



Georgia Bio Legislative Watch
Week: January 11-15, 2016
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The Georgia General Assembly began the 2016 Legislative Session on Monday, January 11. Lawmakers expect to conclude their work by March 24, 2016, so they can get an early start on their re-election campaigns. One important thing to note is that any legislation acted on in 2015 is still eligible to be addressed this year.

Adjournment Resolution: An adjournment resolution proposed in the Senate (Link: [SR 167](#)) sets the schedule for the following days:

January 12, 2016 – Legislative Day 2
January 13, 2016 – Legislative Day 3
January 14, 2016 – Legislative Day 4
January 15, 2016 – Legislative Day 5
January 20, 2016 – Legislative Day 6
January 21, 2016 – Legislative Day 7
January 22, 2016 – Legislative Day 8
January 25, 2016 – Legislative Day 9
January 26, 2016 – Legislative Day 10
January 27, 2016 – Legislative Day 11
January 28, 2016 – Legislative Day 12
February 1, 2016 – Legislative Day 13

New State Legislators: There are a number of new legislators in the General Assembly this year:

- Sen. Larry Walker (R-Perry; who replaced former Sen. Ross Tolleson (R-Perry))
- Sen. JaNice VanNess (R-Conyers, who replaced Sen. Ron Ramsey (D-Lithonia))
- Rep. Taylor Bennett (D-Brookhaven, who replaced Rep. Mike Jacobs (R-Atlanta))
- Rep. Shaw Blackmon (R-Bonaire, who replaced Rep. Larry O'Neal (R-Bonaire))
- Rep. Doreen Carter (D-Lithonia, who replaced Rep. Tonya Anderson (D-Lithonia))
- Rep. Sheri Gilligan (R-Cumming, who replaced Rep. Mark Hamilton (R-Cumming))
- Rep. Marie Metze (D-Atlanta, who replaced Rep. Tyrone Brooks (D-Atlanta))
- Rep. Clay Pirkle (R-Ashburn, who replaced Rep. Jay Roberts (R-Ocilla))
- Rep. Betty Price (R-Roswell, who replaced Rep. Harry Geisinger (R-Roswell))

Study Committee Reports: During the months since the 2015 session, House and Senate Study Committees convened to study a variety of issues. Many of these study committees have developed reports to summarize their findings. Links to those reports can be found below:

House Study Committee Reports

- Adult Day Services
- [Annexation, Deannexation, and Incorporation](#)
- [Children's Mental Health](#)
- Fibroids Education and Awareness
- [Grandparents Raising Grandchildren & Kinship Care](#)
- [Health, Education and School-Based Health Centers](#)
- HOPE Scholarship Program Award for Critical Field Fields
- Intellectual and Developmental Disability Community-based Services
- Life Insurance Consumer Disclosures
- [Post Secondary Education and Employment Options for Individuals with Disabilities](#)
- [Preservation of the HOPE Scholarship Program](#)
- [Saltwater Intrusion into Coastal Aquifers](#)

- [School Counseling & Role of School Counselors](#)
- [Short Term Rental Providers](#)
- [Use of Drones](#)
- Welfare Fraud

Senate Study Committee Reports

- [Preventing Youth Substance Use Disorders \(Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C\)](#)
- [Effect on Georgia of Normalization of Relations with Cuba \(Appendix A, Appendix B\)](#)
- [Women's Adequate Healthcare](#)
- [Consumer and Provider Protection Act](#)
- School Construction
- Rate of Diagnosis for Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- [Annexation, Deannexation, and Incorporation](#)
- [Preservation of the HOPE Scholarship](#)
- [Sexual Assault](#)

State of the State Address

In his State of the State Address, Governor Nathan Deal announced that State revenues for December had increased 3.6 percent and year-to-date net tax revenue collections were over \$10.44 billion. He indicated that, since he took office in 2011, Georgia has built up its rainy day fund to \$1.4 billion and added thousands of new jobs to the economy. The State's unemployment rate has decline from a little over 10 percent to 5.6 percent.

Education

The Governor highlighted the progress that has been made in improving public education. Students in 11 areas can now receive 100 percent college tuition through the HOPE scholarship grant. Additionally, the Governor wants to see \$17.1 million added in the FY17 budget for "industrial maintenance".

The Move on When Ready initiative, which allows high school students to attend postsecondary institutions and receive credit at no cost to them or their parents, has been very successful. The Governor said the initiative currently has over 22,000 students participating and the Governor's FY 2017 Budget includes a 654 percent increase in funding of Move on When Ready (over FY 2011) at a cost of \$58.3 million. Relating to k-12 education, Governor Deal requested the State Board of Education and the University System of Georgia to permit certain computer science courses to count as core courses in high school and for the purpose of college admission. Governor Deal reminded folks that his administration had spent more on k-12 education than any administration in the last 50 years – it also included \$1 billion more in the last two years alone and an additional \$417 million in the FY 2017. Graduation rates have improved significantly to 78.8 percent, however, 96,660 students in the years between 2011-2014 had dropped out of school. He also encouraged the General Assembly to look at the recommendations of the Education Reform Commission.

He did touch on furlough days and how those had been eliminated. Testing of students was also discussed – he did not suggest the abolishment of tests but looking at tests that are duplicative or that do not enhance educational achievement as needing to be eliminated.

Criminal Justice Reform

Governor Deal thanked Judge Michael Boggs and Thomas Worthy for their ongoing work on Criminal Justice Reform. He announced that Georgia has seen a substantial drop in its prison population with more non-violent offenders diverted to accountability courts. There is also an increase for State employees'

salaries included in his Budget. He has added funding for Departments and agencies which have high turnover rates to be provided additional pay raises of three percent (there are four agencies with a 20 percent or more turnover rate last year). Transportation was discussed, building on what he announced on January 12, 2016, so that road paving would be more frequent with the passage of HB 170. The Georgia National Guard was also recognized for its service to Georgia and the country; he highlighted that more than 18,000 guardsmen and women had been deployed since 9/11.

Budget Update

The Governor's Office has released the FY 2016 Amended and FY 2017 Budgets. Budget hearings take place next week, and we will provide you with updates and analyses as they arise. The FY 2016 and FY 2017 budget documents can be found here: <http://www.house.ga.gov/budget/en-US/budgetdocuments.aspx>

Legislation Tracking

As you may know, any legislation not acted upon during the 2015 Session is eligible this year for consideration. In the coming weeks, we will be tracking newly introduced legislation, as well as following legislation that has carried over from last year. We will focus on those bills that will be of the greatest importance to you and provide brief analysis of each. You can find a list of bills currently eligible for consideration for both the House and Senate by clicking on these links:

- [House Composite](#)
- [Senate Composite](#)