

29 March 2016

LWVAF, Report from the Capitol, Week 11

The General Assembly has adjourned sine die, without day. The legislators have returned home to the normalcy of their lives and, for most, to run for reelection. Reporters, however, spent Easter weekend chasing bills, amendments, substitutes, agrees, disagrees, insists, and recedes. This report is what is now known, without much help from the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate, as their final word has yet to be posted.

On April 23, the LWV Atlanta Fulton will hold its legislative reception at which a panel will report on what is in those bills. An update of this report will be available then. The final report will be delivered after May 3, the last day the governor has to sign or veto bills.

He has already started on this task by announcing that he will veto the 'religious liberty' bill. His early declaration of his intentions hopefully will stop the concerns expressed by many in the entertainment, travel, and other industries that the environment created, should the law go into effect, would make the state an far more undesirable place to do business. It is entirely possible that he could not veto it on the day of his announcement. It takes a few business days for the Clerk and Secretary to get all the latest versions of bills delivered to him.

The budget was passed on Day 39, the only task the legislature is constitutionally required to do. The rest of the week was left free to consider all other issues on the table. When the dust settled, some issues were still there -- medical marijuana, pari-mutuel betting, casino gambling, an expansion of Medicaid insurance, any number of tax changes, and over 70 proposed constitutional amendments.

Much of what passed is included in this report including two constitutional amendments, bringing to four that will be on the November ballot.

CA = constitutional amendment. Requires a 2/3s vote in each chamber and a majority vote in the next general election in November 2016.

CCR = Conference Committee Report

NNS = Needs No Signature

TGFS = To Governor for Signature

In CHAMBERS

BUDGET

HB 751 Ralston – 7 **TGFS** Budget for FY17. Is the largest in state history, at \$23.6 billion. Contains a 3% raise for all state employees, and \$300,000 to reduce the K-12 school austerity cut but for which the governor suggests should include local teacher raises. There still will exist \$167,000 in austerity cuts. Bonds for capital projects for all levels of education and includes \$14.2 million for 129 school buses. There is \$812.2 million in funding for roads and bridges from the new revenue sources into the Motor Fuel account.

CHILDREN

SB 64 Hufstetler – 52 **TGFS** Repeals voluntary acknowledgment of legitimation which is an administrative process and makes it a judicial one in juvenile court which can order DNA testing and other evidence.

HB 229 Strickland – 111 **TGFS** Grandparents visitation rights will be extended to great-grandparents, siblings, and aunts and uncles when parents are no longer living together if a court agrees with such a petition. Each must have a relationship with the child and the health and welfare of the child would not be harmed without visitation and the visitation is in the best interests of the child.

HB 887 Efrstration – 104 **TGFS** Prioritizes the placement of a child by DFCS with an adult relative or fictive kin who can care for the child, and if it is in the best interest of the child. Placement with a relative or fictive kin shall be by power of attorney for one year unless parent going on active military duty, then for the length of the duty plus 30 days. Parent doesn't give up parental rights and may revoke the power of attorney at any time. *A fictive kin is not a blood relative. May be a family friend or former step parent as long as the court approves.*

HB 905 Ballinger - 23 **TGFS** Adds 'child endangerment' to mandated child abuse reporting. The Child Abuse Registry reporting from district attorneys is eliminated -- the Georgia Crime Information Center will provide this data. Clarifies that a consensual relationship between an adult and a minor does not constitute child abuse if the age difference is four years or less. County child abuse protocol committees are more precisely defined. Provides immunity from criminal liability for a person acting in good faith who is in possession of materials and images to assist law enforcement or DFCS when the health and safety of a child are being adversely affected and threatened by the conduct of another. Establishes a public scorecard for child welfare agencies under DHS and consolidates inspections for child welfare agencies. Requires protocols for dispute resolutions concerning evaluations.

HB 962 Abrams – 89 **TGFS** Creates a kinship care enforcement administrator in the Department of Human Services to ensure compliance with any program, subsidy, or benefit available to kinship caregivers or the children in their care.

HB 1070 Dempsey – 13 **TGFS** Information in a Department of Human Services file about an adopted child or its biological parents may be used by other agencies in connection with placement of another child in the adoptee home or in connection with an investigation of abuse or neglect by the biological parents.

