

2022 Georgia General Assembly Legislative Days 5-8



Week Overview

The Georgia General Assembly met Monday to Thursday for Legislative Days 5-8. They took Friday off for a long weekend in which they will be convening for Legislative Day 9 on Tuesday, February 1st. Early in the week, the legislature passed a bold adjournment resolution outlining the calendar up to Legislative Day 40 (Sine Die). With the adjournment resolution set to Day 40, the legislature is expected to act swiftly over the upcoming weeks. Throughout this week, there were a multitude of bills and resolutions introduced that resemble more national politics than Georgia politics, a sign of the upcoming 2022 elections. Among the issues being discussed include political lightning rods like abortion legislation, voting and election reform, and critical race theory. While many of the bills introduced and debated this week pertain to more national issues, Speaker Ralston, joined by a strong bipartisan backing in the House, introduced a comprehensive bill to boost Georgia's mental health system and services.

Adjournment Resolution

Tuesday, February 1st - Legislative Day
9

Wednesday, February 2nd - Legislative
Day 10

Thursday, February 3rd - Legislative
Day 11

Monday, February 7th - Legislative Day
12

Tuesday, February 8th - Legislative Day
13

Wednesday, February 9th - Committee
Day

Thursday, February 10th - Legislative
Day 14

Friday, February 11th - Legislative Day
15

Monday, February 14th - Legislative
Day 16

Tuesday, February 15th - Legislative
Day 17

Wednesday, February 16th -
Committee Day

Thursday, February 17th - Legislative
Day 18

Tuesday, February 22nd - Legislative
Day 19

Wednesday, February 23rd -
Committee Day

Thursday, February 24th - Legislative
Day 20

Monday, February 28th - Legislative
Day 21

Tuesday, March 1st - Legislative Day 22
Wednesday, March 2nd - Committee
Day

Thursday, March 3rd - Legislative Day
23

Friday, March 4th - Legislative Day 24

Tuesday, March 8th - Legislative Day 25
Wednesday, March 9th - Legislative Day
26

Thursday, March 10th - Committee Day

Friday, March 11th - Legislative Day 27

Monday, March 14th - Committee Day

Tuesday, March 15th - Legislative Day
28 (Crossover Day)

Wednesday, March 16th - Legislative
Day 29

Thursday, March 17th - Legislative Day
30

Friday, March 18th - Legislative Day 31

Monday, March 21st - Legislative Day
32

Tuesday, March 22nd - Legislative Day
33

Wednesday, March 23rd - Legislative
Day 34

Thursday, March 24th - Committee Day

Friday, March 25th - Legislative Day 35

Monday, March 28th - Legislative Day
36

Tuesday March 29th, - Legislative Day
37

Wednesday, March 30th - Legislative
Day 38

Thursday, March 31st - Committee Day

Friday, April 1st - Legislative Day 39

Saturday, April 2nd - Committee Day

Sunday, April 3rd - Committee Day

Monday, April 4th - Legislative Day 40
(Sine Die)



Campaign Season in the Legislature

The 2022 campaign season has started early this year with legislators introducing and debating a multitude of controversial bills. Among the hotly contested pieces of legislation include critical race theory, Buckhead De-Annexation and Cityhood, abortion, voting and election reform, vaccination mandates, school vouchers and the repeal of the state income tax among other issues.

While some pieces of legislation might pass or move, many are being introduced solely for the campaign trail. The entirety of the Legislature along with all statewide constitutional offices are up for reelection in November. Additionally, Georgia's U.S. Senate race for Senator Raphael Warnock's seat will bring in enormous funding and attention to the other statewide races.

Among those who are running for statewide office, there are currently eleven legislators vying to represent Georgia statewide. Among them include Senate Pro Tem Butch Miller, Senator Burt Jones, Rep. Bee Nguyen, Senator Tyler Harper, Rep. Erick Allen and Rep. Derrick Jackson.



