



SENATE OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS

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SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED

2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

*THE SECOND SESSION OF THE
158TH GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY*

This document contains a comprehensive report of legislation passed by the 2026 Georgia General Assembly, with the exception of local legislation, certain resolutions, and the state budgets. Each bill is indexed by the standing Senate committee by which it was favorably reported. If you are a member of the Georgia State Senate and require additional information on a bill, please contact the Senate Office of Policy & Legislative Analysis.

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AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Senate Bill 435

Renames the Georgia Development Authority

- **Sponsors:** Senator Goodman of the 8th and Representative Meeks of the 178th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: This bill renames the Georgia Development Authority as *the Georgia Agricultural Development Authority* and makes conforming changes.

Senate Bill 551

Repeals Provisions Related to Eggs

- **Sponsors:** Senator S. Watson of the 11th and Representative Cameron of the 1st
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: This bill repeals Article 8 (related to the standards, labeling, and adulteration of eggs) of Title 26, Chapter 2.

House Bill 413

Revises Certain Transfer-on-Death Deed Requirements and Procedures; Prohibits Regulating Certain Livestock or Owners

- **Sponsors:** Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Jenkins of the 136th
- **Effective Date:** Signed April 22, 2026 (Act 379)

Synopsis: This bill clarifies that grantee beneficiaries named in transfer-on-death deeds have a direct and tangible interest in certain vital records and revises various requirements and procedures regarding transfer-on-death deeds. This bill also prohibits certain local government entities from regulating certain livestock or owners.

Current law requires a state registrar or local custodian, upon receipt of written application, to issue a certified copy of a vital record in that registrar's or custodian's custody or abstract thereof to any applicant having a direct and tangible interest in the vital record. This bill clarifies that such applicant includes, but is not limited to, any grantee beneficiary designated by a record owner in a deed titling an interest in real estate in a transfer-on-death form.

This bill revises requirements and procedures for creating, accepting (i.e., redeeming), and revoking transfer-on-death deeds. An attorney in fact is not authorized to execute a transfer-on-death deed on behalf of a record owner. Record owners are authorized but not restricted to (A) designate one or more alternate grantee beneficiaries whose property interests are contingent upon certain conditions, and (B) convey a beneficiary interest to an express trust by naming the trustee as a designated grantee beneficiary. Conversely, record owners are not authorized to create or declare an express trust or create a beneficial interest in real property in a transfer-on-death deed. A real estate transfer tax declaration form must not be filed with a transfer-on-death deed filed by the record owner.

Under this bill, a transfer-on-death deed transfers ownership of the record owner's interest in real estate to each grantee beneficiary upon executing and recording the required affidavit. This bill establishes how each designated grantee beneficiary may accept an interest in such real estate. It requires the personal representative of the estate to provide notice to each designated grantee beneficiary. This bill establishes procedures for how the personal representative of solvent and insolvent estates should cure certain issues that subject the property to imminent danger of foreclosure, condemnation, or destruction. This bill establishes a priority special lien for such repair expenses if the amount is not repaid within a year after the grantee beneficiary's acceptance of the property.

This bill clarifies the process for revoking transfer-of-death deeds. This bill requires only one witness (instead of two) for executing the instrument of revocation. Such a revocation cannot be executed by attorneys-in-fact. This bill establishes the precedence and priority of transfer-on-death deeds over all unsecured debts of the record owner's estate filed upon the death of the record owner, *unless the property is unredeemed*. This bill establishes rules for reallocating lapsed/revoked interests among remaining designated grantee beneficiaries.

Current law prohibits counties, municipalities, consolidated governments, or other political subdivisions of Georgia from adopting or enforcing any ordinance, rule, regulation, or resolution regulating crop management or animal husbandry practices involved in the production of agricultural or farm products on any private property. This bill revises this prohibition to also cover *any livestock or owner located on private property or public road* as defined in Chapter 3 of Title 4 (relating to livestock running at large or straying).

House Bill 1195

Revises Veterinary Teletriage Provisions

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Leverett of the 123rd**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 449)**

Synopsis: Current law allows a licensed veterinarian or a veterinary technician supervised by a licensed veterinarian to practice veterinary triage if certain conditions are met. This bill removes the condition that requires licensed veterinarians or veterinary technicians to be unavailable within a 50-mile radius of the animal's location to perform a physical examination at a veterinary facility or the premises where the animal is located within 24 hours of the client's service request. This bill further clarifies that this bill does not require a valid veterinary-client-patient relationship in order to provide veterinary teleadvice or veterinary teletriage.

House Bill 1408

Authorizes Licensed Veterinary Technicians to Administer Antirabies Vaccinations

- **Sponsors: Senator Summers of the 13th and Representative Camp of the 135th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes a licensed veterinary technician working under a licensed veterinarian's direct supervision to administer antirabies vaccinations to any animals that the State of Georgia requires to be vaccinated.

APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill 1193

Georgia Early Literacy Act of 2026

- **Sponsors: Senator Tillery of the 19th and Representative Erwin of the 32nd**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 5, 2026 (Act 391)**

Synopsis: This bill enacts the Georgia Early Literacy Act of 2026, which significantly revises Georgia's literacy and reading education policies. It provides new funding mechanisms for school-based and regional literacy coaches and requires unified literacy plans in all public schools. It further revises instructional and assessment standards, requiring state approval and funding for high-quality, evidence-based instructional materials. This bill also creates new oversight and advisory bodies, including the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee and Georgia Literacy Task Force.

Part I: School-based and Regional Literacy Coaches

This bill provides for **school-based literacy coaches** at all K-3 public schools. It authorizes the State Board of Education ("State Board") to provide grants to local units of administration for the purpose of reimbursing local units for expenditures sufficient to pay the beginning salary and benefits of one school-based literacy coach per school. The State Board must collaborate with the Office of Student Achievement ("GOSA") to establish minimum qualifications and duties for school-based literacy coaches. By August 1, 2026, the State Board must establish policies, rules, and regulations necessary for the implementation of this bill, including, but not limited to, the process by which local units of administration must request and receive grant funds.

This bill further provides for **regional literacy coaches** and **regional leadership literacy coaches** to provide literacy coaching, support, and related services to local school systems and other public schools in the RESA service area. In collaboration with the State Literacy Director and the Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator, the board of control of each RESA must assign regional literacy coaches to the local school systems and public schools of the RESA service area. The State Board must collaborate with the GOSA to establish minimum qualifications and duties for regional literacy coaches and regional leadership literacy coaches.

No later than December 31, 2026, the Professional Standards Commission must establish a **literacy coaching endorsement** for teachers and other certificated professional personnel trained in an evidence-based approach to teaching oral and written language aligned to the science of reading. The endorsement must include training on the use of universal reading screeners.

Part II: Unified Literacy Plans; Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee and Task Force

By March 1, 2027, this bill requires the State Board to approve high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading upon the recommendation of GOSA. The bill also revises the timeline and standards for universal reading screeners approved by the State Board.

This bill requires GaDOE to develop professional learning programs for K-3 teachers that emphasize the importance of applying research about the science of reading to instructional practices and of using high-quality instructional materials. It specifically requires the development of a state-wide comprehensive curriculum based professional learning program in structured literacy that is aligned to and includes research on the science of reading to support teachers and literacy coaches in applying such research into instructional practices for K-3 teachers and literacy coaches. Beginning no later than the 2027-2028 school year, such comprehensive program must be made available free of charge to public school K-3 teachers.

The bill revises rules and standards for state approved educator preparation programs to reflect the use of diagnostic assessments to identify student strengths and weaknesses. Beginning January 1, 2027, the Professional Standards Commission must undertake an ongoing review of each state approved educator preparation program's compliance with such rules and provide a report of its findings by November 1 each year.

No later than January 1, 2027, each local board of education and other public school governing body must adopt a unified literacy plan. The State Board is prohibited from granting waivers or authorizing charter school petitions or renewals unless the school or system has adopted or included a unified literacy plan.

Beginning with the 2029-2030 school year and continuing thereafter, it is state policy that no public school that receives public funds may use any portion of such funds for the purchase or use of instructional materials and content for K-3 literacy and reading education that are not approved for such purpose by the State Board upon the recommendation of the Georgia Literacy Task Force.

This bill creates the **Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee** within GOSA to maintain and amend as needed the Georgia Literacy Plan originally created by the Georgia Council on Literacy, among other responsibilities. The bill further provides for the State Literacy Director, the Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator, and the Georgia Literacy Task Force, along with qualifications, membership, and duties for each. The bill also sunsets the previous Georgia Council on Literacy on December 31, 2026.

Part III: Enrollment, Placement, and Promotion

This bill requires all local school systems to offer a full-day kindergarten program and encourages parents to enroll their children in school beginning at age five. It further provides that before any child is enrolled in the first grade of a state supported primary grades program, he or she must attend a full-day kindergarten program unless he or she has been assessed as ready for first grade and meets the age eligibility requirement for enrollment in the first grade.

By July 1, 2026, the State Board must approve one or more assessments, screeners, and other instruments for assessing the first grade readiness of children. GOSA must provide a report on the readiness of Georgia children for placement in or promotion to the first grade program by November 1 each year.

If, upon being assessed for first grade readiness, a child is identified as significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading proficiency, a tiered reading intervention plan must be immediately developed and implemented for such child and the child's parents must be notified in writing. If a child who meets the age eligibility requirement for enrolling in first grade and, after a tiered reading intervention plan has been implemented, the child continues to be significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading proficiency, the school principal must notify the child's parent or guardian that the child is not ready for placement or promotion to the first-grade program. If a parent or guardian appeals such decision, the school principal must establish a placement committee including the child's parent and teacher to review and determine the next steps for such child.

By January 1, 2027, the State Board must adopt criteria for the development of a placement and promotion policy by each local board of education to include criteria for students in first grade. The bill outlines additional procedures for promotion, intervention, and retention based on grade level reading proficiency. Local boards must adopt updated placement and promotion policies by July 1, 2026.

BANKING AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Senate Bill 441

Revises Local Government Investment Pool Requirements

- **Sponsors:** Senator Harbin of the 16th and Representative Chastain of the 7th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: This bill requires any pooled investment, for the collective investment of two or more local governments, to obtain the approval of the State Depository Board prior to establishment. This bill exempts local government investment pools for effecting temporary transfers among separate funds.

House Bill 945

Provides Banking Protections for Eligible Adults

- **Sponsors:** Senator Hodges of the 3rd and Representative Williamson of the 112th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis:

Financial Exploitation: This bill allows an eligible adult to designate a ‘trusted contact’, in addition to a co-owner, beneficiary, or fiduciary, that can be notified if there is suspected financial exploitation. If a financial institution has reasonable cause to suspect that a transaction may involve or result in financial exploitation, the financial institution may place a hold on an account: (1) of an eligible adult, (2) on which the eligible adult is a beneficiary, or (3) of a person suspected of perpetrating the financial exploitation. When such a hold is placed, financial institutions must notify, in writing, all parties authorized on the account within three business days, and initiate a review of the circumstances of the hold. Any such hold expires after fifteen business days, and may be extended another fifteen business days if the review continues to support the reasonable belief that financial exploitation has occurred. A financial institution is immune from any administrative, criminal, or civil liability if they are acting in good faith and exercising reasonable care. Prior to placing any hold, a financial institution must first: (1) develop and conduct training policies and programs, and (2) develop, maintain, and enforce written procedures on the internal review of suspected financial exploitation. Financial institutions must create and maintain records of every hold that includes specific information on the cause of the hold and the person impacted.

Virtual Currency Kiosks: This bill provides rules and regulations for virtual currency kiosks, and the operators of such kiosks. Operators must provide specific disclosures before a customer’s first transaction, and every transaction thereafter. Operators must provide receipts that include specific information regarding the operator, customer, and specific information on the transaction itself. This bill establishes daily transaction limits of \$2,500.00 per day for new customers, and \$10,000.00 per day for existing customers. There is a fee cap of 18%. Operators must implement and maintain certain compliance measures including hiring a chief compliance officer and ensure each customer acknowledges receipt of all disclosures.

Merchant Acquirer Limited Purpose Bank Amendment Requirements: This bill allows a merchant acquirer limited purpose bank to amend its articles when (1) adopting a new name, (2) renewing the term for which it is to exist, (3) changing the statement of its purpose, (4) changing the aggregate number of shares or a reclassification of the shares, (5) restating the articles in entirety, (6) or changing its main office location. The Department of Banking and Finance must issue an approval or disapproval of the amended articles within 60 days. If approved, the Secretary of State must issue a certificate of amendment and maintain records of the certificate and its approval by the department. This bill prohibits any person or corporation from using ‘MALBP’ on specific documents unless they are a certified merchant acquirer.

House Bill 1024

Revises Debtor Aggregate Interest Limits Relating to Bankruptcy

- **Sponsors: Senator Harbin of the 16th and Representative Hong of the 103rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises the limit of debtor aggregate interest that can be exempted for purposes of bankruptcy from \$21,500.00 to \$50,000.00. If title to property is used for the exemption by one member of a married couple and is the property of both spouses the exemption is raised to \$100,000.00. This bill requires that beginning July 1, 2031, and annually thereafter, the exemption must be revised by multiplying it by the inflation rate of the prior year.

House Bill 1272

Georgia Payment Stablecoin Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Dolezal of the 27th and Representative T. Jones of the 25th**
- **Effective Date: Subject to appropriations, the earlier of January 18, 2027 or 120 days after the issuance of final implementing regulations for the GENIUS Act.**

Synopsis: This bill adds a new chapter to Title 7, enacting Section 4(c) of the federal Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for U.S. Stablecoins Act (“GENIUS Act”), for the purpose of regulating payment stablecoins (“stablecoins”) and licensure for payment stablecoin issuers (“issuers”). The bill provides numerous definitions related to stablecoins and stablecoin issuers. This bill authorizes the Department of Banking and Finance (DBF) to make rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this bill and the GENIUS Act.

Under this bill, it is unlawful for any person other than a permitted payment stablecoin issuer to issue a payment stablecoin in Georgia. Beginning July 18, 2028, it will be unlawful to offer or sell a payment stablecoin unless the payment stablecoin is issued by a licensed payment stablecoin issuer, a permitted payment stablecoin issuer, or a state qualified payment stablecoin issuer. Licensed issuers must maintain an office in Georgia at all times, and within one year after the date it begins operations, must have sufficient employees to assure its continued and substantive presence for the purpose of conducting corporate affairs and operations. DBF is authorized to participate in the Nationwide Multistate Licensing System and Registry, and the bill outlines procedures for doing so.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Senate Bill 383

Local Child Fatality Review Committees

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Seabaugh of the 34th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill modifies the purpose of local child fatality review committees to identify opportunities for intervention and make recommendations for measures to prevent future deaths in similar incidents. The bill also adds representatives from a local hospital and school system as required members of each review committee. The bill further requires all agencies represented on a review committee to send a representative to annual training—failure to do so possibly resulting in the same punishment as contempt of court. The bill also provides additional coordination and timeline requirements:

- A county medical examiner or coroner must send notification and a preliminary report to the chairperson of the proper review committee within seven days of a child's death;
- The chairperson must convene the review committee every 30 days to review reports;
- The review committee may request consultation from GBI for guidance, but any final determination on whether a child's death meets the criteria for review by the review committee solely lies with the committee;
- The review committee must complete a review and report of a child's death within 90 days of receiving the county medical examiner or coroner's report; and
- Each review committee must issue an annual report published in the legal organ of the county(s) the review committee serves or a publicly available website.

Senate Bill 402

Pilot Program for Screening Foster Youth for Autism

- **Sponsors: Senator Tillery of the 19th and Representative Silcox of the 53rd**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 491)**

Synopsis: This bill requires DFCS to develop and implement a five-year pilot program for screening and evaluating foster youth for autism spectrum disorder. The pilot program must prioritize screening and evaluations for foster youth diagnosed with ADHD, reactive attachment disorder, or who have been prescribed psychotropic medication. Additionally, DFCS must provide training, services, and resources on autism spectrum disorder to various staff, providers, and caregivers.

The pilot program must be implemented in three regional service areas in the first year and expanded each subsequent year until all regional services areas are included. Upon one year of operation of the pilot program, and annually thereafter by July 1 for the duration of the pilot program, DFCS must submit a report to certain state leaders covering specific topics.

Senate Bill 431

Education Updates: School Enrollment for Foster Youth, RESA Reporting, IPSE Program

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Camp of the 135th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 494)**

Synopsis: This bill repeals O.C.G.A. § 20-1-9 and replaces it with new education definitions, requires receiving schools to immediately enroll foster youth upon enrollment request, prohibits receiving schools from assigning foster youth to remote learning due to delays in receiving required documents, requires each RESA to prepare quarterly reports of disputes and contacts received from the most recent quarter of the school year, and makes various changes to the IPSE grant program.

Definitions: This bill repeals O.C.G.A. § 20-1-9 outlining certain education definitions and replaces it with new definitions. The bill makes additional changes to the definitions of 'education records.' The bill also replaces references to 'school days' and 'business days' with 'school business days.'

Enrollment for Foster Youth: Current law requires a parent or guardian to submit certain critical records before a student is enrolled in a grade higher than the third grade in a receiving school. This bill states that receiving schools must immediately, and under no circumstances later than three business days after receipt of an enrollment registration form, enroll any foster youth seeking enrollment. The bill prohibits the unreasonable delay of timely enrollment of foster youth due to the enforcement of requirements for completing registration forms. Such enrollment may be permanent or provisional. Additionally, this bill prohibits any foster youth from being assigned to remote learning based solely on the receiving school not having received required records. This bill does not waive the responsibility of a parent or guardian of a foster youth to separately submit the required records. The bill further outlines noncompliance procedures.

RESAs: This bill requires each RESA student affairs officer to prepare quarterly reports of disputes and contacts received from the most recent quarter of the school year. The bill lists additional requirements for the quarterly reports. Within 30 days of the conclusion of each quarter of the school year, each RESA student affairs officer must submit the report to GaDOE. By November 1 each year, GaDOE must provide a summary of the information included in such reports to certain state officials.

IPSE Program: This bill makes changes to the inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) program. It modifies the definition of a ‘qualified postsecondary institution.’ The bill also removes the required enrollment date of July 1, 2028, for IPSE grant eligibility and differentiates IPSE grant amounts between 1) students enrolled in institutions of the University System of Georgia or units of the Technical College System of Georgia, and 2) students enrolled in eligible private postsecondary institutions.

Senate Bill 540

AI Companion Chatbot Disclosures

- **Sponsors: Senator Anavitarte of the 31st and Representative T. Jones of the 25th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2027**

Synopsis: This bill requires AI operators to disclose to a user that they are interacting with an AI companion chatbot as opposed to a natural person. If an operator knows, or reasonably should have known, that a user was a minor, or if the AI companion chatbot is directed or marketed toward minor users: (1) the disclosure must be made every hour, (2) the operator must institute reasonable measures to prevent the AI companion chatbot from generating statements that would lead a reasonable person to believe that they are interacting with a natural person, and (3) the operator must institute reasonable measures to prevent the AI companion chatbot from producing, generating, or simulating certain explicit or harmful material or conduct. Operators must adopt reasonable measures to prevent AI companion chatbots from using certain techniques directed to a minor and are prohibited from making an AI companion chatbot available unless the operator implements and maintains a protocol for detecting and addressing severe harm or related emotional crises. Operators must publicly disclose certain information on their websites and within any application through which an AI companion chatbot is made available.