DRIVERS LAWS, TRANSPORTATION

HB 166 Yates - 73 **TGFS** Motorcycle Mobility Act. Handlebars on motorcycles shall be no more than 25" high, currently 15".

HB 172 Lumsden – 12 **TGFS** Homemade or inflatable rafts, including inner tubes, may operate no more than 100 feet from shore of a lake, pond, or other non flowing body of water. Occupants are not required to have a personal flotation device on board or worn.

HB 205 Rice – 95 **TGFS CCR** Convicted DUI offenders with blood alcohol levels of .15 grams or higher are required to install and maintain an ignition interlock device on his/her vehicle. Ignition interlock devices can be made a condition of parole for DUI.

SB 307 Beach-21 **TGFS** Defines 'multiple media display' as a device by which the message, image, or text is capable of electronic alteration by movement or rotation of panels or slats. Authorizes such devices to be in the public right of way along with bus shelters.

SB 320 Watson – 1 **TGFS** A foreign drivers license can be used to drive in GA if the person is a visitor (nonresident). Having the passport and a document evidencing recent lawful entry into the U.S. in the car can be most helpful. **House:** Tow truck bill.

HB 579 McCall – 33 **TGFS** Farmers, at least age 16, may drive farm equipment on the highways when it is being used for agriculture purposes between the farmer's residence and the property being worked or between properties. Cities may prohibit such traffic if it endangers the public.

HB 806 Tanner – 9 **TGFS** Drivers licenses, commercial drivers licenses, and identification cards for U.S. citizens shall expire in 8 years, currently 5. Infractions not reported to the DDS for two years will not result in suspension of license. ***Infractions are to be reported within 10 days. Many jurisdictions are extremely lax.*** Driver's Education Commission transferred to the Governor's Office of Highway Safety from Department of Drivers Services.

SR 1038 Mullis – 53 **TGFS** Creates the 10 member Joint Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Vehicle Study Committee to study marketing incentives for installation of refueling infrastructure and to look at whether market incentives to purchase or lease alternative fuel vehicles may drive infrastructure development.

EDUCATION

HB 65 Caldwell – 20 **TGFS** Local boards of education and some charter schools, other than conversion charters or career academies, shall hold at least two public hearings on the proposed budget before adoption. Charter schools with a state-wide attendance zone will have one meeting in the county where its primary business office is located and the other in the Metro Atlanta area. Budgets shall be posted on the website of the school or system.

HB 100 Dickson – 6 **TGFS** QBE funds earned from students enrolled in virtual instruction full time in one school district but living in another district are to be spent 90% on direct virtual instructional costs. This cannot be waived, and does not apply to state public providers of virtual instruction. Money earned but not spent on such instruction is to be returned to the treasury. If the CCRPI, College and Career Ready Performance Index, for the local school district is below the state average, the school system shall not provide virtual instruction to out-of-district students.

SB 275 Williams – 27 **TGFS** Local boards of education shall not adopt any code of ethics preventing members of the school board from discussing freely the board's policies and actions outside of a board meeting, excluding executive session items. *The Ethics Code requires that when a board has voted on an issue, all members of the board shall stand behind that vote. This prevents those opposing the issue from undermining what the majority has agreed to do.*

SB 329 Tippins – 37 **TGFS** Classes taken through Move On When Ready to satisfy high school graduation requirements and HOPE scholarship eligibility will receive credit if they relate to high demand technical and job skills as determined by the Technical College System of GA.

SB 348 Tippins – 37 **TGFS** College and career academies can be established in school districts which are chartered or strategic waiver. Requires a school governing board. *Currently, only two school districts are neither chartered nor strategic waiver, Webster County and Buford City, and school districts cannot sponsor a college and career academy – a nonprofit organization must be the sponsor. The grant for these academies can only go to charter systems or charter schools, now.*

SB 364 Tippins - 37 **TGFS** Reduces the number of state mandated tests from 32 to 24 by eliminating science and social tests for grades 3 and 4, 6 and 7, teacher observations for evaluation are reduced to two for high performing teachers, adds G.1 & 2 to testing for math and language arts, requires DOE to develop an assessment for grade 1 readiness, student tests scores shall be 30% of a teacher evaluation, not 50%, 40% for administrator evaluations, currently 70%, students must be in the class for 90% (162 days) of the school year, up from 65%, for scores to count in evaluations. Encourages pushing the testing window closer to the end of the school year. SBOE and DOE are to report to legislature why the testing window cannot be moved closer to end of school year. Appeals available on the evaluation process, not evaluation score. Applies to all public school systems. *This contains much of what educators have been asking for.*

HB 402 Lumsden – 12 **TGFS** Encourages employers to provide work-based learning opportunities to those age 16 + by reducing workman's comp premiums up to 5%. Both paid and unpaid students will be covered by workman's compensation.