Mental Health Overhaul

On Wednesday, January 26th Speaker David Ralston held a press conference introducing a bill that would boost mental health services in the state. House Bill 1013 would overhaul the state's current mental health service, which is ranked 48th in the nation for access to mental health and substance abuse services. House Bill 1013 would incorporate two years of research and work conducted by a state task force that featured mental health, substance abuse and criminal justice experts. The bill has strong support including being cosponsored by both Majority Leader Jon Burns and Minority Leader James Beverly.

Speaker Ralston's announcement could not come at a more pressing time with Georgia's mental health crisis at a peak since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Georgia's mental health crisis hotline has experienced a 24% increase in calls, texts and chats since the pandemic began, while mental health screenings have soared by 426%, Judy Fitzgerald, commissioner of the state Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, told members of a House committee last month.

The bill seeks parity in pay for mental health providers compared to other health-care providers, strengthens workforce development initiatives aimed at addressing a shortage of mental-health workers and looks to strengthen police departments forced to serve as first responders to calls involving people suffering from mental illness or substance abuse.

General Bills of Interest

SB 356 (Sen. Frank Ginn) – This bill would reduce the restrictions on using a hand held cellular device while operating a motor vehicle. This bill has been sent to the Senate Public Safety Committee.

HB 961 (Rep. Chuck Efstrotation) – This bill would allow for evidence of a non-party's fault and authorize apportionment of damages in single-defendant lawsuits. This bill was voted out of the House Judiciary Committee and is now in the Rules Committee.

SB 372 (Sen. Brandon Beach) – This bill would make it unlawful for a person to be denied any local or state services, goods, facilities, advantages, privileges, licensing, educational opportunities, health care access, or employment opportunities based on their vaccine status or whether or not they have an immunity passport. This bill has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Bills of interest for AIA

HB 302 (Rep. Martin Momtaham) - This bill would restrict local governments by removing the ability to determine a regulatory fee amount based on the number of square feet of a new construction project or the cost of all other construction projects. Under current law, the amount of the regulatory fee charged must approximate the cost of the regulatory activity performed by the local government. This bill would require that the proceeds of the regulatory fee be used to fund the regulatory activity but would not require the local government to establish a separate account for the funds. Additionally, current law provides a nonexclusive list of industries that may be subject to local government regulatory fees. This bill would remove from that list taxicab and limousine operators and boxing promoters. This bill passed the Georgia House of Representatives 91-65. The Senate read and referred to the Finance Committee. This bill was heard for debate only on Wednesday, January 26, 2022. The debate was centered around how regulatory fees are calculated.

HB 435 (Rep. Victor Anderson) - This bill will provide for the exemption of certain contracts procured competitively by the state or organizations relating to contract and bidding requirements for public works. This bill failed to pass the Georgia House of Representatives 80-86, but was reconsidered with an amendment and passed. The Senate read and referred to the Governmental Oversight Committee.

HB 469 (Rep. Ron Stephens) - This bill would revise procedures, conditions, and limitations relating to tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic structures. This bill was passed by House Ways and Means. This bill passed the Georgia House of Representatives. The Senate read and referred to the Finance Committee where it was passed.

HB 476 (Rep. Dale Washburn) - This bill would create the Georgia Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors Board, an independent state agency attached to the Secretary of State for administrative purposes only. This bill passed the House Regulated Industries Committee, and was also passed by House Rules. This bill passed the Georgia House of Representatives 163-2. It also passed the Senate Committee on Regulated Industries and Committees.

HB 586 (Rep. Sam Watson) - This bill would extend the sunset date for the exemption for projects of regional significance regarding sales and use tax. This bill passed out of House Ways and Means and was passed by the House. The Senate read and referred to the Finance Committee where it was passed.

SB 45 (Sen. Bruce Thompson) - This bill would provide for individuals moving to the state to obtain a license by endorsement to practice certain professions in this state. This bill was passed by the Senate, and the House read and referred to the Committee on Regulated Industries.

SR 298 (Sen. Brandon Beach) - This bill would create the Senate Annexation Study Committee. This bill is currently in Senate Rules.