This bill prohibits operators from knowingly and intentionally causing or programming an AI companion chatbot to make any representation that it is licensed, certified, or otherwise authorized to provide professional health services unless the operator is lawfully authorized to provide such services. For accounts known to belong to minor users, operators must offer certain reasonable tools to the minor or parent to manage the minor’s screen time and account settings. Before allowing access to a feature or mode that generates synthetic content containing sexually explicit conduct, operators must use a commercially reasonable age assurance method proportionate to the risk of the feature.

The Attorney General is authorized to bring a civil action against any operator for a violation of this bill. Each day in violation is considered a separate violation for each affected user.

House Bill 256

Rights to Juvenile Court Records; Foster Placements Bill of Rights

- **Sponsors: Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Wiedower of the 121st**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 475)**

Synopsis: This bill establishes the right for a party to any proceeding in juvenile court and DHS to obtain a full and complete record of juvenile court proceedings without a court order.

The bill also revises the ‘Foster Parents Bill of Rights’ and renames it the ‘Foster Placements Bill of Rights’. The bill further defines ‘foster placement’ to include and thereby extend such rights to relative caregivers and fictive kin. With respect to any child placed in the custody of a state department or agency, a foster placement must have access to the child’s records excluding those which may not be lawfully disclosed. A department or agency must respond to requests for such records within 14 days of receipt. The bill specifies the extent to which such information may be shared. The compiled record must include: reports of child abuse, the social history of the child and their family, the medical history of the child, educational records, and any plan of care or placement plan.

The bill adds and clarifies rights for foster placements, including the rights to: use a reasonable and prudent parent standard when determining the ability of a foster child to engage in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, social, or skill-building activities; be provided a fair, timely, and impartial investigation of complaints concerning the foster placement’s home; request a certified volunteer advocate be present at all meetings with DHS where the foster placement is present; be free from retaliation or discrimination for filing of a complaint or grievance with DFCS; and seek and obtain independent legal advice and counsel regarding the foster placement’s status.

Finally, this bill requires DHS to develop and publish new grievance procedures no later than July 1, 2026.

House Bill 943

Pilot Program for Screening Foster Youth for Autism

- **Sponsors: Senator Tillery of the 19th and Representative Silcox of the 53rd**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 477)**

This bill requires DFCS to develop and implement a five-year pilot program for screening and evaluating foster youth for autism spectrum disorder. The pilot program must prioritize screening and evaluations for foster youth diagnosed with ADHD, reactive attachment disorder, or who have been prescribed psychotropic medication. Additionally, DFCS must provide training, services, and resources on autism spectrum disorder to various staff, providers, and caregivers. The pilot program must be implemented in three regional service areas in the first year and expanded each subsequent year until all regional services areas are included. Upon one year of operation, and annually thereafter until July 1, 2031, DFCS must submit a report to certain state leaders covering specific topics.

House Bill 1009

Prohibits Access to Personal Electronic Devices for High School Students

- **Sponsors: Senator Still of the 48th and Representative Hilton of the 48th**
- **Effective Date: December 31, 2026**

Beginning no later than July 1, 2027, this bill prohibits public school students in grades nine through 12 from accessing their personal electronic devices during the school day. By January 1 each year, local school systems must adopt and revise policies that prohibit access to personal electronic devices by students in grades nine through 12 during the school day. Schools must also establish procedure for off-site device access, including participation in dual enrollment programs, work-based learning, and apprenticeship programs to that category.

House Bill 1118

Maternal Birth Leave for Certain Employees

- **Sponsors: Senator Strickland of the 42nd and Representative Donatucci of the 105th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires eligible employees of an employing entity to be eligible for 120 hours of paid maternal birth leave for qualifying life events after six continuous months of employment regardless of whether the employee is eligible for leave under federal law. An ‘employing entity’ is a unit of the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of state government or a local education agency. ‘Maternal birth leave’ is a period of paid time off from work necessary to recuperate as a result of a qualifying life event. A ‘qualifying life event’ is giving birth to one or more children in a single or multiple pregnancy.

Maternal birth leave may only be taken during the three-week period immediately following a qualifying life event and must precede the taking of any paid parental leave. Unused paid maternal birth leave has no cash value at the time of an eligible employee's separation from employment. Eligible employees employed on an hourly basis are eligible for paid maternal birth leave if they have worked a minimum of 700 hours over the six-month period immediately preceding the requested paid maternal birth leave.

House Bill 1123

Requires After-School Programs be Available to Pre-K Students

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative J. Jones of the 47th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

This bill requires qualifying schools that offer after-school programs to make the programs available to students enrolled in pre-K programs beginning in the 2026-2027 school year. Qualifying schools include those with students enrolled in a kindergarten program, primary grades program, upper elementary grades program, and providing a pre-K program. The Department of Early Care and Learning may waive this requirement for up to one year upon receiving a written request from a qualifying school. Schools seeking a waiver must submit a new application each school year.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Senate Bill 111

Rural Hospital Organizations

- **Sponsors: Senator Albers of the 56th and Representative O'Steen of the 169th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises the definition of 'rural hospital organization' by requiring that: (1) it can include rural freestanding emergency departments, (2) it has a primary campus located in a rural county or is a critical access hospital, and (3) it is licensed by DCH to provide maternal and newborn services or has at least 5 percent of its annual net revenue categorized as indigent care, charity care, or bad debt. The bill removes the requirement that a rural hospital organization has a three-year average patient margin less than one standard deviation above the state-wide three-year average for organizations.

Senate Bill 420

Reef and Migratory Fish Endorsement Fees

- **Sponsors: Senator Echols of the 49th and Representative Petrea of the 166th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill establishes a \$10.00 fee for a resident reef/migratory fish endorsement and a \$20.00 fee for a nonresident reef/migratory fish endorsement. Any fees collected must be retained by the Department of Natural Resources. This bill also expands current law to include *recreational* fishing under these provisions.

House Bill 376

Revises Tax Credits for the Rehabilitation of Historic Structures

- **Sponsors: Senator Hodges of the 3rd and Representative Hilton of the 48th**
- **Effective Date: VETOED May 12, 2026 (V2)**

Synopsis: This bill revises existing provisions related to tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic structures. Specifically, the bill increases the amount of qualified rehabilitation expenditures required for certified structures other than historic homes to qualify for the credit.

For certified structures that are not historic homes, current law provides for a credit equal to 25 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenditures. Under this bill, on and after January 1, 2026, such structures are eligible for a credit equal to 20 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenditures. In a county with a population of less than 50,000, such a certified structure will be allowed an additional credit equal to 10 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenditures.

The bill increases the existing maximum credit for any individual certified structure that creates at least 200 full-time jobs or \$5 million in annual payroll within two years of the placed in-service date from \$10 million to \$15 million. The bill further increases the maximum aggregate credit for certified structures other than historic homes from \$30 million to \$60 million.

House Bill 455

Updates Bingo Game Regulations

- **Sponsors: Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Powell of the 33rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises bingo game restrictions by allowing licensees to conduct games at multiple locations, allowing licensees to conduct up to three sessions per day, increasing the daily prize threshold, and increasing the amounts individuals may be paid for assisting with bingo games.

House Bill 466

Designates the Official Georgia Heritage Horse and Cattle Breeds

- **Sponsors: Senator Bearden of the 30th and Representative Cameron of the 1st**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill designates the marsh tacky horse as the official Georgia heritage horse breed. It further designates the pineywoods cattle as the official Georgia heritage cattle breed.

House Bill 998

Revises Rate of Return Regulation for Tier 2 Local Exchange Companies

- **Sponsors: Senator Burns of the 23rd and Representative Leverett of the 123rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes a Tier 2 local exchange company, which has already elected to participate in *alternative* regulation, to elect to become subject to *rate of return* regulation. This election must be submitted to the Georgia Public Service Commission no later than August 1, 2026. Any company making this election is prohibited from making a subsequent election to *alternative* regulation prior to August 1, 2031. This bill must not be construed to limit any election to become subject to *rate of return* regulation made prior to July 1, 2026. This bill revises requirements for distributions from the Universal Access Fund. A company must file information necessary to determine actual and reasonable costs for services, including, but not limited to, the most recent unredacted audited financial reports with accompanying notes. This bill also specifies that no distributions can be made for any expense incurred after December 31, 2040. The Fund must not distribute more than \$50 million per fund year for distributions taking place on or after July 1, 2026. The PSC must continue to administer, review, approve, and disburse distributions as reimbursements for eligible costs incurred prior to July 1, 2026. The PSC is required to submit a written report on the Fund on December 31, 2026 and every other year thereafter.

House Bill 1310

Designates Cotton as the Official State Fabric

- **Sponsors: Senator S. Watson of the 11th and Representative Ford of the 170th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill designates cotton as the official state fabric.

EDUCATION AND YOUTH

Senate Bill 148

Hunting Safety Instruction; Outdoor Learning Pilot Program; Removes Physician Requirement in Defibrillator Programs; Increases Personal Leave for School Personnel

- **Sponsors: Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Hong of the 103rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill establishes criteria for instruction in hunting safety in grades six through 12, provides for an outdoor learning spaces pilot program, removes the requirement of having a licensed physician in automated defibrillator programs, and increases the amount of accumulated sick leave school personnel may use for personal and professional use.

This bill authorizes local boards of education to provide instruction in hunting safety in grades six through 12 beginning in the 2026-2027 school year. Each board of education may establish a curriculum based on courses offered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the State Board of Education must adopt standards for instruction by April 1, 2026. Courses must be taught by an individual certified by DNR.

This bill also authorizes GaDOE to establish a pilot program to provide for the development and study of outdoor learning spaces on elementary and secondary school property. GaDOE may select elementary or secondary schools with sufficient existing or potential outdoor learning spaces to participate in the pilot program. Private, nonprofit, and local school system funding may be utilized by the pilot schools for community engagement, school grounds design support, and capital construction costs. The local school board for each pilot school must agree to implement and maintain the program for at least three years. Upon completion of the third year, GaDOE must evaluate the success and impact of the program and report its findings to certain committees.

This bill removes the requirement of having a licensed physician in automated defibrillator programs in schools. This bill also increases the amount of accumulated sick leave that teachers and school personnel may use for personal and professional use from three to five days maximum.

Senate Bill 369

Establishes Various Requirements for Nontraditional Education Programs

- **Sponsors: Senator Still of the 48th and Representative J. Jones of the 47th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires the State Board of Education to establish definitions, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures to govern the operation of nontraditional education programs and services by July 1, 2027. Such definitions, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures must require a nontraditional education program or school to provide an explanation of special education services, remedial education program services, and other nontraditional education programs; measurable objective performance standards; and the monitoring, evaluating, and reporting procedures for the performance standards. In the required annual report, GOSA must separately report on the performance of nontraditional education programs and services in local school systems.

This bill revises the 'Dexter Mosely Act' by requiring home study and virtual school students to be eligible to participate in extracurricular and interscholastic activities through a resident school or resident school system, provided that certain requirements are met. Current law prohibits a student who withdraws from a public school to participate in a home study program from participating in extracurricular or interscholastic activities for 12 months. This bill adds students who withdraw from a public school and enroll in a qualifying virtual school to the prohibition.

This bill requires local boards of education to take certain factors into consideration when purchasing school technology devices. Beginning in 2027, and no later than October 15 each year, local boards of education must submit a report to GaDOE with certain information regarding school technology devices. Beginning

in 2027, and no later than December 31 each year, GaDOE must submit a report to certain state leaders including the information submitted by local boards of education.

This bill amends the Charter Schools of Act of 1998 to define ‘dropout recovery charter schools’ as charter schools authorized by the local board of education and the State Board of Education that enroll students in any grade six through 12 and provide special education services, remedial education program services, and certain nontraditional education programs and services.

The State Board of Education must establish procedures to govern the charter petition for a dropout recovery charter school. The State Board must establish policies and regulations providing for existing charter schools to convert current charters to dropout recovery charter school charters. The State Board and State Charter Schools Commission must establish separate standards for dropout recovery charter schools, including provisions for establishing measurable objective performance and evaluating progress. GOSA must separately report on the performance of dropout recovery charter schools.

This bill replaces the State Charter Schools Commission with the Office of Charter School Compliance for promoting and supporting the approval of new local charter school petitions and providing incentive grants. The total amount of incentive grants cannot exceed \$2.25 million in any fiscal year.

This bill revises the definition of ‘governing board’ for state charter schools to include the parent corporation of a nonprofit organization if the parent corporation is the sole member of the nonprofit organization. The bill prohibits the State Charter Schools Commission from acting on a petition unless the local board of education has voted to terminate or nonrenew the charter contract or otherwise fails to renew it.

Current law requires that if a state charter school ceases operations, the nonprofit entity which held the charter contract must retain ownership of all records for one year before transferring such records to the State Charter Schools Commission. This bill changes the time period from one year to 180 days.

Senate Bill 472

Financial Oversight of Local Schools; Petition Quotas for School System Ballot Measures

- **Sponsors: Senator Hickman of the 4th and Representative Wade of the 9th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 12, 2026 (Act 722)**

Synopsis:

Local Schools Financial Reporting: This bill requires the state auditor to notify the State Board of Education in writing within three days of determining that a local school system is designated as requiring the highest level of monitoring, supports, and interventions promulgated by the Department of Audits and Accounts. Upon a recommendation by the audit committee and a majority vote of the State Board, a hearing must be held between ten and 90 days to recommend to the governor whether to suspend any members of the local board of education with pay. The same procedure must be followed when a local board of education, board member, local school system, or local school superintendent is subject to a finding of financial mismanagement or misconduct, with initial notice requirements by the state auditor. These requirements apply to local school systems subject to the specific designations and findings beginning on July 1, 2026.

This bill also prohibits the aggregate of state allotted funds distributed by the State Board to a local unit of administration in advance of routine periodic allotments from exceeding an amount equal to 50 percent of the total unit’s state allotted funds for the preceding fiscal year. The State Board is authorized to make advanced distributions exceeding this limit under certain conditions.

Superintendent Employment: Current law requires superintendents be employed by local school systems for a contract term of one to three years. This bill prohibits a contract being extended for more than a one-year period any time a local school system is designated as high-risk by the Department of Audits and Accounts. This bill authorizes a local board of education to terminate the local school superintendent when: (1) the superintendent is the subject of a finding of financial mismanagement or misconduct following an investigation, or (2) the superintendent is the subject of a finding that they have knowingly failed or refused

to comply with a requirement put in place when the local school system is designated as requiring the highest level of monitoring, supports, and interventions. All contracts between local school boards and superintendents after July 1, 2026, must include language outlining these conditions.

Petition Quotas for School System Ballot Measures: Current law requires 25 percent of qualified voters in a territory to sign a petition to annul a local school system and join a county school system for such action to be included on a ballot. This bill reduces the required number of petition signatures to 10 percent of qualified voters in the territory.

Department of Audits and Accounts Responsibilities and Rules: This bill requires the Department of Audits and Accounts to perform an annual financial and compliance audit of financial transactions and accounts of each local school system and state charter school. The Department must also issue a report in conjunction with each audit. By July 1, 2026, the Department must implement a monitoring program for certain purposes. Additionally, the bill prohibits any state aid or public funds from being held in the individual bank account of any official or employee of a local board of education, public school governing body, local school system, state charter school, USG institution, or any other school receiving state aid.

Senate Bill 589

Enrollment Requirements for Pre-K Programs; You Are Not Alone Awareness Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Hilton of the 48th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill provides that each child who attains the age of four or five by September 1 is eligible for enrollment in a voluntary pre-kindergarten program provided and operated within Georgia's Pre-K Program. Children may only be enrolled in the program for one year and must be treated on the same basis relative to selection for available seats in the program, regardless of age. If a child who is eligible for enrollment in first grade enrolls in a state supported education program for the first time, such child must be enrolled in a state supported kindergarten program at the request of their parent or guardian.

This bill also requires schools that issue ID badges to any students in grades six through 12 to print the following statement on badges issued on or after July 1, 2026: "9-8-8 - You are not alone. Right now, anyone experiencing a suicidal crisis, emotional distress, or challenges with substance abuse should call or text 9-8-8. The hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year."

House Bill 907

Requires Collaboration Between Local School Systems and Completion Special Schools

- **Sponsors: Senator Still of the 48th and Representative J. Jones of the 47th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 5, 2026 (Act 392)**

Synopsis: This bill requires completion special schools and local school systems to share certain information, allows direct enrollment in completion special schools for certain students, allows a completion special school to operate programs outside its attendance zone under certain conditions, and requires local school systems to be a party to a collaborative operating agreement with at least one operating completion special school or provide certain education programs.

This bill requires completion special schools to provide an updated description of programs and detailed guidance for registering high school students to resident school systems by June 1 and December 1 each year. Within seven calendar days of receiving this information, resident school systems must post it at each high school in the resident school system and electronically provide it to all students in grades nine through 12 and their parents or guardians.

The bill permits the parent or guardian of a student in grades nine through 12 enrolled in a resident school system to directly register the student with a completion special school. If the student is not enrolled in their resident school system, the completion special school and resident school system must coordinate enrolling the student in the resident school system without delay. This bill also allows a completion special school to operate programs outside its attendance zone under certain conditions. The bill removes a

conditional deadline by which such program offerings must cease when a new completion special school is established in the attendance zone and requires the State Board to provide a reasonable transition period for impacted students.

Each local school system within the attendance zone of an operating completion special school must: (1) be a party to a collaborative operating agreement with at least one operating completion special school; or (2) provide certain education programs and services to students in grades nine through 12. Each qualifying local school system must also provide to each operating completion special school the full name, last known address, and telephone number for each student in grades nine through 12 who: (1) does not attend school for a period of ten consecutive school days; or (2) withdraws from school. This information must be provided within 10 school days of the condition being met. Certain students are exempt from this reporting requirement.

House Bill 1030

Math Matters Act

- **Sponsors: Senator McNeel of the 18th and Representative Donatucci of the 105th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires the State Board of Education to adopt content standards for advanced math courses for grades eight through ten by January 1, 2027. GaDOE must also provide guidance and technical assistance to local education agencies in developing and implementing advanced math courses in grades six and seven. Each local education agency, beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, must (1) require at least 60 minutes daily or 300 minutes weekly of core math instructional time for student in grades four and five, and (2) automatically enroll in an advanced math course each student who receives a score of distinguished learner on the state-wide end-of-course math assessment at the end of the prior school year or demonstrates proficiency using a local measure that considers the student's math coursework or the student's grade point average in math for students in grades six through ten. Each local education agency must establish procedures to allow a parent or guardian to withdraw their child from automatic enrollment and to enroll their child in the advanced math course if the student receives a score of proficient learner on state-wide end-of-course math assessment at the end of the prior school year.

This bill also requires the Georgia Assessment for Certification of Educators to be aligned with evidence-based math instruction. The bill further requires the Professional Standards Commission to recommend the creation of certain standards to ensure that those completing elementary education teacher certification programs graduate with proper math curriculum training and instruction, including skills that develop the four strands of mathematical proficiency.

House Bill 1107

Excellent Teacher Preparation Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Hickman of the 4th and Representative Rice of the 139th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires the Professional Standards Commission to develop EPP performance measures to evaluate each EPP program by January 1, 2027. The performance measures must focus on the preparedness and performance of EPP program graduates and individuals who complete initial preparation programs in Teaching, Leadership, and Service fields, as well as other enrollment, graduation, exam passage, job placement, retention, satisfaction, evaluation, and student performance data. The commission must ensure confidentiality for all individual data, include the data collection processes and evaluation methodology on each performance measure, and publish the performance measures online.