HB 614 Stovall – 74 **TGFS** DOE may authorize video cameras be placed in self-contained classrooms providing special education services at local school district option. Parents to receive prior notice. Recorded video to be retained for at least three months. Cameras are to record as many areas of the classroom as possible. Local board of education may accept gifts to facilitate camera procurement and placement. DOE shall develop guidelines and criteria for camera use in classrooms.

HB 659 Belton - 112 **TGFS** Local school systems and schools shall publish financial data of all kinds that are not required to be confidential on their web sites or with links thereto. SBOE is to establish a template for school systems. The annual audit is to be made available. Includes general operating budget, any SPLOST funds, federal funds, and privately received funds. *Most schools get federal funds for special education students, English language learners, and school meals. There are no sanctions for not providing the financial data.* Any Pre K – 12 grant of \$20 million or more applied for by DOE must be justified in writing to the members of the Senate and House Education committees at least one month prior to application. Points to be covered in the notification include laws that have to be changed, costs to the

state, and change of governing control. ***Race To The Top type grants. Interestingly, the impact on students is not required in the justification.*** To provide for 2016-17 only an exemption from certain financial reporting requirements for local school systems participating in a federally authorized pilot program which allows the school system to combine federal, state, and local funds. No training and experience or health insurance will be paid by the state for teachers who would have been paid with federal funds. ***Five districts have a federal waiver to combine funds. This gives them a state waiver in reporting these combined funds. This bill is a great example of legislative sausage – three bills in one.***

HB 879 Taylor – 79 **TGFG** A Seal of Literacy is to be awarded to high school graduates who attain a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in a language other than English, as measured by an advanced placement grade of 4+ or an International Baccalaureate grade of 5+. Program is voluntary of local boards of education. ***Recognitions of this nature generally done by DOE or local boards of education.***

HB 895 Mayo – 84 **TGFS** Financial directors of charter schools, career academies, and state charter schools must have 2-3 hours training each year as approved by DOE. SBOE is to establish a charter school financial management certification program. The school principal, or similar title, cannot also be the chief financial officer.

HB 959 Beskin – 54 **TGFS** Students who take postsecondary courses to meet high school graduation requirements and get an A, B, or C are excused from taking any high school end of course assessment and will not have the assessment score included in their final high school grade. Also, those getting a 4+ in an advanced placement test or an 5+ in an International Baccalaureate test. Requires an annual review of the costs of a GA Virtual School course, currently \$250, to see if costs can be reduced. Allows a ***nonprofit*** organized by the Office of Student Achievement to own property. Clarifies what local board members can do regarding communications with their constituents without violating their Code of Ethics. Students of active military personnel or reserves shall have a unique identifier so the data for these students can be disaggregated by DOE. ***The ban on OSA owning property has to date prevented it from accepting a donation of property so it can be sold and the proceeds benefit the Governor’s Honors Program. Bill is called Title 20 clean up, but very little applies to removing unused sections of Title 20.***

HR 1564 Clark – 98 **NNS** Encourages each local board of education, governing body of a nonpublic school or charter school to adopt an implement a sudden cardiac arrest prevention and return to play policy. Encourages Department of Public Health to endorse one or more sudden cardiac arrest prevention educational courses. ***Resolution targets young athletes who have had cardiac failure.***

ELECTIONS/ETHICS

SB 199 Jeffares – 17 **TGFS CCR** Distribution of any campaign material within 150’ of the outer walls of a precinct and 25’ of a voter in line is prohibited. Municipal qualification moved to the third Monday in August from last Monday in August. If no one qualifies for a municipal office, the governing authority may reopen qualifications on the next Monday for two days. This avoids having to hold a special election. ***Currently, the prohibitions on campaign materials are limited to specific items, like flyers or bumper stickers. ‘Material’ is expanded to include candidate, referenda, and political party materials. Not included are items from groups that are politically active, unless the message focuses on specific candidates, political parties or referenda. Example: An NRA hat.***

