



Keeping Current @ the Capitol March 29, 2010

Legislators have completed 30 of 40 legislative days. Friday March 26th was “crossover day,” the last day for legislation to pass from its chamber of origin to the other side. Some bills find new life when their contents are amended onto bills that are moving. The budget bills are not subject to the crossover day rule.

Legislators are in session Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of this week. The legislature will then adjourn until Monday, April 12 for the 34th 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. House Appropriations Subcommittee meetings have been scheduled on Tuesday, March 30 to discuss the FY 2011 budget, indicating that the House is close to passing its version of that budget.

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) and **SB 407** (Sen. Judson Hill, 32nd) are two bills 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. These bills threaten benefits such as well child care and minimum hospital stays following childbirth. **Status:** HB 1184 passed the House on 3/26 and SB 407 passed the Senate on the same day. A bi-partisan coalition of women legislators opposed these bills and blocked passage of SB 407 in the Senate on 3/24. Republican leadership then pressured Republican women legislators to abandon their opposition to the bills, threatening action on other legislative and budget items. SB 407 was reconsidered in the Senate and passed in a party line vote.

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:** **HB 39** did not pass by crossover day.

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.

Other Legislation of Interest to HMHB Members

HB 1407 (Rep. Carl Rogers, 26th) requires a single administrator for Medicaid and PeachCare dental services. **Status:** Passed the House on 3/26.

SB 443 (Sen. Preston Smith, 52nd) would give the General Assembly a way of overseeing the CMOs that serve Medicaid and PeachCare patients. **Status:** Passed the Senate on Monday, March 22nd. Assigned to House Health & Human Services.

SB 458 (Sen. Don Thomas, 54th) eliminates the exemption of pick-up trucks from the requirement that drivers use seat belts. **Status:** Passed the Senate on 3/24. A similar bill introduced by Sen. Thomas, SB 22, passed the Senate in 2009. SB 22 is assigned to House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs, which has taken not action on the bill. Failure to pass such legislation costs Georgia millions each year in federal highway funds.

Prepared for HMHB by Mary Frances Williams.