Performance measures for each EPP program must be reported by the commission no later than January 1, 2028, and by January each year thereafter, to specified offices, agencies, and committees. The commission must work with GOSA to create a standard survey to provide to each EPP program graduate and employer at the end of the first year of employment to assess satisfaction with teaching preparedness. GOSA must include a summary of EPP performance measures in an annual report. The Board of Regents of the

University System of Georgia must annually review the performance measures of each EPP program that is part of the University System of Georgia and determine whether interventions or support are necessary.

House Bill 1164

Education Fiscal Oversight and Accountability Reform

- **Sponsors: Senator Hickman of the 4th and Representative Wade of the 9th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis:

Education Audit Committee: This bill requires the State Board of Education to appoint an audit committee, meeting at least six times per year, to review and assess fiscal risks and request reports from multiple agencies. The bill also requires all local school systems and state charter schools to submit signed audit readiness and payment compliance certifications by December 31 each year. Failure to provide such certifications results in mandatory 'high-risk' designation by the Department of Audits and Accounts.

Fiscal Monitoring Program: By July 1, 2026, the Department of Audits and Accounts must develop and begin implementing a plan to monitor the fiscal conditions of schools, provide levels of monitoring and support, and report on conditions. The program must be fully implemented by the 2028-2029 school year. The program must consider various indicators of fiscal concerns. Additionally, the program must include a graduated four-tier framework for assessing and designating schools for escalating courses of monitoring and interventions. The framework is as follows:

1. Tier 1: Fiscally Sound;
2. Tier 2: Fiscal Watch;
3. Tier 3: Fiscal Distress; and
4. Tier 4: Critical Fiscal Emergency.

Tier 2 schools must be deemed 'moderate risk'. Tier 3 and 4 schools must be deemed 'high risk'. Such schools must undergo additional audits and submit corrective action plans and monthly expenditure reports to state agencies. The state auditor may prioritize which schools are subject to the program; however, if the State Board of Education or State School Superintendent refers a school, the auditor must promptly evaluate the school for the program. The state auditor is also authorized to investigate any local school system or state charter school and must make a full investigation when there are facts, records, circumstances, or information that indicate mismanagement or misconduct.

School Contracts: The bill requires local school board flexibility contracts and charters to include a provision authorizing the State Board of Education to unilaterally amend or terminate such contract if a school system is designated 'high-risk'. If a local school system is designated as 'high-risk' by the Department of Audits and Accounts, the local school superintendent's contract of employment cannot be extended for a term of more than 12 months.

GOSA Responsibilities: This bill expands GOSA's authority to conduct performance audits, including evaluation of waiver use and reporting irregularities, and requires additional financial and performance reporting. The bill makes changes to the annual elementary and secondary education report and grants the office the authority to conduct on-site performance audits of local education agencies. The bill provides circumstances under which the director may authorize other performance audits of any school.

Audit Procedure: The bill makes changes to the school audit procedure, requiring the Department of Audits and Accounts to perform an annual financial and compliance audit of financial transactions and accounts of each local school system and state charter school. The bill prohibits state aid or public such funds of any kind from being held by any official or employee of any local board of education, local school system, state charter school, institution of the University System of Georgia, or any other school receiving state aid for any length of time in his or her bank account. The bill authorizes local boards of education to perform additional audits under certain conditions. The bill grants the Department of Audits and Accounts and the state auditor additional responsibilities.

House Bill 1284

High School Diplomas for Students at the End of Life

- **Sponsors: Senator Hickman of the 4th and Representative Silcox of the 53rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

This bill requires local boards of education to issue a high school diploma to a student enrolled in a high school program who has a medical diagnosis of a terminal condition and is receiving end-of-life care. The bill outlines the procedure for requesting such diploma. Every effort should be made for the diploma to be awarded to the student before the end of their life; however, diplomas may be posthumously awarded.

House Bill 1293

Updates Eligibility Requirements for the Dual Achievement Program

- **Sponsors: Senator Still of the 48th and Representative J. Jones of the 47th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 5, 2026 (Act 389)**

Synopsis: This bill establishes a permanent program for students to qualify for enrollment in the Dual Achievement Program at a participating unit of the technical college system and be awarded a high school diploma and provides eligibility for students residing in completion special school attendance zones without operating completion special schools.

Current law requires the State Board of Education to establish a pilot program to allow students who meet eligibility requirements to qualify for enrollment in the Dual Achievement Program at a participating unit of the technical college system and, upon successful completion of the program, be awarded a high school diploma. This bill removes references to the pilot program, instead establishing a permanent program, and makes conforming changes. Beginning in 2027, the annual report submitted by the State Board on the program must include various funding metrics.

The bill requires eligible participants to meet certain qualifications before July 1, 2028. The bill further revises eligibility criteria, requiring students 16 or 17 years of age to: (1) be enrolled in their resident school or resident school system only for administrative purposes and for the purposes of the education accountability programs, and (2) provide written acknowledgment that the high school diploma available through the Dual Achievement Program requires successful completion of the program. For students 18, 19, or 20 years of age, such students must be withdrawn from a Georgia public secondary school and provide certain written acknowledgments to qualify for the program. The bill extends eligibility from 2026 to 2028.

On and after July 1, 2028, to be eligible to participate in the program, a student must:

1. Be between the ages of 18 and 23;
2. Be withdrawn from a Georgia public school;
3. Have not yet earned a high school diploma;
4. Meet the admission requirements for the program established by the State Board;
5. Participate in required wraparound services; and
6. Provide the required information.

Additionally, on and after July 1, 2028, a student who is 16 or 17 years of age and resides in a completion special school attendance zone that does not have an operating completion special school is eligible to participate in the program, provided the student meets the other eligibility requirements. An eligible student who participates in the program through this avenue must be enrolled in his or her resident school only for administrative purposes and for the purposes of the education accountability programs.

The State Board must establish rules and regulations to implement this bill by January 1, 2028, including: (1) eligibility and admission requirements, and (2) standards and requirements for wraparound services. The State Board must also develop a funding formula for the program to be included in the budget request to the General Assembly beginning with Fiscal Year 2028. The bill provides relevant factors for the Office of Planning and Budget to consider when determining the amount of funding necessary for the program.

ETHICS

Senate Resolution 563

Urges Secretary of State to Deliver Georgia's Voter Registration List to Department of Justice

- **Sponsor: Senator Robertson of the 29th**

Synopsis: This resolution urges the Secretary of State to deliver Georgia's voter registration list to the United States Department of Justice in compliance with the National Voter Registration Act, the Help America Vote Act, and the Civil Rights Act of 1960. The resolution states Georgia's Secretary of State has "refused to comply" with the Department of Justice's request to provide a full voter registration list. Providing the full voter registration list to the Department of Justice will "ensure that the state is meeting its responsibilities under the NVRA and HAVA."

House Bill 369

Requires Nonpartisan Elections for Certain County Office and District Attorney Candidates

- **Sponsors: Senator Albers of the 56th and Representative Sharper of the 177th**
- **Effective Date: January 1, 2028**

Synopsis: This bill requires all county office candidates in a consolidated law enforcement county to be elected in nonpartisan elections. A 'consolidated law enforcement county' means any county where the elected office of county coroner has been abolished. This bill does not apply to: (1) the office of county sheriff, or (2) offices of county governing authorities established pursuant to local constitutional amendment.

These elections must be held in conjunction with the general primary in even-numbered years without a prior nonpartisan primary. The election procedures established by any existing local law providing for the partisan election of county office candidates is repealed and elections for such county offices must be conducted as nonpartisan elections.

The bill also requires all candidates for district attorney in a judicial circuit comprised solely of a consolidated law enforcement county to also be elected in nonpartisan elections. These elections are held as part of the November election without a prior nonpartisan primary. No candidate for any such office may be nominated by a political party or by a petition as a candidate of a political body or as an independent candidate.

House Bill 414

Grants the State Ethics Commission Supplementary Investigatory Powers

- **Sponsors: Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative T. Jones of the 25th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 438)**

Synopsis: Current government transparency and campaign finance law defines a 'person' in Title 21 of the Georgia Code as an individual, partnership, committee, association, corporation, limited liability company, trust, professional corporation, or other business entity recognized by the state of Georgia, labor organization, or any other organization or group of persons. This bill removes language which requires a business entity to be recognized by the State of Georgia in order to be considered a person. The bill requires the definition of 'person' to include a 'nonresident' who commits an act or omission or transacts business within the state which if performed by a resident of this state would be subject to current government transparency and campaign finance law.

Under current law, the State Ethics Commission must issue certain orders. Orders may include a provision requiring violators to pay a civil penalty, and the Attorney General may bring an action to enforce civil penalties. This bill requires the party against whom relief is sought to respond within 30 days of being served. If the party does not respond, then a default judgement must be entered. If the party against whom relief is sought does file a response within 30 days of being served, then the superior court must fix a time and place for a hearing on the merits of the action. The hearing must occur no later than 30 days after the response was filed.

This bill grants the State Ethics Commission supplementary investigatory powers related to persons, documents, or information located outside of the state. The commission may request that a person who is located outside of the state make documentation or information available to the commission or a representative of the commission. If that person refuses to comply with the request, the commission may petition the superior court for an order requiring the person to provide the documentation or information.

This bill revises venue selection provisions for the prosecution of civil violations relating to government transparency and campaign finance. The bill requires the case's venue to be Fulton County when a person is not a Georgia resident.

FINANCE

Senate Bill 59

Revises Tax Credit for Certain Timber Producers

- **Sponsors:** Senator S. Watson of the 11th and Representative O'Steen of the 169th
- **Effective Date:** **VETOED May 12, 2026 (V9)**

Synopsis: This bill revises the timber tax credits for those producers who incurred losses due to Hurricane Helene. Preapproval is no longer required for applications received on or after January 1, 2026. The aggregate cap on the credits is increased to \$250 million, from \$200 million. The Commissioner must begin accepting applications no later than January 1, 2026 and provide notice of acceptance or rejection of such applications within 45 days of submission.

Senate Bill 306

Allows Combination of Multiple Covenants on Bona Fide Conservation Use Property

- **Sponsors:** Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative C. Cannon of the 172nd
- **Effective Date:** Signed May 6, 2026 (Act 431)

Synopsis: Current law requires the county board of tax assessors to send by first-class mail written notification of the impending expiration of the covenant between the property owner of a bona fide residential transitional property and themselves. Upon the expiration of any covenant period, the property must not qualify for further current use assessment unless and until the property owner has entered into a renewal covenant for an additional period of ten years

This bill revises the mailing requirement from first-class mail to certified mail. Also, the covenant is automatically extended for a year when the property owner does not receive certified notice. This bill also creates a limited instance for certain property owners to have their covenants reinstated.

Property owners who qualify are only liable for the taxes that would have been imposed if the covenant had not expired. This bill authorizes property owners to appeal the assessment of the property that qualifies. The county board of tax commissioners must refund any tax amounts paid in excess and no other costs, fees, or interest can be imposed in relation to this appeal.

This bill expands the definition of bona fide conservation use property to also allow such property to have as a secondary use carbon sequestration in accordance with a carbon sequestration program or with the Georgia Carbon Sequestration Registry.

This bill allows a single owner who has multiple parcels of bona fide conservation use property that are collectivity subject to more than one valid covenant to combine such parcels and covenants in whole under a single, new, ten-year covenant. Combining such parcels and covenants does not constitute a breach of any of the individual covenants if all such property would otherwise be eligible to be placed under a renewal covenant. This bill does not:

1. Allow any portion of property held under a covenant to be removed from the covenant without being combined into the new covenant;
2. Change any requirements for what constitutes qualified property; or
3. Change any requirements for what constitutes qualifying use for purposes of the Code Section.

Property owners who have a covenant must be sent a written notice by the county board of tax assessors at least 60 days prior to the expiration date of such covenant. The property owner can elect to have the notice sent by certified mail or by email. This bill provides expiration exceptions under certain conditions. This bill requires such properties to only be liable for the taxes that would have been imposed if such covenant had not expired. Property owners are allowed to appeal the assessment of such property for a specific time period, and the county board of tax commissioners must refund any amount of taxes paid in excess of such amount. There must not be any other costs, fees, or interest imposed on such property owners in relation to the appeal.

This bill requires the single owner to first file a real property tax return with the appropriate board of tax assessors on or before the deadline to file a real property tax return before combining parcels. This bill prohibits parcels on which delinquent taxes are owed from being eligible for combination.

This bill allows a qualified owner to obtain ownership of property receiving preferential or current use assessment and to change from such covenant to a forest land conservation use covenant if qualified. The change would not constitute a breach even if the qualified owner does not qualify for the preferential or current use assessment.

This bill clarifies that the \$100 million cap on annual tax credits for qualified low-income buildings are for those *initially awarded* for each of the taxable years 2026-2028.

Senate Bill 403

Addresses Abandoned Property

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Reeves of the 99th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises procedures for handling unclaimed property in Georgia. The bill provides for new definitions, expanded due diligence requirements for notifying owners, conditions for delaying publication of unclaimed property lists, new payment methods for claims (including payments without claims for certain cases), streamlined processes for heirs to claim property without probate court orders under specific circumstances, and a 120-day unenforceability period for certain recovery agreements. The bill also amends tax confidentiality laws to permit DOR to use confidential tax information for unclaimed property administration.

Senate Bill 430

Revises Tourism Product Development Definitions; Hotel Motel Tax Performance Board Revisions

- **Sponsors: Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative Stephens of the 164th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises the definition of a ‘tourism product development’ to include military museums or any other institutions dedicated to preserving, exhibiting, and interpreting the history of conflicts and military actions of the United States armed forces and its service members.

This bill removes the \$500,000.00 annual tax collection threshold, making procedures for changing tourism promotion organizations applicable to all local governments regardless of tax revenue. If the governing authority and the destination marketing organization are unable to reach an agreement as to altering or changing the designated private sector nonprofit organization engaged to promoted tourism, conventions, and trade show, current law requires the Hotel Motel Tax Performance Board to meet quarterly to approve or reject any such change.

This bill requires the Board to meet within 90 days of DCA receiving a complaint regarding the expenditure of the funds received from applicable taxes. The findings of the meeting must be transmitted to the DCA commissioner within 30 days of hearing the complaint. If the Board finds that the local governing authority is in noncompliance, the commissioner must send notice of noncompliance by certified mail. The subject of the complaint has 60 calendar days from receipt to submit a new report specifying the rate of taxation and amounts collected and remitted. Failure to do so results in an automatic notification to the performance review board for consideration in its next meeting. All notifications of non-compliance must be provided to the legal organ of the county in which the subject is located and made public on the department’s website until a remedy is provided. The subject of noncompliance must also publish such notification of noncompliance in the legal organ of the county within 30 days of the receipt. The commissioner must immediately notify the state revenue commissioner of any failure to take remedial action.

Senate Bill 432

Extends Sunset for Higher Education Revenue Nonlapse Provisions

- **Sponsors: Senator Walker III of the 20th and Representative J. Jones of the 47th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 471)**

Synopsis: Current law states that certain revenue collected by higher education institutions does not lapse, subject to different percentage caps for the university system and the Technical College System of Georgia. This bill extends the sunset date for these provisions to July 1, 2031. This bill also extends dates in provisions regarding state agencies and departments administratively discharging obligations or charges from July 1, 2026 to July 1, 2031.

Senate Bill 566

Revises Homestead Exemption Application and Notice Requirements

- **Sponsors: Senator Hufstetler of the 52nd and Representative Williamson of the 112th**
- **Effective Date: Signed April 22, 2026 (Act 378)**

Synopsis: This bill revises ad valorem tax bill form requirements. This bill removes the notice requirement in the form for those who choose to opt out of property tax relief. This bill revises the definition of 'adjusted base year value' and 'base year assessed value' by including substantial property change as part of the calculated value, but prohibits this amount being used if the adjustment is duplicated as to the same addition, improvement, or removal of real property. 'Base year assessed value' is further revised by specifying that the adjustment due to any substantial property change refers to changes which occurring during or after taxable year 2024.

For an applicant who becomes ineligible for the homestead exemption and later becomes eligible and applies for the exemption, the base year must reset and be calculated as if it is for a new applicant. This bill expands the period during which taxpayers may apply for homestead exemptions up to the final date to appeal an annual notice of assessment. Taxpayers are required to notify the tax office if they become ineligible for a homestead exemption by the final appeal date. Failure to do so results in a penalty of 50 percent of the amount by which taxes were to be reduced, in addition to the cost for all taxes and interest due. This bill requires each local tax official to submit a list of taxpayers that have been granted or denied a homestead exemption to the Department of Revenue each year. The commissioner must maintain a list of homestead information that is accessible to local tax officials, who are required to review the list prior to approving a homestead exemption and on an annual basis prior to issuing notices of assessment. This bill revises the annual notice of current assessment requirements by requiring: (1) a brief description of any change, (2) a list of each exemption, credit and preferential assessment granted, (3) the estimated tax savings, (4) a description of the appeal methods, and (5) other details as may be required by the department after consultation with the chairpersons of the House Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committee. This bill revises the required language of the notice. This bill repeals language relating to roll-back rates, and removes associated language from tax bills and assessment notices.

House Bill 134

Keep Georgia Forested Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Tillery of the 19th and Representative Camp of the 135th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill expands the manufacturing tax credit to include forestry manufacturing and defines what qualifies as forestry manufacturing. Forestry manufacturers are permitted to transfer or sell credits in whole or in part under the following conditions: (1) such manufacturers may make only a single transfer or sale of tax credits earned in a taxable year, however, the transfer or sale may involve one or more transferees, and (2) the manufacturer must submit a written notification of any transfer or sale of tax credits within 30 days to the Department of Revenue (DOR). If a forestry manufacturer fails to comply, the tax credit is disallowed until the forestry manufacturer is in full compliance. The transfer or sale of the tax credit does not extend the time in which such tax credit can be used. By December 31 of each year, the DOR must prepare an annual report of the total amount of credits transferred by forestry manufacturers for the prior year. This credit sunsets on December 31, 2030. The automatic repeal does not impair or affect a forestry manufacturer's ability to transfer an unused credit accrued before the sunset date after January

1, 2031. The amount of tax credits are determined by the location of the forestry manufacturer and employment increases. On or after January 1, 2026 and prior to January 1, 2031, the tax credits for forestry manufacturers located in: (1) tier 1 counties are an amount equal to 15 percent of the cost of all qualified investment property purchased in such year, (2) tier 2 counties are an amount equal to 10 percent of the cost of all qualified investment property purchased in such year, and (3) tier 3 and 4 counties are an amount equal to 3 percent of the cost of all qualified investment property purchased in such year. This bill provides caps on the aggregate amount of credits of \$250 million per year. Tier 3 and tier 4 credits are further capped at \$100 million per year of the available \$250 million. No renewal or extension of tax credits allowed to forestry manufacturers can become effective unless approved by two-thirds of the members of both the House and Senate in a roll-call vote.

House Bill 141

Allow Businesses and Practitioners to Submit Affidavits of CPAs in Lieu of Tax Returns

- **Sponsors: Senator Anavitarte of the 31st and Representative Momtahan of the 17th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill provides that a business or practitioner may elect to provide affidavits of certified public accountants in lieu of tax returns or other financial information to local governments to facilitate their determination of the amount of occupation tax to be levied. The bill also extends this option to businesses or practitioners with offices in more than one jurisdiction.

House Bill 165

Revises Sales Tax Exemptions for Manufactured Homes

- **Sponsors: Senator Hufstetler of the 52nd and Representative Franklin of the 160th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises the sales and use tax exemption for manufactured homes in Georgia. It maintains the 50% exemption on the sales price for qualifying homes but updates compliance requirements, modifies language for clarity, and eliminates the prohibition on the exemption applying to local sales taxes. The bill also clarifies that removal of a home from a permanent location is only allowed if previously exempted taxes are paid.