HB 370 Fleming – 121 **TGFS** Eligibility to file for a party nomination shall be prohibited if there are any outstanding fines owed to the state ethics commission unless an appeal has been filed. Local candidates who received notice from the GA Government Transparency & Campaign Finance Commission, previously State Ethics Commission, required between 1-1-10 and 1-10-14 who had in fact filed on time, the commission is authorized to waive late fees, fines, and civil penalties for such late, incomplete or non-filing of campaign disclosure reports and personal finance disclosure reports. Such fines will be refunded if application is made by the candidates. ***Department of Audits and Accounts found software problems caused the incorrect fines to be assessed. This may be a blank check for fine forgiveness.***

GOVERNMENT - GENERAL

SB 168 Jones – 25 **TGFS** The ‘adoptable dog’ shall be the state official dog. ***GA takes in 500,000 strays per year. This might give some of them a second chance.***

SB 184 Black – 8 **TGFS** Bans local ordinances that require hunting dogs or show dogs to be spayed or neutered or from charging a fee not to spay or neuter.

HB 219 Jones – 167 **TGFS** Private swimming pools owned by condominium associations with a capacity of 75 persons or less may be state inspected by request, but require annual inspections by the county board of health. The county may charge a fee.

SB 316 Gooch – 51 **TGFS** Bingo games will no longer have a \$1500/day limit on prizes awarded. The \$3000 weekly limit remains. The numbers must be chosen by a natural person on the premises.

SB 323 Dugan – 30 **TGFS** Public disclosure is not required by any agency for any document regarding an economic development project defined as a \$25 million investment by a business creating 50 or more jobs. *Currently, this applies only to the Department of Economic Development.*

HB 676 Brockway – 102 **TGFS** All state agencies, boards, authorities, and commissions must provide written justification to GA Technology Authority for any technology project of \$1 million or more. Information to be included is itemized in the bill. Also, a change of management plan is required for projects that directly involve two or more agencies or for service delivery changes in current programs which impact more than 10,000 GA citizens.

HB 697 Kirby – 114 **TGFS** Merchandise received unsolicited, initially and subsequently, may be kept without payment unless delivered to the recipient as a result of a bona fide error.

HB 757 Tanner – 9 **TO BE VETOED** Religious officials when acting in their religious capacities are not required to perform marriage ceremonies or any other rite or administer sacraments if they violate the official's religious principles. Refusal to do so shall not give rise to a civil claim or cause of action. No business shall be required by ordinance or regulation to operate on either of the two rest days (Saturday or Sunday). No religious organization, which includes a church, religious school, auxiliary, is required to grant permission for their property to be used for a purpose which is objectionable to them. **Senate added:** Individuals and other entities which sincerely believe that marriage is between a man and a woman, and that sexual relations should be within such a marriage, cannot be discriminated against by any government action. This does not protect those who refuse to perform their defined duties in their jobs.

HB 779 Tanner – 9 **TGFS** Images captured by an unmanned drone are subject to privacy restrictions. Lawful photos may be taken with permission of the property owner and for use by military, utility company, law enforcement, or lawful governmental use, fire suppression, hazard materials spills, or rescuing a person. It is unlawful to sell, manufacture, possess, or operate a drone equipped with a weapon and can result in imprisonment for 1-3 years and/or a \$100,000 fine. Creates the 20 member GA Unmanned Vehicle Systems Commission with 3 senators, 3 representative 5 by virtue of office, and 9 appointed by the governor from specified industries or public office. Shall identify and quantify the needs and benefits of unmanned vehicles and industries that can use them. Is to look at privacy rights, property rights, commercial interests and public safety issues. Commission abolished 12-31-2021.

HB 821 Williams – 168 **TGFS** Licensing boards shall implement policies by which spouses of military personnel may be licensed in GA if the spouse is licensed in another state with similar criteria or has received a specialty, certification, or training or experience in the military while a service member.

HB 1085 Dempsey – 13 **TGFS** Transfer oversight for aging to the Department of Community Health from Department of Human Services.

