



HEALTHY MOTHERS, HEALTHY BABIES
Coalition of Georgia

Keeping Current @ the Capitol March 16, 2009

Legislators have completed 30 of 40 legislative days. Tuesday, March 17th will be the 31st legislative day. Last Thursday was “Crossover Day,” the last day for bills to pass their chamber of origin in order to be eligible for passage this year. Legislators had long days on the 29th and 30th days as they worked to consider many bills.

BUDGET UPDATE

The House and Senate deliberated quickly and behind closed doors to reach agreement on the Amended FY 2009 budget. Both chambers agreed to the final version of the budget with little discussion, and it was “immediately transmitted” to the Governor for his signature. “Immediate transmittal” is a parliamentary move that required Gov. Perdue to act quickly, while legislators are still in session, and he signed the 2009 budget into law. The Governor typically has 45 days to sign or veto most bills.

As attention moves to the FY 2010 budget, advocates remain concerned about holes in the budget, including a \$255 million reduction in the Medicaid budget that was part of the Governor’s revised proposals for FY 2010. The cuts are to Medicaid provider rates and will cost Georgia approximately \$750 million in federal funds. Gov. Perdue had originally included anticipated funds from a proposed Medicaid CMO fee replacement, but legislators failed to act on enabling legislation. Funds (\$30 million) are also lacking in the Department of Education budget to fund school nurses.

The widening gap between state revenues and the budget continues to grow and yet legislators have failed to act on proposals for increased revenue such as the tobacco tax increase. One measure to increase revenue opposed by many advocates was HB 67, which would have reinstated the sales tax on groceries and replaced it with a new income tax credit.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

SB 92 (Sen. Judson Hill, 32nd) seeks to implement a “premium assistance” program in Georgia’s existing Medicaid and PeachCare programs. The state would pay premiums to enroll members in commercial health plans such as employer sponsored health plans.

UPDATE: *Passed by Senate Insurance & Labor Committee, but no vote in Senate by 30th day, dead unless attached to other legislation.*

HB 39 (Rep. Ron Stephens, 164th) would increase tobacco tax by \$1 per pack of cigarettes and generate an estimated \$335 million in new revenue. The increased price for a pack of cigarettes would also be a major deterrent to teen smoking. *Status: did not pass out of House Ways & Means Committee.*

HB 228 (Rep. Mark Butler, 18th) would reorganize and restructure the Departments of Human Resources and Community Health. **UPDATE:** *Committee substitute that would put Public Health with a new Department of Public and Behavioral Health passed House.* The original bill put Public Health with the Department of Community Health to create a new Department of Health. The Senate version, **SB 222** (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th) would put Public Health with the Department of Community Health. **UPDATE:** *Passed Senate. The House and Senate will have to reach agreement on this issue.*

HB 229 (Rep. Brooks Coleman, 97th) would create the SHAPE (Student Health and Physical Education) Act. Beginning in 2011-12, students in grades 1-12 enrolled in physical education would have an annual fitness assessment approved by the State Board of Education. **UPDATE:** *Passed Senate Education & Youth on 3/5.*

HB 337 (Rep. Donna Sheldon, 105th) would instruct Public Health to create, career track, recruit and retain nurses. Implementation dependent on funding. House Health & Human Services Committee. *Status: Did not pass committee.*

HB 351 (Rep. Barry Loudermilk, 14th) would prohibit any family planning services for unemancipated minors. *Status: Did not pass committee.*

HB 474 (Rep. Pat Gardner, 57th) would increase PeachCare eligibility from 235% of Federal Poverty Level to 300%. *Status: Did not pass committee.*

SB 223 (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th) would create a Women's Reproductive Health Legislative Oversight Committee. The purpose would be to review and evaluate all women's reproductive health programs and services, including family planning, teen pregnancy prevention, and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. The committee would consist entirely of legislators. **UPDATE:** *Passed Senate. Assigned to House Judiciary.*

TRAUMA CARE SYSTEM

SB 156 (Sen. Cecil Staton, 18th) would establish a State Office of EMS/Trauma (under policy direction of the Ga. Trauma Care Network Commission) as the lead agency for trauma network development, operations, and evaluation and as the regulatory and administrative authority for the trauma network. It shifts the Commission's priority from compensating providers of trauma services to maintaining and expanding the trauma

network, particularly in regions with the greatest need. Passed Senate on 2/26. Assigned to House Health & Human Services Committee.

SR 277 (Sen. Greg Goggans, 7th) would amend the Constitution to earmark a \$10 fee on passenger vehicles for trauma. **UPDATE:** *Passed Senate. Assigned to House Ways & Means Committee.*

OTHER LEGISLATION

SB 69 (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th) expands the definition of child abuse to include sexual exploitation by any person who allows, permits, encourages or requires a child to engage in prostitution or any sexually explicit product. Also expands the mandate for reporting child abuse beyond the responsibility of the parent or caretaker to include any person. **UPDATE:** *Passed Senate. Assigned to House Judiciary Non-Civil.*

SB 91 (Sen. Jack Murphy, 27th) would create a \$5.00 surcharge on adult entertainment to fund services for sexually exploited youth. **UPDATE:** *Passed Senate Finance. Did not reach Senate floor for a vote by 30th day.*

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Feedback, questions, or concerns can be directed to the HMHB Public Affairs Committee, c/o Merrilee Gober, Chair at magober@bellsouth.net