

## Gold Dome Report - Legislative Day 27 (2024)

Article By:

Stanley S. Jones, Jr.

Helen L. Sloat

George S. Ray

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No time for fun and games today — the Georgia House and Senate were all business on the final legislative day before Crossover. Each chamber took up numerous weighty issues with vigorous debate but, fortunately, no broken gavels. For example, the House passed comprehensive reform to the Certificate of Need program ([HB 1339](#)), tax credits for firearm safes and safety training ([HB 971](#)), and adjustments to how tax appeals are handled in the state ([HB 1267](#), [HR 598](#)). The Senate signed off on a constitutional amendment to allow sports betting in Georgia ([SR 579](#)), legislation allowing for inter-district transfers of public school students ([SB 147](#)), and the "Georgia Consumer Privacy Protection Act" ([SB 473](#)). Legislators did so much work on Legislative Day 27 that they may not even have anything to do on Legislative Day 28. See a full recap of floor action in this [#GoldDomeReport](#).

In other news, Senate Minority Leader Gloria Butler (D-Stone Mountain) [announced her retirement](#) on Tuesday. Congratulations and best wishes to Leader Butler as she concludes her 25 years of service in the State Senate.

### In this Report:

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### Floor Notes

The House took up the following measures on Legislative Day 27:

- [HB 451](#) - Public officers and employees; supplemental, illness-specific insurance for certain first responders with occupational post-traumatic stress disorder; require provision — PASSED 168-0
- [HB 598](#) - Professions and businesses; certain boxing, wrestling, and martial art associations

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- and federations; change certain provisions — PASSED 164-1
- [HB 643](#) - Georgia Judicial Retirement System; certain state court judges of Fulton County participating in other retirement systems; repeal prohibitions — PASSED 156-11
  - [HB 880](#) - Professions and businesses; military spouses to use an existing license in good standing from another state; allow — PASSED 168-0
  - [HB 971](#) - Firearm Safe Handling and Secure Storage Tax Credit Act; enact — PASSED 162-3
  - [HB 974](#) - Secretary of State; establish and maintain a state-wide system for the posting of scanned paper ballots; require — PASSED 167-0
  - [HB 996](#) - Penal institutions; provide jailers with arrest powers — PASSED 166-0
  - [HB 1127](#) - Agriculture, Department of; enforce certain criminal laws; authorize — PASSED 165-1
  - [HB 1188](#) - Peace officers; extend time frame for which reimbursement of total training expenses by a subsequent employer may be sought — PASSED 166-0
  - [HR 598](#) - Georgia Tax Tribunal; vest judicial power; provide for venue and jurisdiction — CA - PASSED 165-0
  - [HB 1018](#) - Georgia Firearms Industry Nondiscrimination Act; enact — PASSED 106-60
  - [HB 1022](#) - Colton-McNeill Act; enact — PASSED 168-0
  - [HB 1138](#) - Invest Georgia Fund; provide additional factor that the fund administrator shall consider in the selection of venture capital funds — PASSED 146-14
  - [HB 1093](#) - Agriculture; prohibit acquisition of possessory interest in certain land by certain foreign persons and entities — RECOMMITTED
  - [HB 1181](#) - Income tax; limit carry-forward periods of certain income tax credits — PASSED 166-0
  - [HB 1182](#) - Income tax; low-income housing tax credits; revise — PASSED 104-61
  - [HB 1185](#) - Revenue and taxation; statewide homestead exemption from ad valorem taxes when current year assessed value exceeds the inflation rate; provide — PASSED 169-0
  - [HB 1192](#) - Sales and use tax; certain high-technology data center equipment; prohibit issuance of new certificates of exemption — PASSED 96-71
  - [HB 1115](#) - Sales and use tax; revise provisions for maximum allowable tax rate; remove prohibition of simultaneously levying a LOST and a HOST — PASSED 167-2
  - [HB 1251](#) - The Council of Superior Court Judges of Georgia; duties related to review and approval for travel expenses; transfer from state auditor — PASSED 167-0
  - [HB 1267](#) - Georgia Tax Court Act of 2025; enact — PASSED 161-0
  - [HB 1303](#) - Special license plates; Shepherd Center; establish — PASSED 166-0
  - [HB 1339](#) - Health; certificate of need; revise — PASSED 166-1
  - [HR 1022](#) - Local government; option to offer a state-wide homestead exemption from ad valorem taxes when current year assessed value exceeds the inflation rate; provide — CA - PASSED 168-0