GOVERNMENT – COURTS AND CRIMES

HB 59 Willard – 51 **TGFS** Persons aggrieved cannot get governments to pay for damages caused by their employees, equipment, buildings, and other assets due to the defense of sovereign immunity, which dates back to early English Law which ruled that the 'king cannot be sued'. *The Supreme Court has said that it can be waived if the legislature is willing to enact law to allow that. This bill provides for such a waiver.*

SB 193 Bethel – 54 **TGFS** Battery between household members is a misdemeanor on the first offense and a felony on the second or subsequent offenses. Does not apply to reasonable corporal punishment of a child by a parent.

SB 243 Hill – 4 **TGFS** Persons holding positions requiring membership in the GA Bar who were enrolled in a state pension system other than the GA Judicial Retirement System may switch to the GA Judicial Retirement System by 12-31-16. Those employed after the effective date of this bill will have 90 days to elect to join. Those transferring will retain their number of years and any vesting in the current retirement system. All money paid into the current retirement system for the transferring person will be transferred to the GA Judicial Retirement System.

SB 255 Stone – 23 **TGFS** An extensive revision of the garnishment laws, making them uniform.

SB 262 Stone – 23 **TGFS** A judge, judicial officer, grand juror or trial juror may be disqualified if related to a party within the third degree, currently 6th degree. Superior Courts are authorized to receive documents and payments electronically.

SB 304 Parent – 42 **TGFS** Requires evidence collected from rape victims to be turned over to law enforcement within 96 hours which must submit it for testing within 30 days. Law enforcement agencies shall keep records of all evidence per individual obtained from a forensic medical exam. Provisions are outlined for evidence taken before 7-1-16 but not yet submitted to GBI for testing.

SB 367 Kennedy – 18 **TGFS** GA Council of Judicial Reform recommendations. Extensive bill.

HB 555 Chandler – 105 **TGFS** Clerks of the Juvenile Courts to report to the Administrative Office annually various statistics regarding number of court appointed guardians ad litem, counsel, etc., including the number of juvenile abortions authorized or denied, and appealed. Records are exempt from Open Records requirements. Individual records at each court are to be destroyed 6 months after reporting.

HB 759 Williard – 51 **TGFS** Providing advice to FDIC insured financial institution customers regarding financial services shall not be considered the practice of law. ***Currently, banks have such protections but other financial institutions do not.***

HB 808 Willard – 51 **TGFS** Creates a new Judicial Qualifications Commission of seven members – 2 judges from any court selected by the Supreme Court, 3 members of the state bar active for 10 years, one to be selected by the governor, and one each by the Speaker and Lt. Governor and one member each not a member of the bar appointed by the Speaker and the Lt. Governor. The commission is not subject to open meetings. Enabling legislation for HR 1113. ***The current commission has no appointed members by the Speaker or Lt. Governor.***

HB 927 Coomer - 14 **TGFS** Appellate Jurisdiction Reform Act of 2016. The Supreme Court is allowed nine justices, currently seven. Each of the three terms per year start earlier by two or four weeks. Supreme Court transfers to the Court of Appeals several types of cases as the final appellant court – title to land, wills, divorce and alimony, equity cases and extraordinary remedies except those involving death sentences, and all other cases not reserved to the Supreme Court. Law assistants for the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals shall be members of the bar within one year of appointment.

HB 941 Golick – 40 **TGFS** If the grand jury conducts a review of any incident involving a peace officer's use of deadly force that results in death or serious bodily injury, the officer is to receive prior notice of such review. If the officer testifies, s/he may be cross examined and have counsel present. The officer may be in the grand jury room only when testifying.

HB 976 Hitchens – 161 **TGFS** Retention of video recordings shall be on the following schedule:

- Surveillance recordings to be held for 30 days
- Body-worn or devices on or inside law enforcement vehicles recordings to be held 180 days
- If recording has content anticipated for use as evidence, it is to be held 30 months.

Recordings not required to be destroyed after the retention period. A 6 member State Records Committee shall review, approve, disapprove, amend, or modify retention schedules submitted by agency heads, school boards, county and city

governments. Members are: governor, Secretary of State, Chancellor who serves as chair, a governor's appointee, state auditor, and an officer of a governing body appointed by the Chancellor.

HR 1113 Willard – 51 **TO BALLOT** CA to create a new Judicial Qualifications Commission with the power to discipline, remove, cause involuntary retirement of judges. The current Judicial Qualifications Commission is abolished on 12-31-16. The Supreme Court may review the procedures of the commission. Enabling legislation is HB 808.

