

Gold Dome Report - Legislative Day 35 (2024)

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Portrait of the late Speaker David Ralston unveiled in the House chamber on Thursday.

Thursday may be the new Friday of the legislative work week, but lawmakers weren't content to knock off early and ease into St. Patrick's Day weekend. Instead, both chambers took up high-profile, controversial legislation that had many lawmakers and lobbyists celebrating — and others ruminating — as they headed for the door. The House resurrected [SB 233](#), Senator Greg Dolezal's

(R-Cumming) "Georgia Promise Scholarship Act." The measure returned as an "omnibus education bill" loaded up with pro-public school elements that garnered just enough support to allow passage by a 91-82 vote. Meanwhile, the Senate narrowly approved [HB 1192](#), Representative John Carson's (R-Marietta) pause on sales tax exemptions for data center equipment by a 29-22 vote. Surprisingly though, contentious legislation providing for reform of the state's Certificate of Need laws ([HB 1339](#)) passed with bipartisan support by a 43-11 vote. But more surprises could be in store as that measure returns to the House for further action, so keep following the [#GoldDomeReport](#).

Although each chamber had its tense moments on Thursday, the House paused with reverence to celebrate the birthday of the late Speaker David Ralston. As a special gift for his family, friends, and colleagues, House leaders and former governors joined in [unveiling a portrait of the revered lawmaker](#) that will hang outside the House chamber. There it will stand guard over the People's House, including [barring access for one state senator](#).

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Floor Notes

The House took up the following measures on Legislative Day 35:

- [SB 233](#) - 'The Georgia Promise Scholarship Act'; establishment of promise scholarship accounts — PASSED 91-82
- [SB 387](#) - Identification Cards; certain applicants who are either homeless or in the legal custody of the Division of Family and Children Services do not require signatures; provide — PASSED 161-0
- [SB 448](#) - Official Code of Georgia Annotated; revise, modernize, correct errors or omissions in, and reenact the statutory portion of said Code, as amended, in furtherance of the work of the Code Revision Commission — PASSED 138-0
- [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 150-0

The Senate took up the following measures on Legislative Day 35:

- [SR 687](#) - University of North Georgia and the University System of Georgia Board of Regents; name a certain building after former Speaker David Ralston; urge — PASSED 53-1
- [HB 244](#) - Board of Natural Resources; effective date for certain rules and regulations; extend — PASSED 51-1
- [HB 880](#) - Professions and businesses; military spouses to use an existing license in good standing from another state; allow — PASSED 54-0
- [HB 995](#) - Education; administration of a nationally recognized multiple-aptitude battery assessment that predicts success in the military to certain public school students; require — PASSED 36-1
- [HB 1192](#) - Sales and use tax; certain high-technology data center equipment; prohibit issuance of new certificates of exemption — PASSED 29-22

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- [HB 1339](#) - Health; certificate of need; revise — PASSED 43-11

Committee Reports

House Ways and Means Committee

Chairman Shaw Blackmon (R-Bonaire) called the House committee to order Thursday to discuss the following:

- [SB 340](#), authored by Senator Kay Kirkpatrick (R-Marietta), amends Title 48. A substitute was presented by Representative Joe Campbell (R-Camilla) to remove the underlying bill, which had the author's approval. LC 50 0864S now allows diesel exhaust fluid ("DEF") to qualify as an allowable purchase with their Georgia Agriculture Tax Exemption ("GATE") card, which can only be used for agricultural products on their farm. An amendment on line 12, which added "for agricultural use only," was passed. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation as amended.
- [SB 349](#), authored by Senator Chuck Hufstetler (R-Rome), amends Title 48. The underlying measure was removed to make room for [HB 1031](#) and [HB 1115](#). HB 1031 seeks to share the local sales tax with those wanting to participate to offset the property tax. HB 1115 seeks to create more transparency in tax appraisal and assessment processes. The measure aims to allow for a floating homestead exemption built in SB 349. Representative Noel Williams (R-Cordele) asked about the referendum. ACCG and GMA explained that adopting a homestead would require a referendum plus any subsequent LOST. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation, with one in opposition.