The Senate took up the following measures on Legislative Day 27:

- [SB 147](#) - "Boundless Opportunities for Georgia Students Act"; enact — PASSED 38-14
- [SB 171](#) - Development Authorities; the length of a director's hold-over period following expiration of term of office; limit — PASSED 50-2
- [SB 324](#) - State Printing and Documents; a victim centered address confidentiality program; provide — PASSED 51-0
- [SB 368](#) - Government Transparency and Campaign Finance; foreign nationals from contributing to candidates or campaign committees; prohibit — PASSED 52-0
- [SB 402](#) - Instruction Permits; restrictions upon the operation of Class C motor vehicles by Class D license holders with certain passengers in the vehicle; revise — PASSED 35-17

- [SB 433](#) - Nonprofit Corporations; enact "Donor Intent Protection Act"; provide definitions; charitable organizations from violating the terms of charitable contributions; prohibit — PASSED 44-9
- [SB 450](#) - Courts; property, and wills, trusts, and administration of estates; neither superior court nor a state court shall have appellate jurisdiction pursuant to Chapter 3 of Title 5; clarify — PASSED 50-0
- [SB 473](#) - "Georgia Consumer Privacy Protection Act"; consumer personal data in this state; protect the privacy - PASSED 53-0
- [SR 570](#) - Senate Supporting Safety and Welfare of All Individuals in Department of Corrections Facilities Study Committee; create — PASSED 53-0
- [SR 583](#) - Dr. Robert F. Sullivan Memorial Highway; Franklin County; dedicate — PASSED 52-0
- [SB 293](#) - County Boards of Health; operational policies and procedures of the Department of Public Health apply to local personnel; provide — PASSED 37-15
- [SB 421](#) - Obstruction of Public Administration; offense of transmitting a false public alarm; enhance penalties — PASSED 53-0
- [SB 455](#) - Medical Assistance; provisions to comply with federal law; revise — PASSED 45-2
- [SB 456](#) - Central Caregiver Registry; disabled persons to the registry; add — PASSED 49-0
- [SB 465](#) - Homicide; the felony offense of aggravated involuntary manslaughter; provide — PASSED 49-3
- [SB 497](#) - Education; High-demand Career Initiatives Program as the High Demand Apprenticeship Program; redesignate — PASSED 52-1
- [SB 520](#) - Domestic Relations; provisions relating to income withholding orders; change and clarify — PASSED 49-0
- [SR 579](#) - Sports Betting; Georgia General Assembly to provide by general law for sports betting in this state; authorize — CA - PASSED 41-12
- [SB 494](#) - 'Georgia Hemp Farming Act'; hemp products; regulate — PASSED 43
- [SB 515](#) - Emergency Medical Services; two-year pilot program to provide additional ambulances to certain areas of this state; provide — PASSED 53-0
- [SB 417](#) - Reporting of Accidents; timing and documentation of such reports; provide — PASSED 48-4
- [SR 609](#) - Princess Trahlyta; dedicate a roundabout in her memory — PASSED 53-0

## Committee Reports

### House Health Committee

Chairman Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville) and his committee took up the following bills on Monday evening:

- [HB 1339](#), authored by Representative Butch Parrish (R-Swainsboro), rewrites and modernizes Georgia's Certificate of Need Laws in Chapter 6 of Title 31. It is a bipartisan effort and the result of a study committee looking at this issue in 2023. Some of the many provisions in this legislation are:
  - Eliminates the capital and equipment expenditure thresholds for healthcare facilities, provided that they do not create new or expanded clinical offerings that would trigger the need for a certificate of need (CON)
  - Requires the Department of Community Health to update the state health plan at least every five years beginning Jan. 1, 2025
  - Streamlines the application process for CON

- Increases the length of time that a closed facility can be purchased and reopened as a micro-hospital (up to 7 beds) from 12 months to 24 months
- Expands the CON exemption to allow existing hospitals to increase bed capacity by the greater of 10 beds or 20% every three years if the facility has maintained at least a 60% occupancy rate for the previous 12 months
- Revises the currently allowed CON exemptions for single-specialty and joint venture ambulatory surgery centers, removing the capital expenditure cap
- Expands the CON exemption to allow healthcare facilities in urban counties to relocate within five miles of the existing facility and creates new exemptions
- New or expanded psychiatric or substance abuse inpatient programs or contracted beds that serve Medicaid and uninsured patients that:
  - are open 24/7 and 365 days per year
  - provide uncompensated indigent and charity care in an amount equal to or greater than 5% of its adjusted gross revenue.
  - participate as providers of medical assistance for Medicaid purposes
  - have hospital affiliation agreements with acute care hospitals within a reasonable distance from the programs or contracted beds or the medical staff at the programs or contracted beds for medical complications. The programs or contracted beds are required to have the capability to transfer a patient immediately to a hospital within a reasonable distance from the programs or contracted beds with adequate emergency room services. (Prohibits hospitals from unreasonably denying a transfer agreement or affiliation agreement to the programs or contracted beds); and
  - provide annual reports in the same manner and in accordance with Code Section 31-6-70.
- It also addresses the offering of new or expanded basic obstetric services by a hospital in a rural county under certain conditions.
- Addresses a new general acute care hospital in a rural county and what that requires (e.g. GME requirements, participation in Medicaid, providing emergency, inpatient, and outpatient psych/behavioral health services, etc.)
- Permits the transfer of existing beds from one hospital campus to another hospital campus within the same hospital system within a 10-mile radius of the original campus; provided that the exemption has not been used by the transferring hospital in the prior 24 months.
- Directs the Department of Community Health to review the CON statutory framework and make recommendations to the General Assembly to streamline the CON statute
- Increases fines for failure to submit annual reports to the Department.
- Increases the cap for the Rural Hospital Tax Credit increasing it from \$75 million to \$100 million and extending the sunset of the program to 2029.
- Creates the Comprehensive Health Coverage Commission to examine access and quality of healthcare for Georgia's low-income and uninsured populations.

Representative Mark Newton (R-Augusta) asked that further attention be paid to maternal mortality and care provided in rural areas. Representative James Beverly (D-Macon) asked about birthing centers in the state and whether they might qualify as critical access hospitals; his concern was around transfer agreements. Representative Parrish noted that the House has led on expanding healthcare in Georgia, but providers are needed, and the State needs to resolve that problem first. HB 1339 received a DO PASS recommendation.

- [HB 1363](#), authored by Representative Karen Mathiak (R-Griffin), addresses O.C.G.A.

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45-18-16.1 and the pricing of pharmaceuticals sold to individuals covered by the State Health Benefit Plan (the plan for the State's employees and teachers). Wide disparities in the pricing of generic drugs have been uncovered by the Georgia Pharmacy Association. The state uses a Pharmacy Benefits Manager (CVS Caremark). The legislation is an attempt to bring stability, transparency, and savings and encourages the use of the National Drug Acquisition Cost to set pricing and dispensing fees. The independent drug stores explained the unfairness of the current system which really negatively impacts the costs of medications that covered individuals obtain and ultimately causes increases in health plan costs. There was testimony on the proposal, including from the Department of Community Health, which issued a request for a proposal for the drug plan. The department explained when that is done, there is an annual market check conducted on drug costs. The Georgia Association of Health Plans opposed the legislation, noting that the bill was unnecessary and the issue could be addressed without legislation. The association overseeing 20 PBMs also testified to the proposal, noting their negotiations and explained that they would not be opposed to a "study" of the issues. The legislation received an amendment to make the legislation effective upon signature. A second amendment was attempted to address pricing of medications for the independent pharmacies so that essentially they would be reimbursed the average amount of a drug cost sold by a chain drug store. The bill then received a DO PASS recommendation.