GOVERNMENT – COUNTIES AND CITIES

SB 420 Tippins – 37 **TGFS** Requires a local referendum approval in any county for expenditure of public funds for the establishment of a fixed guideway transit. *Sponsored shared that this meant a transit system on a dedicated right of way. MARTA has already had a local referendum so it is not included here.*

HB 691 Tanner - 9 **TGFS** Municipal court judges may be removed from office for unethical conduct by a 2/3s vote of the entire governing authority at a public meeting. Charges are willful misconduct in office, willful and persistent failure to perform duties, habitual intemperance, conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, and disability seriously interfering with performance of duties. City charters may include additional causes for removal. The governing body may appoint a judge to fill the vacancy.

HB 727 Battles – 15 **TGFS** Fireworks are not allowed within 15 feet of a vertical or overhead obstruction or across, into, or within the right of way of a public road, street, highway or railroad. Hours of use are 10 a.m. until 9 p.m., currently midnight, with exceptions to midnight or 1 a.m. on Dec. 31-Jan. 1 and July 3-4. Cannot ignite near an electric plant or substation, water or wastewater treatment plant, a gas station (where flammable liquids or gases over 500 gallons are stored), a jail or prison, or, unless permission is granted, within 100 yards of a health care facility, local governmental property, a public gathering, a public use air facility or helipad. Using under the influence of drugs or alcohol is banned. Cannot use for harassment, intimidation, or cause harm to others. If drought is declared, local governments may restrict use even further. It is unlawful to sell fireworks from a motor vehicle, a towed trailer, a tent, or a canopied or membrane structure. Counties or cities may further regulate until 1-31-18.

HB 949 Powell – 32 **TGFS** Adds clerks of the Superior Court, Probate Court judges, sheriffs, tax receivers, tax collectors, or tax commissioners to those who may use purchase cards or credit cards issued by the local government. There must be specific policies for use of such cards, and those getting the cards must affirm that they are aware of such policies.

GOVERNMENT – CAPITOL AND GROUNDS

SR 177 James – 35 **NNS** Capitol Arts Standards Commission is encouraged to authorize a placement of a portrait of Coretta Scott King next to that of her husband in the Capitol. *Nearly all persons memorialized inside the Capitol have been elected officials.*

GOVERNMENT – ENVIRONMENT

SB 346 Beach - 21 **TGFS** Construction of public roads when under \$100 million and which has no federal funding are not required to file formal reports with the Environmental Protection Division if an environmental evaluation shows that there would be no significant adverse impact on historical sites or buildings and cultural resources.

HB 1028 Werkheiser – 157 **TGFS** Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division requires an owner/operator of a solid waste landfill to notify local governments within 14 days of any contaminant which poses a threat to human health.

GUNS

SB 270 Martin – 9 **TGFS** Retired POST certified law enforcement officers may carry a handgun anywhere within the state allowed for active law enforcement officers. *Includes retirees from other states.* Fraudulent representation of

military service is a misdemeanor. If receipt of medals is involved, it is a misdemeanor of a high and aggregated nature. False alarms to evacuate a building are a misdemeanor unless the alarm threatens death, when it becomes a felony.

SB 332 Kennedy – 18 **TGFS** Judges and former judges who are exempt from gun carry license laws may be issued a personal ID card by a probate court judge. The ID may have a fee.

HB 1060 Jasperse – 11 **TGFS** Persons or trade associations engaged in the lawful commerce of firearms or ammunition products cannot be denied credit based solely on the services and products sold. If such discrimination is determined, a civil suit can be brought and attorney fees can be recouped. Enforcement is in the AG's office.

HEALTH

HB 212 Weldon – 3 **TGFS** No controlled substance may be prescribed or dispensed in a pain management clinic unless a doctor, physician assistance, or advanced practice registered nurse is on-site. Administration of anesthesia under doctor's orders shall not be 'dispensing'.

HB 216 Gravely – 67 **TGFS** Firefighter occupational diseases include cancer if the duties involve suppressing fires.

SB 230 Hufstetler - 52 **TGFS** Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act. Provides for a certification process for volunteer practitioners so that those licensed in other states may be deployed to GA in an emergency.