House Bill 328

Exempts Certain Students from Student Scholarship Eligibility Requirements; Revises Tax Credits for Student Scholarship Organization Contributions

- **Sponsors: Senator Still of the 48th and Representative Carpenter of the 4th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill expands eligibility for student scholarships to include children of active duty military stationed in Georgia and students with IEPs, certain Section 504 plans, or designated disabilities. It institutes new compliance and disclosure rules for scholarship organizations and prohibits General Assembly members and their spouses from receiving income from organizations benefiting from tax-credit donations. The bill raises the aggregate limits for tax credits for scholarship-related donations and qualified education donations, modifies virtual instruction rules for out-of-system students, and restricts the use of TSPLOST funds for free/reduced transit fares. It also sets an 8-year waiting period before resubmitting failed TSPLOST referendums in nonattainment areas.

House Bill 439

Local Homeowner's Incentive Adjustment Grant Programs

- **Sponsors: Senator L. Anderson of the 24th and Representative Yearta of the 152nd**
- **Effective Date: January 1, 2027**

Synopsis: This bill provides a mechanism for counties and municipalities to establish local homeowner's incentive adjustment programs to reduce the tax burden on qualified homesteads. A county or municipality must first submit a referendum about such a program to the electors of such jurisdiction. When a program is approved by electors, it cannot be discontinued until the electors approve the discontinuation in a referendum. If a program is discontinued after a referendum, it must be discontinued at the end of the next fiscal year. Once a county or municipality becomes a participating local government (PLG), the governing

authority must appropriate funds to the local homeowner's incentive adjustment grant fund to provide the credits. No funds can be appropriated unless the actual revenues collected by a PLG in the preceding fiscal year exceeded appropriations enumerated in the budget ordinance or resolution adopted by such government for the preceding fiscal year and the amount of estimated total revenues available for appropriation are equal to or exceed such actual collections for the preceding fiscal year.

This bill requires the PLG's fiscal authority to calculate the adjusted credit immediately following the actual preparation of ad valorem property tax bills. A county or municipal fiscal authority must, (1) calculate the total amount of tax revenue which would be generated by applying the county/municipality millage rates to the eligible assessed value of each qualified homestead, (2) determine the amount of funds in the grant fund, and (3) calculate the amount of the adjustment credit that may be provided from such fund to each qualified homestead up to the taxpayer's ad valorem property tax liability on the homestead. The total amount of actual adjustment credit must be applied as a tax credit given to each qualified homestead in the county/municipality. The credits must not exceed the amount of the otherwise applicable tax liability after granting all applicable homestead exemptions, except for those included in the 'Homestead Option Sales and Use Tax Act' and after the granting of all applicable millage rollbacks. The state revenue commissioner must adopt rules and regulations for the administration of all requirements, including specific instruction to PLGs on developing and preparing the forms necessary for the administration of the program.

House Bill 445

Property Tax Assessment Appeals; Assessments of Public Water and Sewer Systems

- **Sponsors: Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Martin of the 49th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: Current law allows any taxpayer or property owner to file an appeal from assessment to certain individuals for specified matters. The bill allows any taxpayer or property owner to file an appeal after an assessment by the county board of tax assessors to a hearing officer for one or more account numbers of any taxable, tangible personal property (other than wireless property) that possesses an aggregate fair market value in excess of \$200,000.00. The bill authorizes individuals who are former or current Appraiser IVs or chief appraisers to serve as hearing officers. This bill establishes the application process for such individuals. The Georgia Real Estate Appraisers Board must publish an annual list of qualified and approved hearing officers and which counties they are willing to serve. Former Appraiser IV's and chief appraisers are not allowed to serve as a hearing officer in the county they previously served as either an Appraiser IV or a chief appraiser.

This bill revises the definition of 'public utility' to include private water systems and sewer systems with at least 10,000 connections for services.

House Bill 463

Georgia Economic Growth and Tax Relief Act of 2026; Taxpayer Relief Fund

- **Sponsors: Senator Tillery of the 19th and Representative Blackmon of the 146th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 465)**

Synopsis: This bill reduces Georgia's personal income tax rate from 5.19% to 4.99% starting in 2026, with further annual reductions to 3.99%. The bill increases standard and dependent deductions and provides for continued annual increases subject to revenue triggers. The bill increases retirement income exemptions for those 65 and older. The bill creates new exemptions for certain overtime and tipped income and repeals numerous tax credits and sales tax exemptions. The bill also expands the Revenue Shortfall Reserve with a higher cap and new provisions for surplus fund use. The bill provides for appropriations related to fund management and K-12 education.

House Bill 519

Tax Credit Against State Income Taxes

- **Sponsors:** Senator Hickman of the 4th and Representative Stephens of the 164th
- **Effective Date:** **VETOED May 12, 2026 (V3)**

Synopsis: This bill provides a state income tax credit equal to 100 percent of the federal work opportunity tax credit claimed for qualified wages paid to certain Georgia residents. The state credit is capped at \$500 per eligible employee per year and \$10 million total statewide per year, is non-transferable across tax years, includes provisions for recapture, and sunsets on December 31, 2030.

House Bill 1000

One-Time Income Tax Credit

- **Sponsors:** Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Gambill of the 15th
- **Effective Date:** **March 20, 2026 (Act 374)**

Synopsis: This bill provides a one-time income tax credit for taxpayers who filed an income tax return for both the 2024 and 2025 taxable years by the due date for 2025. This credit does not include nonresident alien individuals, individuals claimed as dependents in 2024, or any estate or trust. The credit is a one-time refund amount equal to the lesser of (A) the taxpayer's 2024 individual income tax liability as reported on Line 4 of the 2024 Georgia Form 500EZ or Line 16 of the 2024 Georgia Form 500 or (B) an amount equal to: (i) \$250.00 for a single taxpayer or a married taxpayer filing separately, (ii) \$375.00 for the head of a household, or (iii) \$500.00 for a married couple filing jointly. For any taxable nonresident or part-year resident whose tax was prorated, the refund credit must also be prorated based on the ratio of income taxable to Georgia. This bill prohibits DOR from issuing credits to any taxpayer with a refund greater than the taxpayer's individual income tax liability. Refunds do not constitute taxable income and cannot accrue interest. The refund is subject to setoff debt collection provisions.

House Bill 1070

Income Tax Credit for Class III Railroads

- **Sponsors:** Senator Gooch of the 51st and Representative Hagan of the 156th
- **Effective Date:** **VETOED May 12, 2026 (V4)**

Synopsis: This bill clarifies that the term 'qualified railroad track maintenance expenditures' does not include expenditures used to qualify for a federal tax credit or expenditures funded by a state or federal grant. This bill increases the maximum income tax credit for qualified railroad track maintenance expenditures paid or incurred by Class III railroads from \$3,500.00 to \$5,000.00 multiplied by each mile of railroad track owned or leased by such Class III railroad in Georgia at the close of the taxable year. The credit is extended to December 31, 2027. The period in which unused tax credits are freely assignable is extended to January 1, 2028.

House Bill 1077

Extends Sunset Date for Tax Exempt Ticket Sales and Admission Charges to Fine Arts Performances and Exhibitions

- **Sponsors:** Senator Hickman of the 4th and Representative N. Williams of the 148th
- **Effective Date:** **VETOED May 12, 2026 (V5)**

Synopsis: This bill extends the sunset date for sales and use tax exemptions for ticket sales and other admission charges for fine arts performances or exhibitions at eligible nonprofit facilities to December 31, 2032. It also extends the exemption to sales of tickets, fees, or charges for admission to the Georgia National Fair held at the Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter.

House Bill 1112

Requires Rounding Total Prices When Using Legal Tender

- **Sponsors: Senator Hufstetler of the 52nd and Representative Barrett of the 24th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires the price of goods and services with a total amount ending in one cent, two cents, six cents, or seven cents to be rounded down to the nearest five cents when using legal tender. If three cents, four cents, eight cents, or nine cents is at the end of the total amount, the total must be rounded up to the nearest five cents. This bill provides an exception for totals that are, in total, two cents or less, rounding them up to five cents. Rounding to the nearest five cents may apply to the amount of the transaction or to the amount of change tendered to the purchaser. This bill does not apply to transactions when payment is made by any demand or negotiable instrument, electronic funds transfer, money order, credit card, debit card, gift card, electronic payment, other like instrument, or mixed tender unless cash is disbursed to the purchaser. The total price includes sales tax and any other applicable tax. As long as the penny remains legal tender, any merchant must accept exact payment calculated prior to rounding. No tax imposed by the state or any local governing authority applies to losses or gains resulting from rounding. Any merchant selling goods or services is not in violation of any requirements based on any action taken in compliance with this bill.

House Bill 1129

Revises Tax Exemptions for Designated Enterprise Zones

- **Sponsors: Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Seabaugh of the 34th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill allows the DCA commissioner to designate a nominated area as an enterprise zone if it is in an urban development area that has been designated to be underdeveloped for 20 years or more and contains a redevelopment project that has a minimum of \$400 million in capital investment. This bill clarifies that redevelopment projects that are used to qualify for such designation also qualify for an exemption from any *local* sale and use tax levied by a *local governing body*. Such projects cannot qualify for an exemption of any *state* sales and use tax, unless such exemption is approved by the Governor or his or her designee.

This bill clarifies that, *after the commissioner designates an enterprise zone*, the local body that nominated a designated enterprise zone may by resolution or ordinance assess and collect annual enterprise zone infrastructure fees from certain retailers.

The principal of revenue bonds cannot be used, directly or indirectly, to satisfy an obligation on or otherwise provide a return of the capital investment on any redevelopment project used to qualify an area for designation as an enterprise zone. No area can be designated under this subsection in a county in which four enterprise zones under this subsection are wholly or partially located, regardless of which local governing body or bodies nominated such existing enterprise zones.

House Bill 1159

Tax Exemptions Under Farm Bridge Assistance Program and Specialty Crop Farmers Program

- **Sponsors: Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Gambill of the 15th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 6, 2026 (Act 424)**

Synopsis: For taxable years beginning on January 1, 2025, this bill requires that any income that was received as a payment under the Farm Bridge Assistance Program (FBAP) and reported to the USDA by December 19, 2025, to be subtracted from taxable income. Additionally, for taxable years beginning on January 1, 2025, any income received under the Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers Program (ASCFP) and reported to the USDA by March 13, 2026, must be subtracted from taxable income to the extent it is included in federal taxable income. These exemptions apply to individuals, partnerships, electing partnerships, S corporations or corporations.

House Bill 1199

Annual IRC Updates

- **Sponsors: Senator Hufstetler of the 52nd and Representative Carson of the 46th**
- **Effective Date: Signed March 20, 2026 (Act 375)**

Synopsis: This bill updates Georgia's tax code to reference the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as amended through January 1, 2026, for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2025. It revises the list of federal provisions that are either included or excluded for Georgia tax purposes and updates the effective date and applicability of these references. Several specific federal code sections are added, removed, or treated as they existed before specified federal enactments. This bill places a 60-day suspension on collection of the gas tax on distributors. The bill also places a \$100 million credit cap for the aggregate annual amount of state matching for the federal housing tax credit for taxable years 2026-2028.

House Bill 1209

Tax Exemption for Specific Property and Construction Materials

- **Sponsors: Senator B. Watson of the 1st and Representative Stephens of the 164th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 467)**

Synopsis: This bill provides a tax for the sale or use of tangible property and construction material used for or in the construction and furnishing of buildings located at any wharf lot and improvements that are located within 1,500 and 5,000 feet of a state owned convention or meeting facility with 150,000 to 750,000 square feet of available meeting space that is also located on an island in a river that serves as this state's boundary. The exemption does not include the sale or use of tangible property remaining in the possession of a contractor after completion of construction. The exemption applies from July 1, 2026 until June 30, 2033, or until the refunded amount exceeds \$7 million, whichever occurs first.

House Bill 1261

Level 1 Freeport Exemptions

- **Sponsors: Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Huddleston of the 72nd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill expands the types of tangible personal property that qualify for the level one freeport exemption to include certain inventory of electric utility equipment that is used by an electric utility for use in the normal course of business with the state. Electric utility equipment that has been incorporated into operating electric generation, distribution, or transmission facilities does not qualify for the exemption. This bill requires a summary of the inventory of finished goods and parts held in the ordinary course of an electric utility taxpayer's operations which are destined for incorporation into any electric generation, distribution, or transmission infrastructure located in Georgia through construction, improvement, repair, or maintenance.

GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT

Senate Bill 170

Establishes a Grant Program to Fund the Acquisition of Backup Generators for Rural Hospitals

- **Sponsors:** Senator Jackson of the 41st and Representative O'Steen of the 169th
- **Effective Date:** Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 487)

Synopsis: This bill requires DCH to create a grant program to provide funding to certain rural hospitals for acquiring or installing backup generators to ensure continuity of operation during a state of emergency. Grants may be awarded only to rural hospitals that do not have a backup generator as of the effective date of this bill and have not received any federal assistance for the purpose of acquiring or installing a backup generator.

House Bill 1192

Funding Requirements for DHS and DCS

- **Sponsors:** Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative D. Taylor of the 173rd
- **Effective Date:** **VETOED May 12, 2026 (V6)**

Synopsis: This bill prohibits any funds appropriated or allocated to the Department of Human Services or the Department of Community Health designated for a specific purpose either by the General Assembly or the federal government from being commingled with other funds and expended for any other purpose except the one designated. This bill requires that these funds be maintained in a separate account.

This bill establishes the following reporting requirements:

1. The DCH commissioner must annually review department practices and procedures, contracts and agreements, and accounting practices to identify cost savings achieve and operational efficiency opportunities; and
2. The DHS commissioner must annually review department practices and procedures, provider agreements, rebate programs and agreements, and accounting practices to identify cost savings achieved and operational efficiency opportunities.

By December 31, 2026, and annually thereafter, both commissioners must report their findings to the chairpersons of the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Appropriations Committee as well as the chairpersons of the House Committee on Public and Community Health and the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

House Bill 1415

Prohibits the Stone Mountain Memorial Association from Selling Certain Real Property

- **Sponsors:** Senator Echols of the 49th and Representative Seabaugh of the 34th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: This bill prohibits the Stone Mountain Memorial Association (Association) from selling real property acquired prior to January 1, 1971, requiring it to be held in trust for Georgia citizens. It allows for the sale or disposition of such real property only if necessary for a public road right of way. Any funds from such sale must be remitted to the Association. This bill requires the Association to maintain an inventory of its real property and for all transactions by the Association to comply with certain Code Sections requirements (related to real property inventory and conveyance requirements).

This bill clarifies provisions related to the Jekyll Island—State Park Authority to reflect a similar prohibition and exception.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senate Bill 195

Authorizes Pharmacists to Dispense and Administer PrEP and PEP

- **Sponsors:** Senator Hufstetler of the 52nd and Representative Newton of the 127th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: This bill authorizes pharmacists to issue PrEP or PEP orders and to dispense and administer preexposure prophylaxis and postexposure prophylaxis pursuant to a protocol agreement with a physician and requires completion of a training program, accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education or a similar health authority or professional body and approved by the State Board of Pharmacy, prior to dispensing PrEP or PEP. The bill authorizes pharmacists to dispense a 30 to 90 day supply or administer a long-acting injectable form of PrEP if specified conditions are met. The bill also authorizes pharmacists to dispense or administer a 30 day supply of PEP if the patient meets clinical eligibility criteria.

The bill establishes requirements for protocol agreements between pharmacists and physicians, including provisions for consultation, patient eligibility, documentation and recordkeeping, notification to a patient's primary care provider, administration procedures including post-administration observation, and restrictions on delegation to pharmacy interns or qualified pharmacy technicians under the direct supervision of the pharmacist. The bill requires pharmacists to maintain liability insurance coverage of not less than \$250,000, limits physicians to no more than ten such agreements, and prohibits agreements between physicians and pharmacists employed by the same pharmacy. The bill requires protocol agreements, affidavits, and proof of insurance to be filed with the State Board of Pharmacy.

Senate Bill 220

Putting Georgia's Patients First Act

- **Sponsors:** Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Newton of the 127th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: Shift from Low THC Oil to Medical Cannabis: Current law authorizes the production, cultivation, manufacture, and dispensing of low THC oil, if in compliance with certain regulations. This bill authorizes the production, cultivation, manufacture, and dispensing of medical cannabis by replacing the usage of the term low THC oil with medical cannabis. The immunity from criminal, civil, and administrative liability or penalties given to persons and entities that act in accordance with relevant provisions regarding low THC oil or its products is transferred to persons and entities that act in accordance with applicable provisions related to medical cannabis or its products. Medical cannabis is defined as any plant within the genus Cannabis and any part of such plant, including all derivatives, extracts, cannabinoids, isomers, acids, salts, and salts of isomers, whether growing or not, subject to specified exclusions.

Lawful Possession of Medical Cannabis: This bill makes it lawful for a person to possess, purchase, or have under their control products containing a cumulative total of 12,000 milligrams or less of tetrahydrocannabinol pursuant to the same requirements imposed under current law. This limitation also applies to individuals involved in clinical research programs conducted by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia or authorized clinical trials. Noncompliance with such requirements, where the amount does not exceed the allowable limit, is punishable as a misdemeanor.

Penalties for Felony Offenses: This bill removes specific felony penalties related to low THC oil and instead provides that possession, purchase, or control of amounts exceeding the lawful limit is subject to penalties applicable to controlled substances under Chapter 13 of Title 16. The bill also removes the prior tiered trafficking penalties based on fluid ounce thresholds.

Medical Cannabis Commission's Duties, Powers, and Responsibilities: Currently, the Georgia Access to Medical Cannabis Commission is authorized to issue licenses for the production, cultivation, manufacture, and dispensing of low THC oil and its products. This bill converts such licenses to medical cannabis licenses and expands the commission's duties, powers, and responsibilities to include engagement in public awareness and education activities related to the medical cannabis program and its uses.

Limitations on Locations, Advertising, or Marketing of Medical Cannabis: This bill imposes the same limitations on locations, advertising, and marketing on medical cannabis as were imposed on low THC oil. A licensee is authorized to provide information regarding medical cannabis to healthcare providers and to registered patients regarding the legal and safe use of such products, subject to restrictions prohibiting misleading claims and targeting individuals under 21 years of age.

Marijuana & Schedule I Controlled Substances: This bill excludes medical cannabis and its products from Schedule I classification and from being considered marijuana when possessed or controlled in accordance with applicable law.

Low THC Oil Vapor Consumption: Current law prohibits the ingestion of low THC oil through certain electronic devices. This bill revises such provisions to allow certain forms of vaporization while maintaining prohibitions on combustion and restricting certain uses, including by individuals under 21 years of age and in specified public settings.

DPH's Low THC Oil Patient Registry: Currently, DPH must issue a registration card to qualified persons diagnosed with specified conditions. This bill revises the list of qualifying conditions and the requirements for annual certification and card renewal.

Senate Bill 395

Low THC Oil Patients Registry Revisions; EMS Essential Services

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Newton of the 127th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes the Department of Public Health to disclose Low THC Oil Patient Registry information to the Georgia Composite Medical Board for investigatory, compliance, or disciplinary purposes. The bill also changes the frequency of physician reporting from semiannual to annual, requiring physicians to submit annual reports to the board regarding patient treatment, outcomes, and related data for research purposes. Failure to submit such reports cannot serve as a basis for revoking a patient's registration. Additionally, the bill designates ambulance services, whether provided by public, private nonprofit, or private for-profit entities, as essential services in Georgia. The bill clarifies that this designation does not alter the provision of services through local coordinating entities within territorial zones and health districts and does not grant new or additional regulatory authority to any state agency or local government. The bill further provides that the designation does not conflict with existing emergency medical services statutes or Georgia's participation in the EMS Interstate Compact.

