



Keeping Current @ the Capitol March 22, 2010

Legislators have completed 27 of 40 legislative days. They are in session Monday, Tuesday and Thursday of this week. Thursday March 25th will be “crossover day,” the last day for legislation to pass from its chamber of origin to the other side. The 30th day is typically hectic and lasts late into the evening as legislators scramble to move their bills. Next week legislators will convene on Monday, March 29th for the 31st legislative day. The calendar has not been set beyond this date.

Budget Update

There is still no word on when work will resume on the Amended FY 2010 budget, which has passed the House and Senate but must be finalized in conference committee. Work continues behind the scenes on the FY 2011 budget, which must pass the House by the end of the 30th legislative day.

On March 11, Gov. Perdue lowered the Amended FY 2010 revenue estimate by \$343 million and the FY 2011 revenue estimate by \$443 million. As was explained last week, the governor proposed dealing with the resulting FY 2011 shortfall of close to \$1 billion by increasing various state fees, eliminating the sales tax exemption for nonprofit hospitals, requiring a 10.25% reduction in Medicaid provider payments for doctors and hospitals and an additional 3% cut for most state agencies. State agencies spent much of last week trying to determine how to manage this latest round of budget cuts.

ACTION NEEDED:

Attend a rally for revenues to stop budget cuts Tuesday March 23rd.

Numerous organizations including Families First, the Interfaith Children’s Mission, AARP and others plan a rally for Tuesday, March 23rd at 2:00 p.m. on the Washington Street side of the State Capitol. They say cutting spending is only one part of the solution to the current budget crisis and that officials have gone far beyond eliminating inefficiency and “nice to do” programs. They are calling for raising revenues in sensible ways to ensure that services for children, the elderly and struggling families are preserved and that Georgia does not go backward in irretrievable ways.

HMHB Legislative Agenda Update

Oppose legislation that threatens health insurance benefits such as mammograms, pap smears, and childhood immunizations.

HB 1184 (Rep. Matt Ramsey, 72nd) would allow insurance products licensed and sold in other states to be sold in Georgia. Out-of-state insurers are exempted from state laws governing required benefits and consumer protections that apply to health insurers licensed in Georgia. The bottom line is that benefits such as mammograms, pap smears, well child care and minimum hospital stays following childbirth would be threatened.

Status: HB 1184 will be voted on in House Insurance Committee on Monday, March 22nd.

Support legislation to increase the state's tobacco tax.

Momentum continues to build for passage of legislation increasing the tobacco tax. . Last week a successful rally was held at the Capitol as well as numerous press conferences around the state. Additional House members from both parties have signed **HB 39** (Rep. Ron Stephens, 164th), the tobacco tax legislation introduced in 2009. **Status:** Legislators remain opposed to consideration of any options for new revenues. Your attendance at the rally mentioned above can help convince them that budget cuts alone are not the answer and that Georgia needs new sources of revenue, including an increase in the tobacco tax.

Support funding for a statewide trauma care system.

SR 277 (Sen. Greg Goggans, 7th) proposes a vote on a constitutional amendment to add a \$10 car tag fee to provide funds for a trauma trust fund. **Status:** SR 277 passed the Senate in 2009 and was favorably reported by the House Ways & Means Committee but was not voted on in the House. House Ways & Means has again favorably reported SR 277 and it is assigned to House Rules, awaiting placement on the calendar for a vote in the House.

Prepared for HMHB by Mary Frances Williams.