HIGHER EDUCATION

SB 18 Harbison – 15 **TGFS** Technical College System of GA shall maintain a policy by which students may earn academic credit for college level learning acquired prior to enrollment, such as in the military, work experience, service in the community, or independent study. Such training and experience shall be substantially related to course work for which the credit is given. *Currently, TCSG is providing such academic credit, but has no policy.*

HB 54 Waites – 60 **TGFS** Children of law enforcement officers, firefighters, prison guards, and HERO personnel killed in the line of duty may be eligible for a scholarship provided by the GA Student Finance Authority to be funded by donations through the income tax return check off or when renewing one's driver's licenses effective 1-1-17.

HB 745 Ehrhart – 36 **TGFS** The authority for various state agencies to write off low amounts of money due, particularly higher education tuition, fees, and loans, sunsets June 30, 2021, currently 2016.

HB 792 Brockway – 102 **TGFS** Allows postsecondary employees or students age 18 and over to carry tasers or stun guns and use them in defense of self or others while in a building or on real property owned or leased by a public post secondary institution.

HB 798 Chandler – 105 **TGFS** Home schooled students and those graduating from non eligible high schools may earn the Zell Miller HOPE scholarship, which pays 100% of tuition costs, if they score in the 93th percentile of SAT/ACT. They may earn the regular HOPE scholarship if they score in the 75th percentile of the SAT/ACT, currently 80th percentile. *Home schools are unaccredited, so a student achievement rating is measured with the ACT/SAT scores. Home schooled students pay up front for their first year of college and are repaid by HOPE if their college GPA is sufficient. Under this proposal they get HOPE going into their freshman year.*

HB 801 Jones – 47 **TGFS** The science requirement for high school graduation can be partially satisfied with computer science courses. STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) college classes shall be weighted by .5 as are AP and IB courses. *Jobs requiring STEM skills are in very high demand. There are over 10,000 openings in STEM fields now, and average salary is over \$70,000.*

HB 1072 Coomer – 14 **TGFS** A service cancellable loan to a National Guard member may be awarded in addition to any HOPE grant or scholarship the person receives. *Currently, it is one or the other.*

REVENUE/TAXATION

HB 51 Benton – 31 **TGFS** Owners of property sold to satisfy taxes may redeem such property by repaying the buyer all costs incurred in the transaction including 20% additional to satisfy any amounts owed to a homeowners, property owners, or condo association.

SB 258 Millar – 40 **TGFS** Assessed values on real property cannot rise during the year when a taxpayer appeals. Homestead exemptions for disabled veterans is expanded to include more disabilities. An income tax credit of 80% of the actual amount given to rural health organizations such as a critical care access hospital or a nonprofit in a rural area which provides care to Medicare and Medicaid patients and has a local board. Up to \$2500 for single taxpayers, \$5000 for married filing jointly. Corporations get 80% of the actual up to 75% of the income tax liability. State aggregate total is \$250 million/year. Credit is repealed on 12-31-2020.

SB 350 Mullis – 53 **TGFS** The 5% excise tax on consumer fireworks is to be split 55% to GA Trauma Care Network Commission, 40% to GA Firefighter Standards and Training Council, and 5% to the local government where the fireworks were sold to be used for public safety purposes. Enabling legislation for SR 558.

HB 364 Knight – 130 **TGFS** Taxpayers who have had multiple illegal property tax assessments may appeal directly to the GA Tax Tribunal. Department of Revenue may request an alteration in county tax digest and create an appeal process if tax assessor disagrees. If illegal taxation of property is found, the county qualified status may be revoked up to three years unless all members of the board of assessors are removed.

SB 379 Ginn – 47 **TGFS** A sales tax exemption for purchases by fire districts which have elected governing bodies and are supported by property taxes. A sales tax exemption for purchases by a qualified nonprofit job training organization which sells donated items at retail. *Goodwill?* Distribution of the alternative property tax on motor vehicles is defined as the sales tax amounts received in 2012 in a county and the proportions distributed to counties, cities, school districts, MARTA, and any other entity.

HB 408 Willard – 51 **TGFS** Cities levying a hotel-motel tax to fund a domed stadium may use 39.3% of the revenues collected annually for purposes of tourism product development after the bond are paid off. Distribution of the alternative property tax on motor vehicles is defined as the sales tax amounts received in 2012 and the proportions distributed to counties, cities, school districts, MARTA, and any other entity.

HB 763 Houston – 170 **TGFS** A sales tax exemption for donations to food banks and donations of food and food ingredients to feed the hungry shall be made permanent.