Senate Bill 427

Limited Provisional Licenses and Pathway to Licensure for Internationally Trained Physicians

- **Sponsors: Senator B. Watson of the 1st and Representative Newton of the 127th**
- **Effective Date: Subject to Appropriations; Signed by Governor May 11, 2026 (Act 509)**

Synopsis: This bill creates a limited provisional license for internationally trained physicians. To be eligible, an applicant must satisfy certain criteria. Licensees must practice under the supervision of a licensed physician. Practice is limited to a medical practice located in a rural county, a licensed hospital, a federally qualified health center, or an accredited medical school, and licensees are subject to all applicable GCMB rules and disciplinary authority. A limited provisional license becomes inactive upon termination of

qualifying employment or supervision. An internationally trained physician who completes four years of active practice under the provisional license may apply for full medical licensure. As a condition of receiving a full license, the physician must complete an additional two years of practice in an underserved area, as defined by GCMB rules. The bill authorizes GCMB to employ administrative staff and one or more medical directors to oversee implementation, including evaluation of practice sites, supervision, performance, and compliance. GCMB must submit annual reports beginning December 1, 2027, detailing implementation metrics, applicant data, practice locations, and disciplinary actions.

Senate Bill 428

Medicaid Waiver for Home and Community Mental Health Services

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Efstration of the 104th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes DCH to submit a waiver request before December 31, 2026, to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to allow Medicaid reimbursement of home and community based mental health services for individuals age 21 and older who do not require an institutional level of care. Eligibility is based on specified risk factors, including, but not limited to, a history of hospitalization stays, psychiatric crises, emergency department visits, prior incarceration, or homelessness. Upon approval, DCH must take all necessary steps to implement Medicaid reimbursement for these services.

Senate Bill 439

Regulates Referral Agencies for Assisted Living Communities and Personal Care Homes

- **Sponsors: Senator Still of the 48th and Representative LaHood of the 175th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill defines a “referral agency” as an individual or entity that provides referrals to assisted living communities or personal care homes for prospective residents in exchange for a fee from the community or home. Referral agencies must, at the time of referral, conspicuously disclose certain information regarding the referral relationship to a prospective resident. Agencies must obtain a documented written, electronic, or verbal acknowledgment of this disclosure from each prospective resident or their authorized representative, and such acknowledgment does not create a contractual or exclusive relationship between the referral agency and the resident. Agencies may not charge or collect a fee from an assisted living community or personal care home unless the acknowledgment of receipt of disclosure has been provided to both the assisted living community or personal care home and the prospective resident or their authorized representative. A prospective resident or their authorized representative may at any time terminate all agency services, including use of their personal information, by providing written or electronic notice to the referral agency. Enforcement of this Code section is limited to public enforcement by the Attorney General and does not create a private right of action.

Senate Bill 500

Expands Workforce Data Collection for Health Care Professionals

- **Sponsors: Senator Hodges of the 3rd and Representative Townsend of the 179th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill renames the Behavioral Health Care Workforce Data Base to the Health Care Workforce Data Base and replaces references to ‘behavioral health care provider’ with ‘health care professional.’ The bill expands the scope of individuals subject to workforce data collection to include any health care professional regulated by a licensing board, removing the prior limitation to those who primarily diagnose or treat mental health or substance use disorders. The bill revises the definition of licensing board to include additional professional licensing boards and the Department of Public Health.

Senate Bill 535

Recreates Community Service Boards

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Cooper of the 45th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: The bill revises existing language to re-create community service boards effective July 1, 2026. Boards remain public corporations and instrumentalities of the state, and existing employee protections and contractual authority continue under the revised structure. The bill requires The Department of Behavioral Health and Development Disabilities (DBHDD) to establish unified bylaws by December 31, 2026 addressing governing board appointment and removal procedures, staggered terms, quorum requirements, and representation standards ensuring consumers and family members constitute at least 50 percent of certain governing board members. The bill revises executive director provisions regarding appointment and removal procedures. The bill provides transition provisions for existing and newly promoted executive directors. Any individual serving as executive director as of June 30, 2026, may elect by August 1, 2026, to remain as an employee of the community service board via a three-party contract between the CSB, DBHDD, and the individual. If no such election is made, that individual becomes a DBHDD employee effective August 1, 2026. Any individual newly promoted to executive director from within a CSB may elect to remain a CSB employee only with the express agreement of the Commissioner, also via a three-party contract; if no such election is made, the individual becomes a DBHDD employee.

House Bill 334

Sickle Cell Disease Protection Act; RSV Education

- **Sponsors: Senator Harbison of the 15th and Representative Crawford of the 89th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires child care learning centers and family child care learning homes to provide educational information to the parent or guardian of each enrolled child regarding respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and recommendations for prevention based on guidelines and recommendations from professional medical organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics. Such information must be provided annually by September 1. This bill requires DCH to conduct an annual review of all medications, forms of treatment, and services eligible for coverage under the Medicaid program for recipients diagnosed with Sickle Cell Disease. The purpose of the review is to determine whether currently covered medications, treatments, and services adequately meet the needs of Medicaid recipients with sickle cell disease and whether the department should seek to add additional medications, treatments, or services. When conducting the review, the department must solicit and consider input from the general public, with particular emphasis on obtaining input from individuals or groups with knowledge and experience in the treatment of sickle cell disease. On or before January 15 of each year, DCH must submit a report detailing the findings of the review and any recommendations to the presiding officers of each house of the General Assembly. The presiding officers must forward the report to the chairpersons of the appropriate standing committees in each chamber. The department must also publish the report on its public website.

House Bill 350

Eliza Jane Warner Act (Revises the Safe Place for Newborns Act of 2002)

- **Sponsors: Senator Strickland of the 42nd and Representative Cameron of the 1st**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises the Safe Place for Newborns Act of 2002 to authorize ambulance services and occupied public safety vehicles operated by fire stations or police stations to accept physical custody of a newborn. It revises the definition of qualifying medical facilities to include infirmaries, health centers operated by county boards of health, ambulatory surgery centers, urgent care facilities, and other specified healthcare settings.

The bill extends immunity from prosecution for abandonment-related offenses to individuals who assist or act at the direction of a mother in surrendering a newborn. The bill also revises the age thresholds for surrendered newborns. A newborn surrendered directly to personnel at a medical facility, fire station, police station, public safety vehicle, or ambulance service must be no more than 30 days old, while a newborn placed in a newborn safety device must be no more than 45 days old.

The bill authorizes medical facilities, fire stations, police stations, and ambulance services to install newborn safety devices in conspicuous areas visible to staff if the facility is staffed by an emergency medical services provider at all times. Each device must include a dual alarm system and a security camera capable of recording video of any individual accessing the device. The alarm system must be capable of dispatching the nearest ambulance service to retrieve a newborn if all facility staff have been dispatched to an emergency or are otherwise off site. No state funds may be expended for the acquisition or operation of newborn safety devices. The bill revises reimbursement provisions to require DHS to reimburse medical facilities, fire stations, and police stations that accept a surrendered newborn for all reasonable medical and other associated costs incurred prior to the child being placed in the care of the department. A facility or service that receives a newborn must arrange for transport of the newborn to the nearest medical facility and notify DHS. Upon notification that the child is medically ready for discharge, DHS must take physical custody of the child within six hours and must promptly bring the child before the juvenile court.

House Bill 382

Prescription Drug Security, Supervision, and Return Act; Revises Certain Provisions Related to Pharmacists

- **Sponsors: Senator B. Watson of the 1st and Representative Stephens of the 164th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises Schedule I controlled substance provisions to provide that the terms **lysergic acid diethylamide** and **psilocybin** do not include drugs containing lysergide tartrate or crystalline polymorph psilocybin that are approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration, scheduled by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, and listed in the federal Controlled Substances Act. These exclusions become effective only upon federal approval and scheduling of such drugs. This bill revises supervisory and operational requirements governing pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and authorizes pharmacy technicians to perform certain technical functions from a remote location. Any pharmacy technician performing functions from a remote location outside a pharmacy cannot be counted toward the pharmacist to pharmacy technician supervisor ratio. The bill also provides that a pharmacist may directly supervise pharmacy interns and externs, and limits the total number of interns, externs, and pharmacy technicians under the direct supervision of one pharmacist to six individuals in any combination. The bill also revises wholesale drug distributor return requirements by removing the restriction that the State Board of Pharmacy may only require distributors to accept returns of drugs essential to healthcare treatment if such drugs have an expiration date of less than one year from the date of manufacture.

House Bill 506

Provides for Insurance Coverage for Certain Out-of-Network Ambulance Services

- **Sponsors: Senator Still of the 48th and Representative Hilton of the 48th**
- **Effective Date: January 1, 2027**

Synopsis: This bill requires healthcare plans to consider emergency transport service as a covered service when such service is requested by a first responder. The bill establishes minimum allowable reimbursement rates for covered emergency transport services provided by out-of-network ambulance providers based on rates established by contract or by ordinance, resolution, rule, or regulation adopted by a county, municipality, special district, or authority within the applicable jurisdiction. If no such rate exists, the minimum allowable reimbursement rate is the lesser of (1) 325 percent of the Medicare reimbursement rate or (2) the billed charges. Payment to an ambulance provider releases a covered person from further payment

responsibility other than applicable copayments, coinsurance, or deductibles and limits such cost-sharing amounts to those owed for similar in-network services. Insurers must remit payment directly to ambulance providers within 30 days of receiving a clean claim and requires written notice when claims are denied or additional information is needed. The bill outlines notice procedures for when an insurer receives a claim that is not a clean claim. The bill defines ‘clean claim’ as a claim for reimbursement of service rendered by an ambulance provider that has no defect of impropriety, including any lack of required substantiating documentation, which would reasonably prevent timely payment for a claim.

House Bill 659

Adds Optometrists to Rural Medical Assistance Programs; Authorizes Medication Administration in Certain Facilities

- **Sponsors: Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Greene of the 154th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill adds optometrists to eligibility for medical education funding and service cancelable loans. The bill adds optometrists to loan qualification and prioritization criteria considered by the Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce. The bill adds optometrists to recruitment grant provisions authorizing support for loan repayment assistance, salary supplements, and additional support staff. The bill adds optometrists to service cancelable loan repayment through practice in board-approved underserved rural areas and to criteria used to determine such underserved areas.

Current law authorizes medication aides in personal care homes and assisted living communities to administer insulin, epinephrine, and vitamin B12 pursuant to physician direction and protocol. This bill adds GLP-1 to the list of authorized medication.

House Bill 717

Regulates Psychedelic-Assisted Treatment Clinics

- **Sponsors: Senator B. Watson of the 1st and Representative Cooper of the 45th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill regulates psychedelic-assisted treatment and therapy administered in clinic settings, including treatment using psychedelic or dissociative substances that may cause hallucinations or significant changes in perception. The bill requires the Georgia Composite Medical Board to adopt rules and regulations by December 31, 2026, establishing standards for clinic operations and practitioner competency. Required standards include clinic equipment and accreditation, prescribing and administration protocols, emergency transfer procedures, maintenance of medical records, reporting of adverse events, continuing education requirements, advertising standards, and inspection procedures. Any physician, physician assistant, anesthesiologist assistant, or certified registered nurse anesthetist administering, directing, or supervising psychedelic-assisted treatment in a clinic is subject to these rules. The board may establish continuing education requirements for clinic owners. All other licensed healthcare professionals practicing in these clinics may be subject to minimum standards of continuing education established by the respective licensing board. The bill specifies who may administer psychedelic-assisted treatment: (1) a physician licensed in Georgia with advanced airway management training; (2) a certified registered nurse anesthetist under the direction and responsibility of a licensed physician; (3) an anesthesiologist assistant under the direct supervision of a licensed anesthesiologist; (4) a nurse practitioner with airway management training, at least five years of clinical experience, acting under a nurse protocol agreement, and with express written board approval; or (5) a physician assistant meeting the same experience and training requirements with express written board approval.

Beginning July 1, 2027, clinics must obtain a license from the board and renew such license biennially. Each clinic location must be separately licensed and licenses are nontransferable. The board may investigate applicants, including conducting criminal background checks, and may deny or restrict licenses

to safeguard public health, safety, and welfare. Clinics must be owned by one or more physicians or certified registered nurse anesthetists who meet the board's competency requirements, including advanced airway management training; however, existing operational clinics are exempt from ownership requirements but must comply with other provisions.

Licensed clinics must execute hospital affiliation or transfer agreements to ensure emergency care capability, and hospitals may not unreasonably deny such agreements. Psychedelic-assisted treatment can only be administered by specified licensed practitioners. Prior to administering treatment, clinics must review the patient's prescription drug monitoring program record and document such review, and all administrations must be reported to the program. The bill does not authorize the use of drugs not approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration and does not apply to hospital-affiliated clinics, approved clinical trials, or on-label uses of approved drugs. Operating a clinic without the required license constitutes a felony punishable by imprisonment for one to five years, a fine of \$1,000 to \$5,000, or both.

House Bill 1096

Retains Leave and Seniority for Certain County Health Employees Transitioning to DPH

- **Sponsors: Senator Hufstetler of the 52nd and Representative D. Taylor of the 173rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: An employee of a county board of health who is a member of the Employees' Retirement System of Georgia and becomes an employee of the Department of Public Health without a break in service retain all accrued annual and sick leave. Such employees also retain seniority for purposes of determining graduated leave accrual rates. The bill prohibits a county board of health from paying out accrued leave to an employee who transitions directly into Department of Public Health employment.

House Bill 1097

Criminal Background and Registry Checks for Mental Health Facility Owners and Employees

- **Sponsors: Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Petrea of the 166th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill changes authority for designation of authorized agencies responsible for submission of national criminal history background checks to the Georgia Crime Information Center and specifies that authorized agencies must make reasonable efforts to communicate fitness determinations within a defined timeline. The bill also revises procedures governing receipt and use of conviction data and authorizes the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) to conduct fingerprint-based national background investigations and make suitability determinations for certain positions. The bill requires facilities and license candidates to conduct registry checks of owners, applicants, and employees prior to criminal background checks, including checks of registries in other states if an applicant has not resided in Georgia for at least two years. The bill also requires verification that an individual's professional license is in good standing through queries of applicable licensing boards.

Applicants and employees must consent to registry checks, licensure verification, and criminal background investigations as a condition of employment. The bill also authorizes employment in non-licensed positions for certain individuals whose professional license is not in good standing if a favorable eligibility determination is obtained and provides rights to challenge criminal history accuracy, contest registry findings, and appeal disqualifying determinations.

Facilities must maintain personnel files documenting registry checks, eligibility determinations, and licensure verification and authorizes DBHDD to require additional criminal background checks of owners or employees during investigations or upon notice of arrest. GCIC is required to notify DBHDD of resulting determinations. Facilities must terminate employees with ineligible determinations, subject to retention during administrative review or appeal periods, and authorizes license revocation when an owner receives

an ineligible determination. The bill imposes civil monetary penalties of \$500 per day, not to exceed \$10,000 total, for failure to terminate an employee with an ineligible determination. Employment applications for facility positions must include a notice that state law mandates national and state background checks as a condition of employment.

House Bill 1138

Increasing Access to Contraceptives Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Camp of the 135th**
- **Effective Date: January 1, 2027**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes pharmacists, pursuant to a written joint protocol agreement issued by the Department of Public Health and the Georgia State Board of Pharmacy, to dispense self-administered contraceptives and administer injectable contraceptives without a patient-specific written order. The protocol must establish training, patient assessment, documentation, and operational requirements for participating pharmacists and pharmacies. Pharmacists must complete specified education and training, obtain and review a self-screening risk assessment, utilize a standardized patient assessment, and provide required counseling, written materials, and referrals as appropriate. Pharmacists must determine clinical appropriateness prior to dispensing or administering contraceptives and refer patients to a practitioner when necessary.

The bill requires health benefit policies providing outpatient prescription drug coverage to cover FDA-approved contraceptive drugs and devices and requires coverage of no less than a three-month supply initially and a 12-month supply for subsequent prescriptions, subject to an annual limit. The bill prohibits insurers from denying reimbursement to pharmacists providing such services and requires reimbursement at rates no less than those paid to physician assistants and nurse practitioners for comparable services.

House Bill 1275

Human Stem Cell Therapy Requirements

- **Sponsors: Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Newton of the 127th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes a physician or, following lawful designation from such physician, a physician assistant or nurse practitioner to perform human stem cell therapy that is not approved by the FDA when used within the scope of practice and when the patient is advised and signs a consent form. Human stem cell therapy under this bill expressly excludes treatment or research using human cells or tissues derived from an aborted fetus or embryo. Human stem cells used for such therapies must be retrieved, manufactured, and stored in facilities that are registered with the FDA or certified and accredited by specified entities, whether located in Georgia, another state, or another country. Physicians must obtain stem cell products only from facilities maintaining valid certification or accreditation.

This bill requires specific notice language in advertisements for human stem cell therapies not approved by the FDA and requires a clearly legible disclosure. It also requires a signed informed consent form stating the nature of treatment, lack of FDA approval if applicable, and anticipated results.

This bill provides exceptions for physicians operating under FDA investigational approvals or for therapies performed on behalf of certain accredited institutions. Violations may subject the physician or designee to disciplinary action by the applicable professional licensing board.

House Bill 1278

Revises Dentist Permit Requirements for Conscious Sedation & General Anesthesia

- **Sponsors: Senator Hufstetler of the 52nd and Representative Hawkins of the 27th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises permit requirements for dentists administering conscious sedation and general anesthesia. The bill authorizes the Georgia Board of Dentistry to designate qualified persons to perform evaluations, certifications, and examinations required for the issuance and renewal of such permits, including on-site evaluation and certification that the dentist utilizes a properly equipped facility for the administration of conscious sedation or general anesthesia.

House Bill 1329

Revises Schedule I Substance Criteria & Dangerous Drug Listings

- **Sponsors: Senator B. Watson of the 1st and Representative Stephens of the 164th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 5, 2026 (Act 390)**

Synopsis: This bill revises Schedule I controlled substance criteria to include substitution at the 5-position or 6-position with specified chemical groups. The bill adds additional drugs to the dangerous drug list. The bill repeals and reserves one existing dangerous drug listing and revises the Antihemophilic factor (recombinant), Chikungunya vaccine, and COVID-19 Vaccine. This bill also revises allowable epinephrine spray dosages and pharmacist distribution for emergency treatment of allergic reactions and temporary relief of mild, intermittent asthma symptoms.

House Bill 1374

Revises Requirements for Health Insurer Payment Methods to Healthcare Providers

- **Sponsors: Senator Tillery of the 19th and Representative Hawkins of the 27th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises payment methods used by health insurers, contracted vendors, and care management organizations when paying healthcare providers. Beginning January 1, 2027, contracts for healthcare services may not restrict payment methods so that the only acceptable method is a credit card payment or another method that imposes fees or similar charges on the provider. Insurers or care management organizations that initiate or change electronic payment methods, including virtual credit card payments, must notify healthcare providers of any associated fees and advise providers of available alternative payment methods that do not impose fees. The bill requires express acceptance by the healthcare provider or the provider's agent before payment may be made using a credit card or electronic funds transfer method. A provider's selected payment methodology remains in effect until the provider elects a different method or enters into a new contract.

Additionally, the bill authorizes healthcare providers or their agents to charge reasonable fees related to automated clearing-house payment transmission for transaction management, data management, portal services, or other value-added services. It defines the types of electronic funds transfer or remittance transactions covered, including payment, transfer information, payment processing information, explanations of benefits, and remittance advice.

