina's leaders increased payments to some hospitals in a push to improve rural health, though the extra money likely placated hospital officials who might otherwise have pressured Republicans to adopt the Democratic plan.

[Read more](#)