- [HB 1046](#), authored by Representative David Clark (R-Buford), amends Titles 31 and 43 to authorize advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants to order home healthcare services and to sign death certificates. Both activities would be under the delegation of a physician. There was an explanation that these activities were permitted during the public health emergency (for approximately three years). Clark indicated that many supported the proposal, including the Georgia Alzheimer's Association, Georgia Nursing Association, Georgia Nursing Leadership Association, and others. Testimony from a plastic surgeon expressed concern as this proposal is providing a new authority for these individuals and stressed that it fell short of protecting Georgia patients. After much discussion, the chairman asked for a motion. Representative Mark Newton (R-Augusta) moved to table the proposal with the bill being TABLED.

### **House Interstate Cooperation Committee**

Chairman Newton held a late evening meeting on Monday with members of his committee where they took up one bill. [HB 839](#), authored by Representative Katie Dempsey (R-Rome), seeks to adopt two Interstate Compacts in Title 43: the Social Work Licensure Compact and the Massage Therapy Compact. The Board Chair of the State Board of Massage Therapy, Craig Knowles, spoke in favor of adding the massage therapy wording to the proposal. The legislation received a DO PASS recommendation.

### **House Insurance Committee**

Chairman Eddie Lumsden (R-Armuchee) and the House Insurance Committee took up the following proposals:

- [HB 389](#), authored by Representative Marvin Momtahan (R-Dallas), amends O.C.G.A. 44-3-94 to revise the maximum amount of insurance deductibles payable by unit owners moving the amount from \$2,000.00 to \$10,000.00 (the association's master policy deductible). The Commercial Association Institute spoke about the legislation and the requirements for condominium and homeowners associations, which include that property owners can obtain a copy of the insurance certificate "upon request." The legislation received a DO PASS

recommendation.

- [HB 1005](#), authored by Representative Marvin Lim (D-Lawrenceville), adds a new Code section at O.C.G.A. 33-24-59.34 to require that every health benefits policy shall provide coverage for rabies immune globulin and vaccinations administered after potential exposure to rabies. This applies to state-regulated insurance products. The State Health Benefit Plan, Medicaid, and PeachCare already provide for this coverage. Lim noted that these immune globulin and vaccinations are expensive. There was an amendment proposed and adopted, to clarify that ERISA products are not covered (and also excludes HMO and PPO products, according to Representative Darlene Taylor (R-Thomasville)). The bill received a DO PASS recommendation as amended.

## Senate Finance Committee

Early Tuesday morning, Chairman Chuck Hufstetler (R-Rome) called the Senate Finance Committee to order to discuss a few measures:

- [HR 804](#), authored by Representative Chuck Martin (R-Alpharetta), is a constitutional amendment that seeks to change how Tax Anticipation Notes are paid. It requires the notes to be paid back within 12 months rather than by the end of the calendar year. This gives flexibility. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation.
- [HB 1162](#), authored by Representative David Knight (R-Griffin), is the annual IRC update bill, which only changes the dates. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation.
- [HB 461](#), authored by Representative Brad Thomas (R-Holly Springs), amends Title 48 to revise the list of professions subject to regulatory fees. This measure eliminates charging a percentage-based fee, which does not have to do with the job. It must be accepted in conjunction with the Code Council formula for new construction and extensive renovation when using square footage. This version is a compromise of the House and Senate versions. Senator John Albers (R-Roswell) asked about advisors being included in this measure. Chairman Hufstetler explained there was confusion about stock brokers, and this was to clarify the language. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation.