The bill adds provisions relating to state purchasing to clarify that prequalification of prospective suppliers must not be used to abrogate or frustrate competitive bidding requirements. It requires the Commissioner of Administrative Services to adopt rules, regulations, and procedures to ensure competitive bidding requirements are maintained and to submit a written report by November 1, 2026 to the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, and the chairpersons of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees regarding the adopted rules. The bill further prohibits the renewal or extension of certain contracts that were originally awarded without competitive bidding when the renewed or extended contract

price would exceed the applicable competitive bidding threshold and provides an exception for emergency purchases.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Senate Bill 523

Establishes Practices to Monitor and Investigate Discrimination in Schools

- **Sponsors: Senator Goodman of the 8th and Representative Silcox of the 53rd**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 5, 2026 (Act 402)**

Synopsis: This bill requires GaDOE to designate a state-wide K-12 Title VI Coordinator and USG and TCSG to develop policies and procedures to monitor and investigate acts of discrimination.

This bill prohibits any person from being excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity or in employment practices conducted by a public school that receives federal or state financial assistance on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion. By September 29, 2026, GaDOE must designate a state-wide K-12 Title VI Coordinator to monitor complaints of discrimination and harassment within public school systems. The bill outlines the responsibilities and requirements of the K-12 Title VI Coordinator, the responsibilities of GaDOE to conduct and supervise investigations and make written determinations of compliance, and the process to address noncompliance. The K-12 Title VI Coordinator must notify certain state leaders upon any enforcement action.

This bill establishes additional requirements for higher education institutions. USG and TCSG are held to the same requirements, with the board of regents and State Board of the Technical College System of Georgia designated as the respective overseeing entities. By December 31, 2026, higher education institutions must establish policies and procedures to: 1) establish, maintain, and publicize a complaint submission process; 2) develop procedures for implementing the requirements of this bill; and 3) document and investigate complaints of discrimination and harassment and prepare written findings and conclusions. The respective overseeing entities of must monitor compliance with the requirements of this bill and are authorized to take corrective action in the event of noncompliance, including withholding state funds. The bill outlines annual reporting requirements for complaints, investigations, and findings related to enforcement of this bill's requirements.

Senate Bill 556

DREAMS Scholarship and Medical School Scholarship Programs; GPA Calculation Metrics for HOPE Scholarship Eligibility; Opioid Antagonists at Institutions of Higher Education; Georgia Higher Education Savings Plan Contributions and Tax Exemptions for Qualified Tuition Programs; Lottery Shortfall Reserve Subaccount

- **Sponsors: Senator Payne of the 54th and Representative Hilton of the 48th**
- **Effective Date: Multiple**

Synopsis: This bill makes various changes regarding education, health, retirement and pension, revenue and taxation, and state government related to higher education and incorporates language from HB 1413, HB 419, and HB 962 in addition to the original language contained in SB 556.

DREAMS Scholarship Program: This bill establishes the Dedicating Resources to Educationally Advance More Students (DREAMS) Scholarship Program. To be eligible for a scholarship under this program, a student must satisfy certain criteria. Students must continue to meet eligibility criteria, maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA, and maintain satisfactory academic progress to retain eligibility for the scholarship. The Georgia Student Finance Authority (Authority) must provide scholarships to eligible students with a maximum award amount of \$3,000 per student per academic year. Awards are prohibited from being an amount more than a student's unmet financial need and being awarded for more than eight semesters or 12 quarters. Each student awarded a scholarship must complete a financial literacy course and be engaged in paid or unpaid work at least part-time.

DREAMS Scholarship Endowment Fund: This bill establishes the DREAMS Scholarship Endowment Fund as a separate fund in the state treasury to be administered by the Authority. Three separate accounts must be created within the Fund: (1) a principal account; (2) a scholarship account; and (3) a transitional scholarship account. All moneys credited to the Endowment Fund must be credited to the principal account unless designated otherwise. The Authority must adopt an investment policy for the investment of moneys in the principal account as a pooled portfolio in accordance with public trust fund prudent investor standards. In the event of a shortfall in moneys available for scholarship awards that will materially adversely affect awards, the Authority may adopt an emergency stabilization authorization to allow the distribution or transfer of moneys from the principal account. The Authority must also adopt a spending policy at the end of each fiscal year. The bill provides a detailed timeline for capitalization of the Endowment Fund, including from which accounts scholarships may be paid at certain times. By December 1 of the second fiscal year following capitalization of the Fund, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Authority must publish an annual report regarding the Endowment Fund for the immediately preceding fiscal year. By December 1 each year, the Authority must also provide a report on the DREAMS scholarship and the Endowment Fund to certain state leaders.

Advanced Fine Arts Courses: This bill requires the Georgia Student Finance Commission (Commission) to include advanced fine arts course grades in GPA calculations for determining HOPE scholarship eligibility. However, the Commission is prohibited from including advanced fine arts course grades for such calculation for any student graduating high school before July 1, 2026.

Opioid Antagonist Regulations: This bill provides that, for all institutions of higher education within the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia, students, visitors, and employees must be permitted to possess an opioid antagonist on institution property or at institution-sponsored activities. Subject to available community funding, each institution must maintain a supply of opioid antagonists, with specific storage and access requirements for institutions maintaining an automated external defibrillator. Any personnel are permitted to administer an opioid antagonist to any individual believed in good faith to be experiencing an opioid overdose and such personnel are immune from civil liability or professional discipline for any act or omission related to administering an opioid antagonist, with certain exceptions. Institutions and personnel are immune from civil liability and professional discipline due to the removal or misuse of an opioid antagonist, with certain exceptions.

Medical School Scholarship Program: This bill establishes a medical school scholarship program. To be eligible for a scholarship under this program, a student must satisfy certain criteria. Subject to appropriations, the Authority must award scholarships to eligible students with the maximum award amount per applicant per academic year not exceeding such student's cost of attendance. The bill prohibits an applicant receiving a scholarship award for more than eight semesters. Each scholarship awarded is conditional upon the applicant agreeing to practice medicine in Georgia for at least four years after graduation from an eligible medical school. Each applicant must enter into a contract with the Authority before being awarded a scholarship agreeing to repay scholarship awards if the recipient does not complete medical school and fails to receive a medical degree, fails to obtain licensure from to practice medicine, or fails to practice medicine in Georgia for at least four years.

Georgia Higher Education Savings Plan Contributions: Current law prohibits additional contributions to a savings trust account under the Georgia Higher Education Savings Plan when the beneficiary's total account balance equals or exceeds \$235,000. This bill increases the contribution cap to **\$550,000**.

Qualified Tuition Program Contributions: This bill establishes various deductions from taxable net income for qualified tuition programs. Contributions or payments for any taxable year may be made during or after the taxable year but on or before the deadline for making contributions to an individual retirement account under federal law for the taxable year.

Georgia Defined Contribution Plan Employees: Current law exempts those performing services for an institution in which they are enrolled as a full-time student from the definition of ‘employee’ for purposes of the Georgia Defined Contribution Plan. This bill extends the exemption to part-time students.

Lottery Shortfall Reserve Subaccount: This bill requires the amount in the shortfall reserve subaccount within the Lottery for Education Account to be equal to at least 50 percent of the average amount of net proceeds deposited into or base lottery spend from such account for the preceding three fiscal years, whichever is greater.

Senate Resolution 697

Recognizes Jason Colbert for Technical College Achievement

- **Sponsor: Senator Burns of the 23rd**

This resolution commends and congratulates Jason Colbert for receiving the Technical College System of Georgia’s 2025 Georgia Occupational Award of Leadership and invites him to appear before the Georgia Senate.

Senate Resolution 698

Recognizes and Commends Dr. Ekaterina Mirzakulova

- **Sponsor: Senator Burns of the 23rd**

This resolution recognizes and commends Dr. Ekaterina Mirzakulova and invites her to appear before the Georgia Senate. Dr. Ekaterina Mirzakulova is the recipient of the 2025 Rick Perkins Award for Excellence in Technical Instruction and is the Technical College System of Georgia’s Instructor of the Year

House Bill 541

Includes Certain Institutions Offering Nursing Programs for Tuition Equalization Grants

- **Sponsors: Senator Williams of the 25th and Representative Dempsey of the 13th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

This bill updates definitions regarding eligibility for tuition equalization grants at private colleges and universities to include certain institutions offering baccalaureate degree programs in nursing. Institutions must meet specific criteria, and only the nursing program(s) are eligible.

House Bill 1302

Education and Workforce Strategy Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Gambill of the 15th**
- **Effective Date: January 1, 2027 (Section 19, relating to TCSG as State Apprenticeship Agency); July 1, 2026 (All other sections)**

Synopsis:

Office of Education and Workforce Strategy: This bill reconstitutes the Office of Student Achievement as the Office of Education and Workforce Strategy, centralizing education and workforce strategy duties and expanding its authority to cross-agency coordination and data governance. The bill also repeals the Alliance of Education Agency Heads and all associated references, consolidating cross-agency coordination under the new Office of Education and Workforce Strategy. The Office must develop a state-wide education and workforce plan in collaboration with participating agencies. The Office must develop and approve a High-Demand Career List that identifies careers most critical to the state's current and future workforce needs. The Office must also create a navigation tool with certain requirements to assist students, parents, counselors, educators, and job seekers in identifying secondary, postsecondary, and workforce training opportunities in Georgia. This bill also creates the Education Data Governance Board within the Office of Education and Workforce Strategy to standardize, secure, and coordinate cross-agency educational and workforce data, with explicit roles for all major education and labor agencies. This bill does not transfer statutory authority from any agency to another agency or require the disclosure of personally identifiable information.

Office of College and Career Transitions: The bill requires the Office of College and Career Transitions to establish intergovernmental cooperation between postsecondary institutions and local boards of education and collaboration with business, industry, and community stakeholders to aid relevant education programs informed by the High-Demand Career List.

Top State for Talent Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Program: The bill renames and expands the 'High Demand Apprenticeship Program' to the 'Top State for Talent Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Program,' broadening eligibility, increasing award caps, and incorporating pre-apprenticeship pathways. The bill extends the program's sunset date from July 1, 2027, to July 1, 2031.

Technical College System of Georgia: This bill requires GaDOE and the Technical College System of Georgia to prepare a combined Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Plan and Perkins State Plan in accordance with federal law. The bill also designates the Technical College System of Georgia as the authorized state entity to administer the federal Workforce Pell Grant program. The bill designates the Technical College System of Georgia as the state apprenticeship agency, granting it authority to register, oversee, and deregister apprenticeship programs and issue completion credentials per federal guidelines.

State Workforce Development Board: This bill makes changes to the compositions of the Career and Technical Education Advisory Commission and State Workforce Development Board. The State Workforce Development Board is authorized to implement the federal Workforce Pell Grant program to determine whether a Pell Grant-eligible postsecondary institution that offers short-term programs in the state or enrolls students living in the state in a short-term program meets the requirements under applicable law. The Board must also periodically review the conditions related to career and technical education programming to collaborate with the Office of Education and Workforce Strategy to create the state-wide education and workforce plan, as well as approve the combined Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Plan and Perkins State Plan.

House Bill 1328

Authorizes Additional University of North Georgia Military Scholarship Recipients

- **Sponsors: Senator Gooch of the 51st and Representative Wade of the 9th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

This bill requires the Georgia Student Finance Authority to select and nominate between six and ten people from each Congressional district in Georgia to receive a military scholarship to the University of North Georgia by February 1 of each year. At least three people from each congressional district must be selected for a scholarship. If funding allows, this bill authorizes the selection committee to select additional candidates to receive military scholarships. However, the total number of people receiving a scholarship may not exceed 70 percent of the Georgia Army National Guard cadets enrolled in the University of North Georgia, or 210 people, whichever is less.

House Bill 1379

Foreign Funding Transparency and Accountability Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Burns of the 23rd and Representative Gaines of the 120th**
- **Effective Date: January 1, 2027 (Section 3, repealing USG reporting requirements); July 1, 2026 (All other sections)**

Synopsis: This bill defines 'reportable funding' as funds received during a fiscal year from a single foreign source of concern or an individual or entity directly or indirectly controlled by, acting on behalf of, or working in conjunction with such foreign source of concern totaling \$10,000 or more. The bill lists other new definitions, including, but not limited to, 'foreign country of concern', 'foreign entity of concern', 'foreign individual of concern', and 'foreign source of concern'. This bill also repeals O.C.G.A. § 20-3-84 related to reporting on funding received by the university system from any foreign country, entity, or individual of concern.

This bill requires each public educational institution to provide a report to the Attorney General and the Department of Audits and Accounts detailing reportable funding received during the preceding fiscal year

by such public educational institution or an organization controlled directly or indirectly by or acting on behalf of the institution beginning July 31, 2027 and annually thereafter.

Public educational institutions must also report if they have not received reportable funding during the preceding fiscal year. The Attorney General must notify a public educational institution that fails to provide a report or disclose reportable funding and allow 30 days to correct the failure. If the failure is not resolved, the Attorney General must notify the applicable governing authority, which is authorized to withhold a portion of the state funding allotted for the institution in the greater amount of (1) \$5,000, or (2) three times the amount of reportable funding the public educational institution failed to disclose.

INSURANCE AND LABOR

Senate Bill 284

Revises Securities Enforcement Orders; Provides for Certain Roofing Contracts

- **Sponsors: Senator Walker III of the 20th and Representative Hilton of the 48th**
- **Effective Date: Signed April 22, 2026 (Act 377)**

Synopsis: If the Commissioner determines a person has engaged, is engaging, or is about to engage in an act, practice, or course of business constituting a violation of the Georgia Uniform Securities Act of 2008, current law authorizes the Commissioner to issue certain orders and conduct hearings. This bill authorizes the Commissioner to issue an order directing a person to return to investors, customers, or clients the principal amount of securities purchases and any moneys collected in connection with such purchases for specified violations or for materially aiding such violations. The bill requires final orders to include findings of fact and conclusions of law in order to be issued.

This bill provides that qualifying local school systems utilizing certain cooperative purchasing contracts for roofing improvements are eligible for low-wealth capital outlay grants when such projects are included in an approved facilities plan. The bill also revises public works provisions to exclude certain roofing improvements from the definition of public works construction and provides that contracts for such roofing improvements awarded to approved suppliers through cooperative purchasing organizations are deemed to satisfy competitive bidding requirements.

Senate Bill 444

Establishes Regulations for the Use of Artificial Intelligence by Private Review Agents

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Hawkins of the 27th**
- **Effective Date: January 1, 2027**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes private review agents and utilization review entities to use artificial intelligence systems as part of a utilization review plan, provided such use complies with existing statutory standards and rules adopted by the Commissioner. The bill further allows the use of artificial intelligence and automated tools to automate tasks, reduce administrative burdens, and participate in decision-making processes, but prohibits such systems from issuing an adverse determination to a patient until a natural person qualifying as a private review agent or utilization review entity conducts a utilization review in which a clinical peer participates. The bill further provides that artificial intelligence systems, artificial intelligence, and other software tools do not supersede the judgment of such clinical peer.

Senate Bill 503

Requires State Health Plans to Cover Orthotic and Prosthetic Devices

- **Sponsors: Senator Harbin of the 16th and Representative Reeves of the 99th**
- **Effective Date: Effective only if funds are specifically appropriated by the General Assembly and, if so, on the later of the effective date of such appropriations Act or the beginning of the applicable fiscal year.**

Synopsis: This bill requires health benefit plans, policies, or contracts executed by the state to provide coverage for medically necessary orthotic devices and prosthetic devices, including related materials and components. The bill revises the definition of “health benefit policy” to exclude plans executed by the state for coverage of state employees, public school employees, and Board of Regents members, as well as Medicaid managed care and ERISA self-funded plans.

House Bill 987

Voluntary Portable Benefit Plan Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Still of the 48th and Representative T. Jones of the 25th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill establishes voluntary portable benefit accounts and portable benefit plans for independent contractors. The bill authorizes any person or entity, including internet or application-based entities, to voluntarily contribute funds to an independent contractor's portable benefit account. It further allows contributions to be made through voluntary withholding from compensation when such withholding is clearly expressed in a written agreement, prominently displayed in the hiring contract or other contract with the independent contractor, requires the contractor to opt in, and permits the contractor to opt out at any time. Voluntary contributions to portable benefit accounts do not result in a hiring party being classified as an employer or the services of the independent contractor being classified as employment for purposes of employment security law.

House Bill 1015

Increases Certain Funded Levels for the Self-Insurers Guaranty Trust Fund

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Werkheiser of the 157th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill increases certain funded level thresholds for the Self-Insurers Guaranty Trust Fund. Specifically, the funded level at which annual assessments cease for eligible participants is increased from \$15 million to \$25 million net of all liabilities. The bill also increases the threshold that permits the board of trustees to levy a special assessment when the fund balance declines from \$5 million to \$10 million net of all liabilities.

House Bill 1344

Georgia Insurance Affordability and Claims Integrity Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Walker III of the 20th and Representative Reeves of the 99th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2027**

Synopsis: This bill revises various portions of the Georgia code related to insurance.

Insurance Fraud: This bill allows insurers investigating suspected insurance fraud to report such information to the Commissioner of Insurance prior to completing an investigation. The bill authorizes the Commissioner to employ attorneys to prosecute insurance fraud cases. The bill requires agency captive insurance companies, industrial insured captive insurance companies, sponsored captive insurance companies, and pure captive insurance companies to pay \$100 annually into the Special Insurance Fraud Fund. Foreign or alien captive insurance companies doing business in Georgia must pay \$200 annually into the Fund. The bill creates criminal prohibitions on soliciting, releasing, or selling motor vehicle collision information for personal financial gain, acting as a "capper," "runner," or "steerer" to solicit clients for practitioners or healthcare providers for the purpose of pursuing insurance claims, and compensating a person acting as a capper, runner, or steerer. Violations are a felony, punishable by up to ten years imprisonment and fines up to \$200,000 per violation.

Insurer Recruitment and Retention: The bill authorizes the Commissioner, in coordination with the Department of Economic Development, to pursue recruitment and retention of insurers to keep or locate headquarters or offices in Georgia.

Timely Claims Processing and Payment: The bill authorizes the Commissioner to extend deadlines for filing insurance claims after a catastrophic event and to impose timelines for claims acknowledgment, investigation, liability determination, and payment following such events.

Reporting Use of Insurance Premium Tax Revenue: The bill requires counties and municipalities receiving certain insurance premium tax revenues to submit annual reports beginning January 1, 2027 demonstrating how funds were expended for purposes authorized by law.

Use of Aerial or Satellite Images in Underwriting: The bill establishes requirements for insurers that use aerial or satellite images as the basis for cancellation or nonrenewal of owner-occupied residential property insurance. The bill requires insurers to provide notice including access to the images relied upon, establish a process for property owners to submit documentation, provide an appeal process, and allow at least 60 days for the property owner to cure identified conditions before finalizing an adverse underwriting decision.

Contracted Limitations: For policies issued, delivered, or renewed on or after July 1, 2027, the bill prohibits property, casualty, credit, marine, and transportation, or vehicle insurance policies providing first-party property coverage from containing a contractual limitation requiring lawsuits to be filed in less than two years from the date of loss. Liability and workers' compensation coverage are exempt.