HB 769 Hawkins – 27 **TGFS** Watercraft and all terrain vehicles held in inventory for sale is exempt from property taxes permanently. *Currently, it is exempt until 2019. Sponsor is from Hall County where there are lots of boat sellers around Lake Lanier.*

HB 822 Coomer – 14 **TGFS** Clarifies that energy used in agriculture is exempt from state sales tax unless it is prepaid.

HB 862 Knight – 130 **TGFS** Homestead exemptions or free license plates for disabled veterans are expanded to include more disabilities.

HB 922 Williamson – 115 **TGFS** Defines ‘taxpayer’ for the tax credit for creating quality jobs as one required to file a return or to pay taxes. A taxpayer may elect to consider the jobs within its disregarded entities, as defined in the IRS code, when calculating the number of new quality jobs created.

HB 935 Harrell – 106 **TGFS** A freeport exemption eligibility for fulfillment centers defined as fulfilling orders for other sellers and delivered to customers at sites away from the fulfillment center location.

HB 936 Harrell – 106 **TGFS** An income tax credit for job creation requires that wages be paid at or above the average wage in the county. An income tax credit to employers who provide full time jobs in GA to those paroled within the last 12 months who are U.S. citizens. Job must be in Georgia, and wage at or above the average wage in the county. Credit is \$2500 per employee, up to \$50,000/year per employer. Credit per employee can only be taken once.

HB 937 Harrell – 106 **TGFS** A sales tax exemption for projects of regional significance, defined as a \$400 million investment in an area under developed for the last 20 years. *Atlanta project in the gulch was mentioned. The new domed stadium?*

HB 960 Kelley – 16 **TGFS** Tax information can be shared with the House Ways & Means and Senate Finance committees as long as individual identifying information is not disclosed. Interest rate to be paid on refunds is prime rate plus 3%. Refund requests are to be filed electronically. Unresolved refund requests after two years are referred to the GA Tax Tribunal. Interest due on property taxes due to state or local governments is 5%, currently 10%, for the first 4 months, and an additional 5% for every four month period thereafter if tax remains unpaid, not to exceed 20%.

HB 987 McCall – 33 **TGFS** Hosting a for-profit rodeo event on covenanted property does not cause a breach in the covenant. *Covenanted property has the assessed value for tax purposes frozen for 10 years if the use of the property does not change.*

HB 1014 Powell – 171 **TGFS** The income tax credit for donation of real property for conservation use has its sunset extended to 2021.

LOCAL

SB 369 Mullis – 53 **TGFS** Authorizes Atlanta to levy a ½% additional sales tax for MARTA capital projects. Creates 159 special tax districts, contiguous with county boundaries and exclusive of the municipal districts, to levy an additional sales tax for transportation capital projects in counties which already levy a transportation tax, subject to a local referendum. The project lists will be created by the mayors of the cities within the district and the county commission chairs. May also issue bonds, subject to referendum, to be paid back with the sales tax revenues. *Bonds provide up front funding to let contracts for the projects. This proposal allows Atlanta to expand MARTA within its city limits, but the rest of the county can build or repair roads, bridges, dedicated lanes for bus transit, or even extend MARTA.*

HB 514 Bruce – 61 **TGFS** Creates the City of South Fulton which will include all unincorporated areas of Fulton County including the Fulton County Industrial Park if the local constitutional amendment which created it is repealed. Local referendum is required. *Local constitutional amendments were allowed before the 1983 constitution was adopted. Any local referendum in force at that time is still valid, but no more can be adopted. If this city is formed, Fulton County will be 100% incorporated, the first in the state.*

HB 885 Jones – 47 **TGFS** Repeals the law that allows counties with over 800,000 population [Fulton] to create a Board of Health and Wellness unlike those created in other counties. It has no direct relationship or reporting to Department of Public Health, GEMA or other health related organizations. There will be created a Board of Health in Fulton under the current law for all other counties with a director appointed by the county commission. *Recommended by the current Board of Health and Wellness whose director is appointed by the county grand jury. County Commission is aware of this move. Gwinnett is almost at this population level and there is a reason not to reproduce this model elsewhere.*

HB 958 Jones – 47 **TGFS** The appointee to the Fulton County Library board made by the mayor of Atlanta shall serve at the pleasure of the mayor and for the same term.

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