

Georgia Rural Health Association

Legislative Report #7, March 2, 2014

The General Assembly was in session Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of last week for the 27th, 28th and 29th day of the legislative session.

The House and Senate will reconvene at 10:00 am, Monday, March 3rd for "Crossover Day". Legislation must have passed at least one chamber or it is effectively dead for the session.

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

State Budget –The House and Senate have agreed upon the Amended 2014 Budget (\$20.2 billion) which ends June 30th of this year. The bill is on the way to the Governor for his signature. Some of the changes to [HB 743](#) include:

*\$5.5 million addition to the governor's emergency fund to help cover the state's costs in response to the two winter storms that hit Georgia in recent weeks.

*After the House put \$30,000 into the Department of Human Services (DHS) budget for fetal alcohol screening and treatment, the Senate did not agree.

The Senate is currently working on, [HB 744](#), the state's \$20.8 billion budget for FY 2015 which begins July 1st of this year. The projected schedule is for HB 744 to be heard in the full appropriations committee on Tuesday, March 4th with Senate floor taking action Thursday, March 6th.

[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), 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 on the Rules Consideration Calendar for the 30th legislative day. It is under Structured Rule (cannot be amended) section.

Medical Student Scholarships - [HB 998](#), sponsored by Representative Matt Hatchett (R-Dublin), revises the powers of the Georgia Board for Physician Workforce (GBPW) 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. This legislation passed out of the House 159-2 and is now in the Senate.

Bills to Watch

[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 – Passed out of House Judiciary Committee and expected to be voted on by the House on Monday

[HB 885](#) - would permit medical marijuana to be grown and used in Georgia for treatment of patients with cancer, glaucoma and seizure disorders under tight control - Passed out of the House Health and Human Services Committee and can be considered for Monday's House Calendar

[HB 913](#) would prohibit Department of Community Health Board membership for anyone having an "ownership interest in an entity or program" licensed or regulated by DCH. The legislation, however, exempts medical professionals such as physicians and dentists – Passed out of the Governmental Affairs 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 – House Ways and Committee Favorably Reported

[HB 990](#) – Requires legislative approval to expand Medicaid in Georgia –Passed out of the House Judiciary Committee and is expected to be voted on by the House Monday

[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 –House Health and Human Services Committee favorably reported

[SB 397](#) - would provide insurance coverage for young autism patients in Georgia. The requirements under SB 397 are limited to covering children ages 6 years and younger, capping annual insurance

benefits at \$35,000 and exempting businesses with 10 or fewer employees – passed the Senate 51-0 and is now in the House

Articles of Interest

Panel Oks medical marijuana

By: Charles Craig

Published: Feb 26, 2014

A state House panel Wednesday unanimously approved a bill that would permit medical marijuana to be grown and used in Georgia for treatment of patients with cancer, glaucoma and seizure disorders under tightly controlled restrictions.

The Health and Human Services Committee's passage of the high-profile legislation paves the way for the full House to vote on the bill and, if approved, send it to the Senate for consideration.

HB 885, sponsored by Rep. Allen Peake (R-Macon), underwent significant revisions to address concerns that the original bill would have unintentionally run afoul of federal law.

[Read more](#)

Carter: Reduce the size of our uninsured population

By: Andy Miller and Charles Craig

Published: Feb 20, 2014

State Sen. Jason Carter (D-Decatur) recently announced that he is running to become governor of Georgia, attempting to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather Jimmy Carter, who was governor of the state from 1971 to 1975.

Carter sat down this week with Georgia Health News to discuss a range of health care issues, including the Affordable Care Act, the criticism of the State Health Benefit Plan, and the financial struggles of rural hospitals.

(GHN is also reaching out to Gov. Nathan Deal for a similar interview on health care topics.)

[Read more](#)