Georgia Storm Damage Mitigation Program: The bill creates the Georgia Storm Damage Mitigation Program within the Department of Insurance to fund residential storm-damage mitigation through grants for structural improvements such as roof reinforcements, secondary water barriers, opening protections, tie-downs, and related mitigation measures. The bill authorizes matching grants to local governments and nonprofit entities for projects that reduce storm and hurricane damage to owner-occupied residential property, subject to specified annual grant limits and public education requirements. The bill authorizes grants to assist homeowners with mitigation retrofits and establishes matching and nonmatching grant awards for roof retrofits, window protections, and hurricane barrier systems with maximum awards ranging from \$4,000 to \$7,500 depending on project type. Grants are subject to the availability of funds. The bill also requires the department to establish a process for mitigation contractors to participate in the program and seek reimbursement, and requires homeowners receiving grants to select from a list of participating contractors.

Uninsured Motorists Lapse and Restoration Fees: The bill increases lapse fees and restoration fees for owners whose motor vehicle registrations are suspended due to lapses in minimum insurance coverage, with higher fees for repeat suspensions.

Rental Home Marketplace Guarantees: Under the bill, property insurance does not include rental home marketplace guarantees, provided that the provider insures such guarantees under a reimbursement insurance policy, includes a statement that the agreement is not an insurance contract, clearly specifies all terms and limitations, and complies with any registration requirement established by the Commissioner.

Judicial Sales: The bill revises provisions governing judicial sales to permit purchasers to tender certified funds or a cashier's check and authorizes holders of security instruments or their representatives to submit credit bids in lieu of cash, certified funds, or cashier's check.

Protection of Personally Identifiable Information: The bill revises provisions relating to the protection of personally identifiable information of judges by expanding definitions of protected persons and covered information.

Increased Fees and Penalties for Insurance Violations: The bill increases monetary penalty amounts and imprisonment ranges for violations of multiple insurance regulatory provisions, including insurance fraud offenses, staged collision claims, pharmacy benefits manager licensing violations, insurer reporting requirements, and cooperation obligations in delinquency proceedings.

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Senate Bill 179

Requires Computer Science to Graduate High School

- **Sponsors: Senator Dixon of the 45th and Representative Ballard of the 147th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires students to complete a course in computer science to graduate, requires local school systems to allow representatives of a patriotic society the opportunity to speak with students to promote good citizenship, civic education, and patriotism during school hours, and revises provisions regarding Georgia Virtual School tuition and how online schools are defined.

Computer Science Requirement: This bill requires all students who will graduate in 2037 or later to complete a course in computer science or a career, technical, and agricultural (CTAE) course embedded with computer science to graduate high school beginning in the 2031-2032 school year. The relevant courses may be completed at any point in grades eight through 12, must meet the content standards created by the State Board of Education, and must be available in a format tailored to meet the needs of each participating student. This additional credit requirement does not increase the overall number of credits required for graduation. A full-credit computer science course satisfies one graduation credit for the following: certain math or science courses, one unit of CTAE, one unit of Modern Language or Latin, one unit of Fine Arts, or one unit of an elective. A full-credit CTAE course embedded with computer science satisfies one graduation credit for CTAE or an elective. Students may earn more than one graduation credit in either course under certain conditions, provided that the course(s) do not replace more than one math or science credit.

Access by Patriotic Societies in School: This bill requires local school systems to allow representatives of a patriotic society the opportunity to speak with students to promote good citizenship, civic education, and patriotism during school hours. A patriotic society must submit a written request to a local school superintendent proposing a date and time to visit a school at least 30 days before the proposed date and time. Within seven days of receiving the request, the local school superintendent must approve or deny the request. If the request is denied, the superintendent must provide, in writing, a comparable, alternative date and time for the patriotic society to visit. If the local school superintendent denies the request and does not provide an alternative date and time, the local school superintendent must provide the patriotic society with a written explanation of the reasoning for such denial.

Georgia Virtual School and Online Schools Defined as Private Schools: Current law limits the amount of tuition for Georgia Virtual School courses to \$250 per student per course. This bill increases the limit to \$350. Under the bill, a nonpublic institution is deemed a private school so long as: its primary purpose is providing education; it's privately controlled and operates on a continuing basis; it provides a basic academic educational program; and solely provides virtual instruction notwithstanding whether such institution provides instruction each 12 months for the equivalent of 180 school days of education with each school day consisting of at least four and one-half school hours.

Senate Bill 204

Revises Standards for Actions Against the Government for an Unauthorized Regulation of Weapons; Allows Certain Offenses to be Charged by Accusation of the District Attorney

- **Sponsors: Senator Moore of the 53rd and Representative Powell of the 33rd**
- **Effective Date: VETOED May 12, 2026 (V10)**

Synopsis: This bill revises standards for actions brought against the government by lawful weapons carriers for an unauthorized act relating to regulation of weapons and allows certain offenses to be charged by accusation of the district attorney.

Action Against the Government for an Unauthorized Regulation of Weapons: No local government entity may regulate in any manner: gun shows; the possession, ownership, transport, carrying, transfer, sale, purchase, licensing, storage, or registration of firearms or other weapons or components of firearms or other weapons; firearms dealers or dealers of other weapons; or dealers in components of firearms or other weapons. Any person aggrieved as a result of a government entity's violation may bring an action against the person who caused the aggrievement. This bill provides standing for any lawful weapons carrier aggrieved by an unlawful regulation to bring:

- (1) An action in mandamus against a public entity or public officer in his or her official capacity to obtain declaratory or injunctive relief. A prevailing plaintiff is entitled to recover his or her costs, including reasonable attorney's fees; or
- (2) A civil action when such individual suffers personal, property, or economic damage and recover the greater of: (A) Actual damages or \$25,000, whichever is greater, plus the expenses of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees or (B) Liquidated damages of three times the expenses of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees.

Allows Certain Offenses to be Charged by Accusation of the District Attorney: This bill allows for offenses that are not serious violent felonies, sexual felonies, or other certain offenses to be charged by accusation of the district attorney in any case where the accused has a prior conviction or upon a second offense.

The accused must be tried on such accusations according to the same rules of and procedure relating to defendants who have been indicted by a grand jury for any felony other than a serious violent felony, a sexual felony, or violations of Code Section 16-11-173, 16-14-4, or 16-15-4, in which the accused has:

- (A) Been bound over to the superior court based on a finding of probable cause pursuant to a commitment hearing;
- (B) Expressly or by operation of law waived a commitment hearing; or
- (C) Been released on bond pending a commitment hearing.

All laws relating to the rights and responsibilities attendant to indicted cases are applicable to cases charged by accusation of the district attorney. Additionally, the accusation need not be supported by affidavit except: (1) in cases where the defendant has not been previously arrested in conjunction with the actions alleged in the accusation; (2) or when the accusation is used as the basis for an arrest warrant.

Senate Bill 207

Revises Licensing Procedures for Individuals with Criminal Records

- **Sponsors:** Senator Strickland of the 42nd and Representative T. Smith of the 18th
- **Effective Date:** Multiple

Synopsis: This bill establishes new standards and procedures related to professional licensing, generally, and applies them to numerous licensing boards throughout the Code. It creates a **direct relationship** standard of review for applicants with criminal histories. It also revises procedures for appeals and predetermination petitions. The bill applies these provisions to the following licensing boards:

- Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors;
- Accountants;
- Chiropractors;
- Massage therapists;
- Real Estate Appraisers and Brokers and Salespersons;
- Structural Pest Control; and
- Insurance Agents and Public Adjusters.

Senate Bill 218

Authorizes Investigations by the Prosecuting Attorneys Qualifications Commission

- **Sponsors:** Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative Gullett of the 19th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis:

Revisions to Prosecuting Attorneys Qualifications Commission Procedure and Administration: The bill allows certain members of the Commission to receive a daily allowance and travel reimbursement from funds appropriated or otherwise available to the judicial branch of government. The bill also assigns the Commission to the Administrative Office of the Courts for administrative purposes only. Current law allows information regarding a disciplinary or incapacity matter of a district attorney or solicitor-general before the Commission to be disclosed under certain circumstances. This bill expands these circumstances for disclosure by allowing a complainant to waive confidentiality, allowing disclosure of the reason for dismissal when a complaint is dismissed at any stage, or allowing disclosure of the statutory basis for a complaint to the subject of the complaint when the complaint is dismissed prior to an authorization of formal investigation. Respondents are entitled to appeal the decision of the Commission's hearing panel.

Special Commission Investigators: This bill allows the Commission to employ investigators and special commission investigators to conduct investigations. A special commission investigator has the power of arrest for crimes that are committed: (1) within the special commission investigator's presence; (2) within the building, parking area, or curtilage of a building where the Commission's office is located; (3) within any building, parking area, or curtilage of a building where an official meeting or hearing of the Commission is being conducted or while traveling to or from such area; and (4) involving the person, building, vehicle, or other personal property of any member or employee of the Commission, or the person, vehicle, or other personal property of any individual attending a meeting or hearing of the Commission or traveling to or from such area. A special commission investigator must be certified by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council. This bill also provides substantive and procedural requirements for subpoenas involving the Commission.

Senate Bill 406

Georgia Property Owners' Bill of Rights Act

- **Sponsors:** Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Martinez of the 111th
- **Effective Date:** January 1, 2027; Section Seven (Attorney's Fees) – July 1, 2026, applies to all actions filed on or after such date

Synopsis: This bill establishes requirements and rights concerning owners' associations. The bill requires associations to register with the Secretary of State, establishes a framework for complaints and hearings, defines due process for fines, fees, and foreclosures, and expands owners' rights to transparency and participation.

Registration of Owners' Associations: This bill requires owners' associations to register with the Secretary of State in order to operate in Georgia. Associations must submit a signed form to the Secretary and a financial statement dated within a year of the filing. Registrations expire on December 31st of each year and must be renewed annually. The fee for filing and registration is \$100. Association records, including electronic records, relating to finances, dues, assessments, fines, fees, liens, and foreclosures must be maintained for ten years at an office in Georgia and are subject to reasonable inspection by the Secretary. An entity that would otherwise constitute an owners' association may elect not to register if the entity submits written notice to the Secretary of State. However, nonregistered owners' associations are prohibited from assessing or collecting fines or fees or accelerated assessments against any owner.

The Secretary may: deny, suspend, or revoke a registration; limit the fines, fees, liens, or foreclosures the association may perform; or bar an association officer, director, trustee, executive personnel employee, or board member under certain conditions. The Secretary may deny the application or revoke the registration of an applicant or registered person under certain conditions. When the Secretary issues any order, a notice

of opportunity for hearing must be sent to the association. The bill provides requirements for notice, requirements for hearings, and procedure for appeals.

No foreclosure action against a lien in favor of the association is permitted unless the amount of the lien is the lesser of \$4,000 or an amount equal to 12 months of regular assessments in arrears but not less than \$2,000, and no portion of such amount may include collection fees or fines or specific assessment. The association is permitted to bid up to the amount of the lien on the lot. The lien for assessments lapse and are of no effect six years after the assessment or installment first became due and payable.

Complaints Regarding Owners' Associations: Under this bill, any person residing in an owners' development claiming that he or she has been damaged by such owners' association may file a complaint with the Secretary, who must appoint a hearing officer to conduct the proceedings. Such complaint must be a written statement of the facts constituting the complaint and be made within 180 days of the alleged action or inaction. The hearing officer must investigate the statement of facts made and, in his or her discretion, order a hearing before the hearing officer. It is unlawful for any person to knowingly make or cause to be made to the Secretary, the hearing officer, or anyone acting on their behalf any false or misleading written or oral statement of material fact or any statement which omits a material fact. The bill provides requirements for notice, requirements for hearings, and procedure for appeals.

Rights of Owners: The bill provides that owners, defined as the record owners of fee simple title to a single lot, unit, or other individually owned property located in an owners' development, have several rights when dealing with owners' associations. The bill also requires all funds remitted by an owner to a property owners' association to be applied to the following expenses in the following priority order: (1) regular assessments or dues until current, (2) special assessments until current, (3) specific assessments until current, and (4) other fees and fines. An owners' association is prohibited from (1) refusing to accept payment from an owner in any amount for any assessment, or (2) assessing or collecting accelerated assessments against any owner.

Revises Submission and Amendment Procedures for Property Owners' Associations: This bill provides new procedures to allow a property owners' association to submit to the Georgia Property Owners' Association Act after the association is created. Specifically, an association may submit when 80 percent of the association votes to approve the submission and records an instrument certifying such vote. Such instrument must give notice that the recordation of the instrument subjects the association to the provisions of the Georgia Property Owners' Association Act. If the provisions of any association declaration that submits to the Georgia Property Owners' Association Act require a majority threshold in excess of 80 percent of the association's voting interest to amend, such threshold will not be affected by the reduction established in this bill if, by the first anniversary of its date of submission, the association votes by a majority to retain the requirements for a higher threshold. If no such vote occurs, any provisions requiring more than 80 percent of the voting interest will be deemed to only require 80 percent of the voting interest.

Attorney's Fees and Dispossessory Proceedings: Before an association may collect or be awarded attorney's fees, it must provide:

- (1) An initial written notice by certified mail or statutory overnight delivery to the lot owner from the association or its agent identifying any outstanding fines or delinquent fees;
- (2) Lot owners with 30 days from the receipt of the notice to pay such outstanding fines or delinquent fees; and
- (3) An itemized list of reasonable attorney's fees claimed.

Judges conducting bench trials for an action to recover sums assessed against a lot owner must review such claims of attorney's fees for reasonableness and must enter an order stating whether the attorney's fees were reasonable before an association can be awarded such attorney's fees.

A court of competent jurisdiction may, upon the filing of a motion and a hearing, order all records of the court relating to a dispossessory proceeding to be made unavailable to the public when (1) the tenant has prevailed in the proceeding resulting in a judgment in favor of such tenant; (2) has satisfied the judgment

in full, including the payment of interest and costs; or (3) seven years have lapsed since the filing of a dismissal or a judgment. Nothing in the bill may prevent the landlord from pursuing all amounts due and owing such landlord in a separate action or through collections.

Senate Bill 443

Increases Penalty for the Offense of Obstructing any Highway or Street

- **Sponsors: Senator Summers of the 13th and Representative N. Williams of the 148th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: Under current law, a person who commits the offense of purposely or recklessly obstructing any highway, street, sidewalk, or other public passage is guilty of a misdemeanor. This bill limits the offense to purposely or recklessly obstructing any highway or street and increases the penalty to a **high and aggravated misdemeanor**. A person may also be held civilly liable for damages resulting from such offense. A person who purposely or recklessly obstructs any sidewalk or other public passage to render it impassable without unreasonable inconvenience or hazard and fails or refuses to remove the obstruction after a reasonable official request or order that he or she do so is guilty of a **misdemeanor**.

Senate Bill 470

Emergency & Public Safety Signal Protection Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Albers of the 56th and Representative Crowe of the 118th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill prohibits any person from possessing, using, or operating a signal jammer with the intent to interfere with the transmission of a communication signal over any wireless, cellular, radar, or GPS system or any radio, telephone, or cable system. A violation is a felony, punishable by imprisonment for one to seven years, a maximum \$10,000 fine or both. A person who intentionally possesses or uses a signal jammer to interfere with the transmission of a communication signal by, from, with, or to a public safety agency, answering point, or any critical infrastructure commits a felony, punishable by imprisonment for one to ten years, a maximum \$25,000 fine or both. This bill also prohibits any person from possessing, manufacturing, selling, offering for sale, distributing or importing a signal jammer. A violation is a felony, punishable by imprisonment for one to five years, a maximum \$10,000 fine or both.

Any property used or intended to facilitate a violation of this bill is contraband and subject to forfeiture. The following are exempt from the bill:

- (1) The possession, use, operation, manufacture, sale, offer for sale, distribution, or importation of a signal jammer in Georgia that is authorized under federal law or that has been approved by the Federal Communications Commission or other federal agency authorized to regulate signal jammers; and
- (2) The possession, use, operation, manufacture, sale, offer for sale, distribution, or importation of a signal jammer in Georgia by public safety agencies, state and local law enforcement and correctional agencies, or any other person or entity that is legally authorized to possess, use, operate, manufacture, sell, offer for sale, distribute, or import a signal jammer in Georgia.

Senate Bill 542

Establishes the Offense of Improper Sexual Contact by Clergy Members

- **Sponsors: Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative Efstathiou of the 104th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill establishes criminal offenses by clergy members for certain improper sexual contact. A person commits the offense of improper sexual contact by a clergy member in the **first degree** when such person, while in a pastoral counseling or spiritual authority relationship with the victim and by means of undue influence, coercion, harassment, duress, deception, false representation, false pretense, or intimidation, knowingly engages in sexually explicit conduct with the victim. A conviction is punishable by imprisonment for one to 25 years and a maximum \$100,000.

A person commits the offense of improper sexual contact by a clergy member in the **second degree** when such person, while in a pastoral counseling or spiritual authority relationship with the victim and by means of undue influence, coercion, harassment, duress, deception, false representation, false pretense, or intimidation, knowingly engages in sexual contact, excluding sexually explicit conduct, with the victim. A first conviction is a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature. A second or subsequent conviction is a felony, punishable by imprisonment for not less than one year to five years. These convictions are also subject to the sentencing and punishment for sexual offenders.

Any person having been previously convicted of a sexual felony who is convicted of the felony offense of improper sexual contact by a clergy member in the first or second degree must be punished by imprisonment for life or a split sentence that is a term of imprisonment followed by probation for life. As a condition of probation, the court must impose the requirement of electronic monitoring. A criminal proceeding brought pursuant to this bill must be commenced within 15 years after the commission of the crime.

Senate Bill 547

Modifies Penalties for the Offenses of Pimping and Pandering

- **Sponsors: Senator Strickland of the 42nd and Representative T. Smith of the 18th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: Under current law, a person convicted of pimping or pandering is guilty of a high and aggravated misdemeanor for the first offense. Under this bill, a person convicted of pimping or pandering is guilty of a felony, punishable by imprisonment of one year to 10 years, regardless of an offender's history.

Senate Bill 552

True Patriotism and Universal Student Access (TPUSA) Act

- **Sponsors: Senator B. Watson of the 1st and Representative Petrea of the 166th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires students enrolled in public schools to be permitted to engage in political activities and expression before, during, and after school to the same extent students may engage in nonpolitical activities. Students may organize partisan or nonpartisan political activities and groups before, during, and after school to the same extent students are permitted to organize other noncurricular student activities and groups during noninstructional time.

The bill does not require a school to establish a limited open forum. However, a school with a limited open forum is prohibited from denying equal access to or discriminating against any students who want to conduct a meeting on the basis of the political, philosophical, ideological, or other content of the speech at such meeting. A public school is deemed to have a limited open forum whenever the school provides opportunity for one or more noncurricular related student groups to meet on school premises during noninstructional time. The bill gives criteria for when schools are deemed to offer a fair opportunity to students who wish to conduct a meeting within its limited open forum.

This bill requires partisan and nonpartisan political groups to be given the same access to school facilities for assembling and the same opportunity to announce meetings as other noncurricular groups. A school must only disclaim school sponsorship of noncurricular student groups in a manner that neither favors nor disfavors political student groups. Students must be allowed to wear clothing, accessories, and jewelry that display political messages or political symbols to the same extent as other clothing and accessories permitted under the school dress code.

Nothing in this bill may be construed to authorize the state or any political subdivision to take certain actions, and nothing in this bill may be construed to limit the authority of a school or its employees or agents to maintain order and discipline, to protect the well-being of students and staff, and to assure that attendance of students at meetings is voluntary.