House Regulated Industries Committee

The House Regulated Industries Committee was called to order Thursday afternoon by Chairman Alan Powell (R-Hartwell) to discuss the following:

- [SB 543](#), authored by Senator Matt Brass (R-Newnan), amends Title 16 related to Bingo and changes some provisions regarding bingo games operated by nonprofits. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation, with one in opposition. Representative Buddy DeLoach (R-Townsend) will carry the measure in the House.
- [SB 373](#), authored by Senator Larry Walker, III (R-Perry), addresses the licensure of marriage and family therapists. The legislation originates from the Senate Study Committee on Occupational Licensing. It is an attempt to increase the number of mental health services, as Georgia is ranked by one entity as 49th in the country in terms of access to mental health care. This legislation specifically speaks to licensure portability in O.C.G.A. 43-10A-13. The legislation is not about an interstate compact that some professions have adopted. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation. The measure will be carried by Representative Rick Jasperse (R-Jasper).
- [SB 375](#), also authored by Senator Walker, amends Code Section 37-2-4 relating to professional land surveyors. The measure seeks to reduce cumbersome requirements. Section one is soil classifiers to allow them to sit for the exam after two years of field experience instead of the current four-year requirement. The land surveyors requested similar changes to their licensing requirements. Representative Kasey Carpenter (R-Dalton) asked if the purpose was to increase the surveying workforce. That is the purpose. Representative Dale Washburn (R-Macon) expressed concern and proposed an amendment to include, in lines 91-93, "or holds a certificate of registration as a professional engineer." Representative

Rick Jasperse (R-Jasper) asked about adding engineering to this and how some are unnecessary. He asked for more time to consider the amendment. Representative Kasey Carpenter asked about using civil engineer rather than generally saying engineer. Representative Mesha Mainor (R-Atlanta) clarified the amendment lines 91-93. Legislative Counsel explained the amendment structure. Representative Washburn explained that the amendment's intent is that the qualified engineer should not have to return to take new courses to become a surveyor. Chairman Powell will carry the measure.

- [SB 495](#), authored by Senator Sam Watson, amends Code Section 31-2A-18, which allows for THC cards to be mailed to the patients and creates a term of validity for the cards. The Senate amendment to replace US Postal Services with certified mail. This will be subject to appropriations. Representative Carpenter amended the bill to remove the appropriations requirement. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation and will be carried by Representative Jason Ridley (R-Chatsworth).
- [SB 503](#), authored by Senator Matt Brass (R-Newnan), relates to Residential and General Contractors and the licensure of general contractors in Chapter 41 of Title 43, which is named commercial general contractor license. Senator Brass presented the clean-up offered by the Association of General Contractors and Home Builders Association. In 2006, there was a grandfather clause for general contractors, but that time has passed. It also revises the law so only a qualifying agent can get building permits. The measure extends finding another qualifying agent to 180 days from 120. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation and will be carried by Chairman Powell.
- [SB 502](#), authored by Senator Clint Dixon (R-Gwinnett), amends Title 50 to prevent agencies and departments from marketing with or contracting for advertising with certain companies. The measure seeks to ensure state agencies hire certified companies to promote information equally to Georgians and to prevent an advertising agency from using a blacklist. The Senate added language to the underlying measure to prevent state entities from contracting with certain foreign adversaries. LC 47 3055S received a DO PASS recommendation and will be carried by Representative Steven Sainz (R-St. Marys).
- [SB 412](#), authored by Senator John Kennedy (R-Macon) and presented by Representative Dale Washburn (R-Macon), amends Title 43 relating to professions and businesses. Currently, civil violations for charities are limited to up to \$2,500 for a single violation and \$5,000 for multiple. Individuals who violate this law can only be fined up to \$250 for a single violation and \$500 for multiple violations. The measure increases this to up to \$10,000 for single and \$100,000 for multiple charities and individuals. The measure seeks to address bad actors. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation and will be carried by Representative Washburn.
- [SB 449](#) was postponed until Tuesday's meeting.

Senate Regulated Industries & Utilities Committee

The Senate Regulated Industries & Utilities Committee, chaired by Senator Bill Cowser (R-Athens), met on Thursday afternoon to consider the following measures before our deadline:

- [HB 73](#), authored by Representative Joseph Gullett (R-Dallas), amends Title 46 to require that the seller provide a written disclosure statement with any agreement for the sale of distributed energy generation systems or for the financing of such systems through leases or solar energy procurement agreements.

The bill was presented as a Substitute that addresses disclosures required to be provided when purchases or leases of solar fixtures. This only applies to residential. There are more penalties for

violations. The Substitute passed.

- [HB 844](#), authored by Representative Ginny Ehrhart (R-Marietta), amends Title 43 to the update on the Dietetics Practice Act. It has been 20 years since an update. No changes were made. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation with an amendment to add “and” at line 361. Senator Larry Walker III (R-Perry) will carry the measure in the Senate.
- [HB 904](#), authored by Representative Ken Vance (R-Milledgeville), is an overhaul of licensure for electricians and plumbers. The bill provides for more continuing education, which can be completed online. The bill passed.
- [HB 1046](#), authored by Representative David Clark (R-Buford), amends Code Section 16-13-72, Code Section 31-6-2, and Title 31 to authorize APRNs and PAs to sign death certificates if delegated by their supervising physician. The measure adds educational requirements and a selection box on the death certificate for non-physicians signing the certificate.

