



HEALTHY MOTHERS, HEALTHY BABIES
Coalition of Georgia

Keeping Current @ the Capitol April 19, 2010

Legislators have completed 36 of 40 legislative days. They met for three days last week. There was much concern that with only a few days left the amended FY 2010 budget had not been finalized and the House had yet to vote on the FY 2011 budget. Two bills to raise revenues for the FY 2011 budget were pending: **HB 307** (Rep. Jim Cole, 125th) the governor's bill to enact a 1.45 percent hospital provider fee to help fund the Medicaid budget and **HB 1055** (Rep. Kevin Levitas, 82nd) which generates revenue by increasing a number of state fees. The House and Senate had difficulty reaching agreement on these two bills and passage of both in some form was necessary to generate enough revenue to move forward with the FY 2011 budget. On Wednesday, House and Senate leadership signaled that an agreement had been reached when the House added language from HB 307 to HB 1055 and also added amendments creating permanent tax breaks for wealthy seniors to the bill. This amended version of HB 1055 passed the House, was agreed to in the Senate and has been sent to the governor for his signature. The House then passed their version of the FY 2011 budget.

Budget Update

A conference committee was appointed last week to finalize the Amended FY 2010 budget. Now that the FY 2011 budget has passed the House, the budget process is expected to move quickly. The Senate Appropriations Committee is expected to pass the FY 2011 budget on Tuesday, April 20 and it should be on the Senate floor for a vote on Wednesday, April 21. The House-Senate budget conferees will then have to work quickly in order to pass the amended FY 2010 and FY 2011 budgets by the 40th legislative day.

The House version of the FY 2011 budget contains much deeper cuts than in the governor's proposed budget as presented to legislators in January. These additional cuts were required when the governor lowered the FY 2011 revenue estimate in March by \$333 million and transferred \$343 million in ARRA funds from FY 2011 into the amended FY 2010 budget. State agencies were instructed to make recommendations for how they would implement another 3.3% in cuts.

The House made the following changes to the Department of Community Health budget:

- Public health grant-in-aid funding is cut by an additional \$2.249 million
- There are additional cuts with little explanation in Infant and Child Health Promotion (\$394,807) and Infant and Child Essential Health Treatment Services (\$911,154).
- The House proposes increasing PeachCare premiums by \$5 a month for ages 6 and above
- Funding for a family planning healthy babies waiver (\$1,275,000) is included. There is a 9:1 federal match for this funding.

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. HB 1184 threatens benefits such as well child care and minimum hospital stays following childbirth. **Status:** HB 1184 was reported favorably by the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee on Tuesday, April 13, and is in the Senate Rules Committee. It could come before the full Senate as early as Tuesday for a vote.

ACTION NEEDED: Contact **Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle** Monday (Phone: 404-656-5030; FAX: 404-656-6739). Urge him not to permit HB 1184 to come to the Senate floor (Leave a voice mail, if no one answer and be sure and give your name and address.) If you wish to send your message by email, click on the following: www.legis.state.ga.us/, then click on "Georgia Senate." When that page opens, you'll see a tool bar at the top of the page with "Lt. Governor" listed in the first position on the left. Your click will send you to the Lt. Governor's information page. In that tool bar, you'll see "Contact the Lt. Governor." Click and follow the prompts to send your email.

Support legislation to increase the state's tobacco tax.

In spite of growing concerns about falling state revenues and the need for even more budget cuts, House and Senate leadership have taken no action on HB 39, which would increase the tobacco tax by \$1.00 a pack

Status: HB 39 did not pass the House 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 on March 17.

Other Legislation of Interest to HMHB Members

SB 458 (Sen. Don Thomas, 54th) eliminates the exemption of pick-up trucks from the requirement that drivers use seat belts. Failure to require seat belts in all autos costs Georgia millions each year in federal highway funds. **Status:** Passed the Senate. Favorably reported by House Health & Human Services on 4/12.

Other News

Gov. Perdue has appointed Clyde Reese as DCH Commissioner. Mr. Reese had served since 2008 as DCH General Counsel.

Prepared for HMHB by Mary Frances Williams