## New Legislation

The following new legislation of interest has been introduced in the House:

<b>H.B.1404</b>	Civil practice; online publication to serve as an interim legal organ; provide	Rep. Lehman Franklin (R-160)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67445">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67445</a>
<b>H.B.1408</b>	Low THC Oil Patient Registry; add ulcerative colitis as a condition for treatment	Rep. Jodi Lott (R-131)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67455">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67455</a>
<b>H.B.1409</b>	Torts; mental health care providers; limit liability under certain circumstances	Rep. Rob Leverett (R-123)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67456">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67456</a>

<b>H.B.1410</b>	State Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless Act; enact	Rep. Chuck Efstration (R-104)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67457">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67457</a>
<b>H.B.1415</b>	Law enforcement officers; cooperate with federal authorities on enforcement of immigration laws; provisions	Rep. Houston Gaines (R-120)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67467">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67467</a>
<b>H.B.1417</b>	Courts; grand juries; indictment proceedings; provisions	Rep. Patty Bentley (D-150)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67469">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67469</a>
<b>H.B.1418</b>	Community Affairs, Department of; create Office of Urban Affairs	Rep. James Beverly (D-143)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67471">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67471</a>
<b>H.R.1256</b>	House Study Committee on the Establishment of a Baby Bonds Program; create	Rep. Kim Schofield (D-063)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67447">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67447</a>
<b>H.R.1257</b>	Joint Study Committee on Combating Homelessness Among Veterans; create	Rep. Eric Bell (D-075)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67458">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67458</a>
<b>H.R.1277</b>	Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month; March 2024; recognize	Rep. Deborah "Deb" Silcox (R-053)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67491">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67491</a>
<b>H.R.1280</b>	Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month; March 2024; recognize; the Georgia Colorectal Cancer Control program; impact on increasing screenings in Federal Qualified Health Clinics in Southwest and Southeast Georgia; commend	Rep. Gerald Greene (R-154)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67494">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67494</a>
<b>H.R.1282</b>	Blood Clot Awareness Month in the State of Georgia; March 2024; recognize	Rep. Kim Schofield (D-063)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67496">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67496</a>

The following new legislation of interest has been introduced in the Senate:

<b>S.B.559</b>	Counties, Municipal Corporations, and other Governmental Entities; sovereign and governmental immunities for violation on the prohibition on immigration sanctuary policies; waive	Sen. Blake Tillery (R-019)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67461">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67461</a>
<b>S.R.692</b>	Senate Transporting Students Safely Study Committee; create	Sen. Rick "Ricky" Williams (R-025)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67448">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67448</a>
<b>S.R.695</b>	Hemophilia of Georgia; recognize	Sen. Josh McLaurin (D-014)	<a href="https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67452">https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/67452</a>

## What's Next

The General Assembly is in adjournment on Wednesday, Feb. 28, and will reconvene for Legislative Day 28 (Crossover Day) on Thursday, Feb. 29 at 10 a.m.

The House Rules Committee will meet at 11 a.m. on Wednesday to set a Rules Calendar for Legislative Day 28 (Crossover Day).

The Senate Rules Committee will meet at 10 a.m. on Wednesday to set a Rules Calendar for Legislative Day 28 (Crossover Day).

See our coverage of [Day 1](#), [Day 2](#), [Day 3](#), [Day 4](#), [Day 5](#), [Day 6](#), [Day 7](#), [Day 8](#), [Day 9](#), [Day 10](#), [Day 11](#), [Day 12](#), [Day 13](#), [Day 14](#), [Day 15](#), [Day 16](#), [Day 17](#), [Day 18](#), [Day 19](#), [Day 20](#), [Day 21](#), [Day 22](#), [Day 23](#), [Day 24](#), [Day 25](#), and [Day 26](#).

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