

Legislative Days 39 - 40
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SINE DIE

Legislative Report



Georgia Society
of Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery

2024

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GOVERNMENT
RELATIONS

Week 11, Legislative Days 39-40

The end of the legislative session reached its apex this past week in the Georgia General Assembly as lawmakers embarked on the final stretch of their 12-week session. With Day 39 falling on Tuesday, March 26th, and Day 40, also known as SINE DIE, on Thursday, March 28th, the atmosphere was charged with anticipation. This week marked the last opportunity for bills to navigate through the second chamber following their successful passage in the initial original chamber prior to the Crossover deadline on Day 28 several weeks ago. Amidst the urgency, both the House and the Senate worked late into the night, striving to clear their dockets and ensure the passage of as many bills as possible. Now, those bills fortunate enough to have secured approval from both chambers are poised for the next stage: the Governor's office. Here, they await either the signature of approval or the veto stamp within the 40 calendar day signing period, or the possibility of becoming law through executive inaction after the allotted time frame. The Governor's bill signing period ends May 8th, 2024.



SINE DIE Breakdown

SINE DIE, the latin phrase meaning ‘end of days,’ marks the culmination of the legislative session, serving as the formal conclusion of the Georgia General Assembly's work for the year. As lawmakers adjourn SINE DIE, they effectively bring an end to their deliberations until the next session. In the 2024 session, the General Assembly grappled with a substantial workload, addressing over 4500 bills and more than 1550 resolutions combined between the Senate and House. The Senate and House Rules Committees played pivotal roles in managing the legislative agenda. The Senate Rules Committee added 53 tabled bills from previous legislative days to the SINE DIE debate calendar, ensuring their opportunity to be considered before adjournment. Meanwhile, the House extracted 45 bills from their consideration calendar, moving them onto the House floor debate calendar, either from the day's agenda or rollovers from prior legislative days. By the conclusion of SINE DIE, both chambers had successfully passed and agreed to 119 pieces of legislation, addressing a diverse array of

issues. The House passed 35 bills and resolutions with the Senate passing 26. Both chambers worked to agree to 59 pieces of legislation total. Among the most pressing matters of the day were discussions on a sports betting constitutional amendment, agreement on the state budget, and deliberations over homestead exemption bills.

FY 25 State Budget

The final agreement to House Bill 916, the Georgia state Fiscal Year 2025 budget, was reached in a conference committee late on SINE DIE. Initially, the House and Senate passed differing versions of the budget, leading to a series of disagreements and insistence between the chambers. Ultimately, a conference committee was appointed, and both chambers reached a consensus. The finalized budget restores cuts to the Department of Education budget, bringing it back to \$15.5 billion, while also fully funding literacy coaches with a \$6 million allocation and increasing dyslexia screening funds by \$1.5 million. Additionally, the budget allocates \$35 million for sexual assault care centers and boosts funding for women's care centers, including a \$1 million increase to address maternal mortality rates. School nutrition funding was restored to \$846 million, and significant investments were allocated across the state for mental health treatment and care centers. Furthermore, \$35 million is designated for the transportation trust fund to support transportation infrastructure, with an additional \$7.5 million allocated for LMIG funding. However, the budget negotiations occurred against a backdrop of concerning revenue trends, with reports indicating consecutive months of year-over-year revenue decline, notably in February, where net tax revenues fell by 4.3%. Overall, the Governor's FY 2024 revenue estimate projects a substantial 13% year-over-year decrease in tax revenues, marking the worst performance on record since at least 1980. These challenges underscore the importance of prudent budget management and strategic allocation of resources to navigate the potential financial turbulence ahead for Georgia.

Sports Betting

This week, the House Higher Education committee has been working hard on SB 386 and SR 576. SB 386, by Senator Dixon, serves to legalize sports betting and gaming in the state, and SR 576 is the resolution that provides a constitutional amendment for the State of Georgia to rewrite constitutional language to permit gambling. The Constitutional amendment would allow the residents of Georgia to vote on whether or not they want sports betting and gaming to be legal in the state. On Tuesday March 26th, the committee met to discuss and hear these bills for several hours. Other than a minor substitute for SR 576, which changed procedural and administrative happenings with the money made, no action was taken on these bills at that meeting. At 8am on SINE DIE, the House Higher Education committee met again to discuss the bills. Both of the bills were passed on from the committee to be considered for the Rules calendar but were not able to make it onto the House floor before adjournment on SINE DIE

Homestead Exemption

On SINE DIE, the Georgia General Assembly took significant action regarding homestead exemption legislation. House Bill 581, sponsored by Senator Blackmon, focused on homestead exemptions. The bill aimed to allow local governments, meaning all cities, counties, and school boards, to opt out of a state wide cap of a 3% floating homestead before March 1st, 2025. In order to opt out, they must hold three public hearings and hold a public vote via ordinance before the deadline. Local entities with a larger exemption greater than the one provided for in the bill are exempted from the opt out provision. Additionally, the bill includes a provision to reassess every parcel every 3 years to protect against 'sticker shock' due to delayed reassessments of property values. During SINE DIE, the House agreed to Senate changes regarding HB 581, signifying the final passage of the bill sending it to the Governor's office. Additionally, Senate Bill 349, addressing revisions to ad valorem property taxation and millage rate setting, underwent notable amendments in the House committee last week. The proposed

substitute introduced several key alterations, including striking language related to local acts and authorizations, replacing references to special districts with intergovernmental agreements, and ensuring consistency throughout the document. SB 349 passed the House floor on SINE DIE but did not obtain the necessary Senate agreement before adjournment.

