

2017 Legislative Update
Week 4

The General Assembly completed Day 12 of the 2017 Legislative Session last Thursday, February 2nd. The legislature re-convened on Tuesday, February 7th for Legislative Day 13. The House and Senate passed a resolution setting the schedule for the remainder of the session that calls for Sine Die to be on March 30th. While this date could change, the General Assembly has followed their adjournment resolution schedules very closely the past few years and March 30th seems to be a realistic goal for ending the session. The pace of activity quickened this week as Committees began to pass out bills for action on the floor.

Budget

HB 43, the supplemental budget, is now in the Senate and HB 44, the 2018 budget, has hearings scheduled. Both bills are sponsored by Speaker David Ralston (R – Blue Ridge).

Business & Industry

SB 85 sponsored by Rick Jeffares (R – McDonough) is a compromise reached between the Georgia Beer Wholesalers and the craft beer industry which will allow breweries in Georgia to make limited direct sales of their product to their customers. The bill caps the total amount of direct sales by each brewer to 3000 barrels per year and allows a customer to purchase a case of beer per day directly from the brewery for take-out from the premises. On-site sales of beer are allowed as well. This effort is designed to help the craft beer industry to continue to grow in Georgia and should be beneficial to both the wholesalers and brewers. The bill passed the Senate on Thursday.

Economic Development

SB 2 sponsored by Sen. Mike Dugan (R – Carrollton), titled the FAST Act - Fairness, Accountability, Simplification and Transparency - empowering our small businesses to succeed, aims to reduce regulations and licensing requirements on small businesses. The bill was heard in the Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee on Tuesday and another hearing is expected this week.

Healthcare

SB 70 sponsored by Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville), would renew the Hospital Provider Payment Program also known as the hospital Medicaid financing program that provides for the continuation of a charge by hospitals statewide which will be pooled to assist in drawing down federal Medicaid matching funds. The current Hospital Provider Payment Program is set to sunset on June 30, 2017 so this bill extends the program until June 30, 2020. The bill passed the Senate on Thursday.

Transportation

SB 6 sponsored by Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonga), creates a statewide regional transit council to address regional solutions to issues of infrastructure for transit. The bill passed the Senate Transportation Committee on Thursday.

HB 160 sponsored by Rep. Kevin Tanner (R – Dawsonville), creates the Georgia Commission on Transit Governance and Funding to study and address the needs of mass transportation. The bill was heard in the House Transportation Committee, a second hearing is expected this week.

For detailed information on specific legislation visit: <http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/Search.aspx>

The Douglas County Chamber is a member of the Regional Business Coalition of Metropolitan Atlanta (RBC), an organization of over a dozen of the largest and most active Chambers of Commerce throughout the metro Atlanta region. RBC member chambers represent over 15,000 member companies who employ millions of metro Atlanta residents. The RBC's primary goal is to represent the interests of RBC Chamber members on regional public policy issues impacting our transportation, water and air quality and to advocate for solutions that improve metro Atlanta's quality of life and economic vitality.