The bill was presented as a substitute that deletes lines 111-131. Senator Clint Dixon (R-Gwinnett) added his [SB 460](#) language on numbers of APRNs and PAs who can work under a doctor under protocol agreement. Senator Rick Williams (R-Milledgeville) added language to allow funeral directors to sign death certificates and provide immunity from liability. The substitute passed as amended.

- [HB 1294](#), authored by Representative Clay Pirkle (R-Ashburn), amends Title 50 to address an issue that the House Rural Development Council heard and authorizes GEFA financing of natural gas projects. It will help economically distressed areas. No changes were made. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation and Senator Carden Summers (R-Cordele) will carry it.
- [HB 1312](#), authored by Representative Rick Jasperse (R-Jasper), originally extended the effective date of provisions relative to regulatory authority of the Department of Agriculture and revenue and taxation of electricity as a motor fuel.

The bill was gutted, and Senator John Kennedy (R-Macon) added language (LC 47 3033 ERS) to address missed elections for members of the Public Service Commission. The Substitute passed.

New Legislation

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

H.R.1477	House Study Committee on Offshore Wind Energy; create	Rep. Becky Evans (D-089)	https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/68825
H.B.1478	Mid-State Energy Authority Act; enact	Rep. Shaw Blackmon (R-146)	https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/68805

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

S.B.582	Public School Property and Facilities; building	Sen. Sally Harrell (D-040)	https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/68817
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	inspection and code enforcement for public school educational facilities in this state; provide		
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What's Next

The General Assembly is in adjournment on Friday, March 15, and will reconvene for Legislative Day 36 on Monday, March 18 at 10 a.m.

The House is expected to take up the following measures on Legislative Day 36:

- [SB 169](#) - Public Schools; extension of hearing dates for student discipline tribunals; provide for limits
- [SB 366](#) - "Tax Expenditures Transparency Act of 2024"; enact
- [SB 376](#) - Juvenile Code; improve timely permanent placement of a child removed from their home; clarify requirements
- [SB 398](#) - Georgia National Guard; adjutant general to be the official sponsor of the state-sponsored life insurance program; provide
- [SB 401](#) - Senate Foster Care and Adoption Study Committee; implement recommendations
- [SB 422](#) - Public Utilities and Public Transportation; percentage limitation as to the amount of the investments an electric membership corporation may make; modify
- [SB 426](#) - Motor Vehicles and Traffic; requirements for joining of a motor carrier and motor carrier's insurer to a cause of action; revise
- [SB 440](#) - 'Accelerated Career Diploma Program'; ACE Grants pilot program; establish and provide
- [SB 454](#) - Alimony and Child Support; guidelines for child support award calculations; provide
- [SB 456](#) - Central Caregiver Registry; disabled persons to the registry; add
- [SB 480](#) - Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce; student loan repayment for mental health and substance use professionals serving in certain capacities; provide
- [SB 508](#) - Administrative Office of the Courts; accessibility of certain personal information of state and federal judges, justices, and spouses thereof; provide

The Senate is expected to take up the following measures on Legislative Day 36:

- [HB 441](#) - Professions; authorize and regulate teledentistry by licensed dentists pursuant to permits issued by Georgia Board of Dentistry
- [HB 502](#) - Georgia Cosmetic Laser Services Act; revise a definition; revise a provision
- [HB 827](#) - Crimes and offenses; livestock theft; increased penalties; provide
- [HB 873](#) - Courts; juvenile treatment court divisions; create
- [HB 991](#) - Hospital Medicaid Financing Program; extend sunset provision
- [HB 997](#) - Motor vehicles; require disqualification to operate a commercial motor vehicle upon receipt of notification from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration of a positive drug test
- [HB 1028](#) - Education; repeal requirement of screening of public school children for scoliosis; provisions
- [HB 1033](#) - Utility Worker Protection Act; enact
- [HB 1041](#) - Savannah-Georgia Convention Center Authority; maximum amount of bonded indebtedness of the authority; increase

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](#), [Day 26](#), [Day 27](#), [Day 28](#), [Day 29](#), [Day 30](#), [Day 31](#), [the Committee Work Day](#), [the Crossover Day](#), [Day 32](#), [Day 33](#), and [Day 34](#).

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