HR 1022, a constitutional amendment concerning homestead exemption, achieved a significant milestone in the Georgia General Assembly as it was passed on SINE DIE. The bill enables local governments to opt to provide a state-wide homestead exemption from ad valorem taxes, equal to any amount by which the current year assessed value of a homestead exceeds the inflation rate from the adjusted base year value. The Senate passed the bill on Day 39 of the legislative session, and on SINE DIE, the House agreed to the Senate substitute with an additional amendment. However, the Senate disagreed with this amendment, prompting the House to retract its position and ultimately agree to the Senate-passed version of the bill. This resolution's passage underscores the legislature's efforts to address property tax concerns and provide relief to homeowners across Georgia. The bill includes a required statewide referendum that would be on the ballot in the 2024 election on November 5th. If voters pass the referendum, the provision in HR 1022 will be enacted.

Puberty Blockers

On SINE DIE, the Georgia General Assembly took significant steps towards prohibiting puberty blockers for minors. Initially introduced as House Bill 1170 by Representative Lee Hawkins, the legislation primarily focused on requiring certain state government buildings, courthouses, and university buildings to maintain and make accessible opioid antagonists. However, during the legislative process, a substitute was presented in committee, which included a section defining puberty blockers, hormone therapy, sex, and sex reassignment surgery. This substitute effectively outlawed the treatment of minors for gender dysphoria using puberty blockers, hormone therapy, and sex reassignment surgery. In essence, it aimed to prevent minors in the state of Georgia from undergoing gender reassignment treatment or medically transitioning to another gender. The bill successfully passed in the Senate on SINE DIE despite much disagreement and debate. However, the bill did not achieve the necessary agreement from the House before adjournment on SINE DIE, signifying the death of the bill.

Healthcare Legislation

Tort Reform for Mental Health Providers

House Bill 1409, sponsored by Representative Leverett, addresses tort reform for mental health care providers within the framework of general provisions related to torts. The bill aims to limit liability for mental health care providers, with a focus on restricting exposure to punitive damages. By defining key terms and outlining the scope of liability limitations, HB 1409 seeks to create a more favorable legal environment for mental health care professionals. During the legislative process, an amendment was introduced in the Senate committee, which initially proposed raising caps on liability. However, this amendment was later removed, due to considerations regarding its implications or feasibility. Despite this alteration, the bill successfully passed the House and the Senate with a substitute and obtained the necessary agreements to be transmitted to the Governor's office.

Low THC Oil Patient Registry

Senate Bill 495, addressing the Low THC Oil Patient Registry, achieved a significant milestone in the Georgia General Assembly as it was passed in the House and received the necessary substitute agreements from the Senate on SINE DIE. The bill focuses on establishing the term of validity for a registration card within the Low THC Oil Patient Registry. This legislation holds promising implications for Georgia patients and healthcare. By ensuring the validity of registration cards, SB 495 streamlines the process for patients to access low THC oil, a vital treatment option and pain management option for individuals with qualifying medical conditions. This enhanced accessibility can lead to improved health outcomes and enhanced quality of life for patients across the state. Additionally, by providing clarity and consistency in the registration process, SB 495 contributes to the efficient operation of Georgia's healthcare system, ultimately benefiting both patients and healthcare providers.

GSDDS Legislation

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
HB 502 (Rep. Deborah Silcox)	Georgia Cosmetic Laser Services Act; revise a definition; revise a provision	House passed, Senate passed
HB 1046 (Rep. David Clark)	advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants to order home healthcare services; substitute introduced with language from SB 102 (that died in committee) allowing CRNAs to administer anesthesia without direct physician oversight in rural hospitals	House passed, Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee favorably reported by substitute, Senate passed, House agreed to senate, Senate agreed to House amend
HB 1264 (Rep. Ron Stephens)	Professions and businesses; establish a professional health program to provide for monitoring and rehabilitation of impaired healthcare professionals; authorize	House passed, Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities favorably reported by substitute
HB 1322 (Rep. Chas Cannon)	Georgia Hemp Farming Act; regulate consumable hemp products	House passed, Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities
HB 1326 (Rep. Ron Stephens)	Crimes and offenses; Schedule I, Schedule III, and Schedule IV controlled substances; provide certain provisions	House passed, Senate passed
SB 495 (Sen. Sam Watson)	Low THC Oil Patient Registry; term of validity of a registration card; provide	Senate passed, House Regulated Industries Committee favorably reported, House passed amended, Senate agreed to amendment