Senate Bill 591

Prohibits Disruption of a Religious Service

- **Sponsors: Senator Gooch of the 51st and Representative Silcox of the 53rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: Current law prohibits engaging in any disorderly or disruptive conduct with the intent to impede, disrupt, disturb, or interfere with the orderly conduct of any funeral or memorial service or with the normal activities and functions carried on in the facilities or buildings where such funeral or memorial service is taking place. This bill adds religious services to this prohibition. A person who violates this prohibition is guilty of a misdemeanor. Under this bill, a person who engages in disorderly or disruptive conduct at a funeral or memorial service of an individual receiving military funeral honors is guilty of an aggravated misdemeanor. The bill defines 'religious service' as any public assembly of persons for worship, religious observance, or other religious purpose.

House Bill 162

Restriction and Sealing of First Offender Act Sentences

- **Sponsors: Senator Cowser of the 46th and Representative Hagan of the 156th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: Under current law, the Georgia Crime Information Center may provide criminal records while a defendant is under active probation supervision or as provided in a court order. Under this bill, the Center may only provide criminal sentencing records:

- To disqualify a person from certain types of employment involving children;
- To criminal justice agencies for the purpose of employment;
- Pursuant to any disclosure of criminal records required by law, including but not limited to those required for federally insured financial institutions; or
- For a determination regarding the transfer of a firearm or issuance of a weapon carry license.

Under current law, the court has discretion to limit public access to first offender sentencing information if the defendant requests sealing. This bill requires the court to limit public access to this information. The bill allows individuals to petition the court to seal their criminal records if, prior to July 1, 2026, they have been exonerated of guilt and discharged, or they were sentenced and have not had their sentences revoked and adjudicated guilty. The seal may be removed, and records may be disseminated if a court revokes the First Offender Act sentence and adjudicates the defendant guilty of the underlying offense while the defendant is serving a first offender sentence. Certain entities, prosecuting attorneys, and public defenders are allowed to access sealed records.

House Bill 304

Creates the Office of Senior Municipal Court Judge; Georgia Municipal Court Clerks' Council

- **Sponsors: Senator Strickland of the 42nd and Representative Yeara of the 152nd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill establishes the office of senior municipal court judge and the Georgia Municipal Court Clerks' Council.

Office of Senior Municipal Court Judge: This bill creates the office of senior municipal court judge. Any former judge of a Georgia municipal court or any former judge of a Georgia court exercising municipal court jurisdiction may apply to become a senior municipal court judge if such former judge (1) is no longer serving as a municipal court judge and (2) had previously served in such capacity for an aggregate period of not less than ten years. The president of the Council of Municipal Court Judges must prescribe the application form, review applications, and notify applicants as to whether or not they will be appointed. The approval or denial of an application must be made within 30 days of the submission of an application. The bill requires an appointed senior municipal court judge to: (A) comply with the mandatory training required to maintain

the status as a certified municipal court judge or a certified judge of a court exercising municipal court jurisdiction; (B) be licensed to practice law in the State of Georgia; and (C) be an active member in good standing of the State Bar of Georgia.

Georgia Municipal Court Clerks' Council: This bill establishes the Georgia Municipal Court Clerks' Council. The council is composed of the municipal court staff of all municipal courts in Georgia. 'Municipal court staff' means the primary person most directly responsible for the administration of a municipal court, other than a judge of the municipal court, and his or her support staff. The council's purpose is: to effectuate the responsibilities conferred upon it; to further the improvement of the municipal courts and the administration of justice; to assist the municipal court staff throughout the state in the execution of their duties; and to promote and assist in the training of municipal court staff. A member of the council is eligible to hold the office of municipal court staff, and membership in the council does not constitute the holding of a public office.

House Bill 447

Establishes the Crimes of Gift Card Theft, Gift Card Forgery, and Gift Card Fraud

- **Sponsors: Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative Gullett of the 19th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill establishes the offenses of gift card theft, gift card forgery, and gift card fraud. These offenses are punishable by imprisonment for one to ten years and a maximum fine of \$5,000.

Gift Card Theft: Any person who, with intent to defraud, acquires or retains possession of a gift card or gift card redemption information without the consent of the cardholder, card issuer, or gift card seller is guilty of gift card theft. Additionally, any person who, with intent to defraud, uses a gift card or gift card redemption information that has been obtained in violation of the prohibitions on gift card theft, forgery, or fraud is guilty of gift card theft.

Gift Card Forgery: Any person who, with intent to defraud, alters or tampers with a gift card or its packaging is guilty of gift card forgery.

Gift Card Fraud: Any person who, with intent to defraud, devises a scheme to obtain a gift card or gift card redemption information from a cardholder, card issuer, or gift card seller by means of false or fraudulent pretenses, representations, or promises, is guilty of gift card fraud.

House Bill 483

Enhanced Penalties for Offenses Committed Against Code Enforcement Officials

- **Sponsors: Senator Burns of the 23rd and Representative Prince of the 132nd**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 5, 2026 (Act 380)**

Synopsis: This bill defines 'code enforcement official' as 'any person with a high school diploma or equivalent who has completed Level 1 code enforcement training under a professional program and is employed by or under contract with a municipality, city, county, or consolidated government who performs safety inspections of buildings, structures, businesses, or real property to ensure they are operated in accordance with the law.' The bill provides enhanced penalties for certain offenses committed against code enforcement officials while acting within the course and scope of their duties. The offenses and penalties upon conviction are as follows:

- Simple Assault – misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature;
- Aggravated Assault – felony requiring imprisonment for three to 20 years;
- Simple Battery – misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature;
- Battery – misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature; and
- Aggravated Battery – felony requiring imprisonment for three to 20 years.

House Bill 530

Requires Electronic Pleadings in Probate Court

- **Sponsors: Senator Strickland of the 42nd and Representative Leverett of the 123rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires all probate courts, on or before January 1, 2029, to provide for the electronic filing of all pleadings and any other related documents. On and after January 1, 2029, all pleadings and any other related documents in any civil matter in a probate court must be filed by electronic means through the court's electronic filing service provider. Once a court has commenced mandatory electronic filings, a clerk may not accept, file, or docket any pleading or any other form of paper document from an attorney, or party if he or she is pro se. However, courts must reasonably accommodate parties by accepting and then converting and maintaining in electronic form pleadings or other form of paper documents presented physically at the courthouse. Courts must also provide a public terminal either within the administrative office space of the probate court or the county law library for any party to electronically file pleadings or other related documents.

A court's electronic filing service provider may charge a fee which must be a recoverable court cost and only include a: (A) One-time fee for electronically filing pleadings or documents and the electronic service of pleadings to not exceed \$30.00 per filer, per case; and (B) Convenience fee for credit card and bank drafting services to not exceed 3.5 percent, plus a 30¢ payment services fee per transaction. No electronic filing service provider may charge a fee for the filing of: (A) Pleadings or documents filed: (i) By any local, state, or federal office, officer, or agency; (ii) By attorneys appointed by the probate court to represent the interest of any party; (iii) By guardians ad litem; or (iv) On behalf of municipal corporations or county governments; or (B) Leaves of absence or conflict notices filed pursuant to the Uniform Rules for the Probate Court. Additionally, no fee may be charged for allowing an attorney or pro se party to view and download any pleading or document electronically filed in connection to the civil action in which he or she is counsel of record or a pro se party.

This bill does not apply to pleadings or other documents: (A)(i) Filed in connection with a pauper's affidavit; (ii) Filed under seal or presented to a court in camera or ex parte; (iii) To which access is otherwise restricted by law or court order; (B) Presented in a court located in an area that has been declared to be in a state of emergency; or (C) Filed prior to the commencement of electronic filing.

A judge to whom the case is assigned and his or her staff must, at all times, have access to all pleadings and documents electronically filed. Any pleading or document filed electronically is deemed to be filed as of the time of its receipt by the electronic filing service provider. A pleading or document electronically filed is not subject to disclosure until it has been accepted by the court, and upon acceptance, the pleading or document must be publicly accessible for viewing at no cost on a public access terminal available at the courthouse during regular business hours.

House Bill 535

Revises Offense of Trafficking in Fentanyl; Provides Credit for Time Served for a Sentence Imposed based on Revocation of Probation

- **Sponsors:** Senator Cowsert of the 46th and Representative T. Smith of the 18th
- **Effective Date:** Section One – Signed May 5, 2026 (Act 384); Section Two – July 1, 2026

Synopsis:

Section One: Under current law, any person who sells, manufactures, delivers, brings into this state, or has possession of fentanyl, the fentanyl analog structural class, or any mixture containing such substance commits the felony offense of trafficking in fentanyl. This bill provides that any person who sells, manufactures, delivers, brings into this state, or has possession of **four grams or more** of fentanyl, the fentanyl analog structural class, or **any salt, isomer, or salt of an isomer thereof, as described in Schedules I and II,** of any mixture containing **four grams or more of fentanyl** any such substance is guilty of the felony offense of trafficking in fentanyl.

Punishments for the offense of trafficking in fentanyl are based on the quantity of the substance. This bill revises the sentencing departure ranges for these punishments as follows:

Amount of substance	Imprisonment Range	Fine Amount Range
Four to Eight Grams	Two years and six months to ten years	\$12,500 to \$75,000
Eight to 14 Grams	Five years to 15 years	\$25,000 to \$150,000
14 to 28 Grams	Ten years to 25 years	\$50,000 to \$250,000
28 Grams or More	15 years to 35 years	\$250,000 to \$750,000

Under the bill, any person who commits the offense of trafficking in fentanyl must be punished according to the applicable mandatory minimum punishment. However, any such punishment imposed cannot exceed 40 years of imprisonment and a fine not to exceed \$1 million.

Section Two: This bill gives a person subject to a carceral sentence based on revocation of probation full credit for time served in confinement since the date of the commission of the violation, including pretrial and posttrial confinement, but excluding any time tolled for failure to report, failure to appear in court, or the filing of a return of non est inventus or other return to a warrant for the violation of the terms and conditions of probation.

House Bill 999

Authorizes Magistrate Court Fees

- **Sponsors:** Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Leverett of the 123rd
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026; Section Three (increase in threshold for magistrate court claims) – January 1, 2027

Synopsis: Current law allows magistrate courts to collect certain fees. This bill allows magistrate courts to assess and collect fees in addition to other fees currently authorized by law. Under current law, magistrate courts have jurisdiction over the trial of civil claims in which exclusive jurisdiction is not vested in the superior courts and the value of the claim does not exceed \$15,000. This bill increases the maximum value of civil claims that can be tried in magistrate court to \$25,000. The bill also corrects a scrivener's error in House Bill 426, which was signed by the Governor in 2025, by revising the automatic repealer language to only apply to probate judges instead of probate and magistrate judges.

House Bill 1075

Provides Felony for Individuals Convicted of Four or More Qualifying Misdemeanor Offenses

- **Sponsors: Senator Bearden of the 30th and Representative Chastain of the 7th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: Under this bill, a defendant is deemed to have committed a felony upon conviction of a fourth or subsequent qualifying misdemeanor within a ten-year period of time. The time period is measured from the dates of previous arrests for which convictions were obtained or pleas of nolo contendere were accepted to the date of the current arrest for which a conviction is obtained or a plea of nolo contendere is accepted. The defendant must be punished by imprisonment for one to ten years. The first year of such sentence cannot be suspended, probated, deferred, or withheld.

Multiple qualifying misdemeanors occurring on a single date constitute only one qualifying misdemeanor conviction for purposes of the bill. 'Qualifying misdemeanor' means any misdemeanor conviction under Title 16 Chapter Five (Crimes Against the Person) or Title 16 Chapter Six (Sexual Offenses) or any misdemeanor conviction under the laws of any other state or of the United States of a crime which, if committed in this state, would be a misdemeanor under Chapter Five or Six of Title 16.

For purposes of deeming a conviction a felony, the preceding qualifying misdemeanors must be alleged in a separate count of the indictment that includes:

- (1) A list of the preceding qualifying misdemeanor offenses;
- (2) The dates of conviction for such offenses; and
- (3) The jurisdictions where such offenses occurred.

House Bill 1121

Revises Terms of Court in the Cordele Judicial Circuit

- **Sponsors: Senator McNeel of the 18th and Representative N. Williams of the 148th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill changes the terms of the superior courts in Ben Hill, Crisp, Dooly, and Wilcox Counties to January 1 and July 1.

House Bill 1128

Establishes an Application Window for Indemnification Claims Related to Total Permanent Disability Caused by Organic Brain Damage

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Seabaugh of the 34th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: Current law requires the State Board of Workers' Compensation and law enforcement agencies to notify injured employees who are eligible peace officers about the Georgia State Indemnification Fund and eligibility for the temporary disability compensation program. This bill allows the board and agencies to notify injured employees **or their legal guardians**.

The bill establishes a special application window (July 1, 2026 – August 1, 2026) for indemnification claims related to total permanent disability caused by organic brain damage. A public safety officer or his or her legal guardian may submit an application for indemnification when:

- (1) The total permanent disability is due to organic brain damage incurred by a public safety officer in the line of duty on or before July 1, 2024; and
- (2) The organic brain damage incurred required extended recovery such that it impaired the capacity of the public safety officer to the extent it prevented his or her ability to make a timely application for indemnification.

House Bill 1131

Allows for Personal Service for Notice of a Warrant Application Hearing

- **Sponsors: Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative Hong of the 103rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: Currently, a warrant application hearing must be conducted only after attempting to notify the person whose arrest is sought by any means approved by the judge or other officer which is reasonably calculated to apprise such person of the date, time, and location of the hearing. This bill allows for **personal service** for notice of a warrant application hearing as well as notice by any means approved by the judge or other officer.

Under current law, an affidavit made or warrant issued for the arrest of a person who is accused of violating the penal laws of Georgia must include certain facts, and it is the intent of these requirements that the accused person be informed of the specific charge against him and of all basic pertinent particulars pertaining thereto. This bill clarifies that the intent is to inform the accused person by **personal service**.

Currently, every individual, corporation, organization, charity, nonprofit corporation, or group that claims to be a charitable bail fund with the purpose of soliciting donations to use for securing the release of accused persons is required to submit to the same requirements as any professional surety company. This bill clarifies that these requirements do not apply to a natural person posting a cash bond on behalf of an immediate family member. The bill also prohibits requiring the cash escrow account of a professional bonding company that has operated in a county continuously for 18 months or longer to have on deposit an amount in excess of \$500,000.

House Bill 1185

Allows Certain Shareholder Claims to be Brought Before the Georgia State-wide Business Court

- **Sponsors: Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Efstration of the 104th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes business entities to require, via articles or bylaws, that internal entity claims be heard exclusively in the Georgia State-wide Business Court. The bill also allows removal and transfer of certain internal entity claims to the Business Court, including a new process for such removal, and restricts transfer away from the Business Court for claims required to be brought in such court. The bill also revises standing requirements for a shareholder bringing a derivative proceeding. The ownership threshold required for a shareholder to bring a derivative proceeding is capped at one percent of one or more classes of shares that together are entitled to receive the net assets of the corporation upon dissolution for certain corporations or one percent of the outstanding partnership interests of the limited partnership.

Current law allows shareholders to inspect and copy certain records. A demand to inspect and copy the records must be made for a proper purpose. This bill provides that a 'proper purpose' does not include: (A) an active or pending derivative proceeding in the right of the corporation that is, or is reasonably expected to be, instituted or maintained by the shareholder; or (B) an active or pending civil lawsuit to which the corporation and the shareholder are, or are reasonably expected to be, adversarial named parties. If the court does not order inspection and copying of records, the court may, after a hearing if requested by a party, order the shareholder to pay costs, including but not limited to reasonable attorneys' fees, incurred in the proceeding if the court determines that the shareholder's inspection demand was not made in good faith or for a proper purpose that was reasonably relevant to his or her legitimate interest as a shareholder. The bill prohibits awarding reasonable expenses and attorneys' fees if the sole relief received by the plaintiff as a result of a judgment, compromise, or settlement of an action or claim is additional or amended disclosures made to the partners, regardless of materiality.

House Bill 1187

Trey's Law

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Hong of the 103rd**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 448)**

Synopsis: This bill establishes that any provision of a nondisclosure or confidentiality agreement or nondisclosure or confidentiality provision of an employment agreement, settlement agreement, or any other agreement is void and unenforceable to the extent that the provision prohibits (1) a person from disclosing an act of childhood sexual abuse or (2) facts related to an act of childhood sexual abuse to any other person.

Under this bill, a person may not enforce or attempt to enforce an agreement or a provision that prevents disclosure of an act of childhood sexual abuse unless the person obtains a declaratory judgment that is final, not subject to appeal, and declares that the agreement is enforceable.

House Bill 1208

Requires Depositions in Georgia to be Taken Before a Certified Court Reporter

- **Sponsors: Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Gunter of the 8th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires depositions in Georgia to be taken before a certified court reporter. The bill deletes references to stenographic and nonstenographic means for deposition recording. 'Certified court reporter' means any person certified to practice verbatim reporting.

House Bill 1215

Adds a Judge to the Atlanta, Clayton, Middle, Northeastern, and Gwinnett Judicial Circuits

- **Sponsors: Senator Strickland of the 42nd and Representative Parrish of the 158th**
- **Effective Date: For the purpose of appointing the additional judges, May 11, 2026 (Act 450); For all other purposes, January 1, 2027**

Synopsis: This bill provides for the appointment of an additional judge to the superior court of the following judicial circuits:

- Atlanta Judicial Circuit – increases the total number of judges from 20 to 21;
- Clayton Judicial Circuit – increases the total number of judges from five to six;
- Middle Judicial Circuit – increases the total number of judges from two to three;
- Northeastern Judicial Circuit – increases the total number of judges from five to six; and
- Gwinnett Judicial Circuit – increases the total number of judges from 11 to 12.

The Governor will appoint the additional judges to serve a term beginning January 1, 2027, and expiring December 31, 2028, until a successor is elected and qualified. Future successors will be elected at the nonpartisan judicial election every four years and until their successors are elected and qualified. The newly elected judge will take office on the first day of January of the year following an election. The additional judges for the Atlanta, Clayton, and Middle Judicial Circuits are appointed subject to appropriations.

Under this bill, the qualifications of the additional judge are the same as all superior court judges. The judge's compensation, salary, and expense allowance from the State of Georgia and from the counties will be the same as for other judges of that circuit. The new judge will also share equal jurisdiction and powers with the circuit's other judges. The judges will share, divide, and allocate the work and duties to be performed. In the event of a disagreement among the judges of the superior court of the circuits, the majority will rule, or failing a majority, the decision of the chief judge will be controlling.

House Bill 1247

Georgia Bureaucratic Deference Elimination Act; Unlawful Employment Claims Against the General Assembly Red Tape Rollback Act of 2026; Participation in the Georgia Homeless Management Information System

- **Sponsors: Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Reeves of the 99th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 12, 2026 (Act 718)**

Synopsis: This bill prohibits courts or officers hearing an administrative action from deferring to a state agency's determination or interpretation of Georgia's Constitution, statutes, regulations, or other subregulatory documents (Georgia Bureaucratic Deference Elimination Act). The bill also requires documents related to unlawful employment claims against the General Assembly to be subject to public disclosure and provides penalties for noncompliance and revises procedures related to the adoption of administrative rules (Georgia Red Tape Rollback Act of 2026). The bill further requires certain privately funded organizations that operate a shelter or provide outreach services to homeless individuals within 1,000 feet of schools, public parks, public playgrounds, or certain childcare facilities to participate in the Georgia Homeless Management Information System.

Part I: Georgia Bureaucratic Deference Elimination Act: This bill prohibits courts or officers hearing an administrative action from deferring to a state agency's determination or interpretation of Georgia's Constitution, statutes, regulations, or other subregulatory documents. This applies to both written or unwritten determinations and interpretations. This bill cannot be construed to alter the current standards of judicial review expressly established by statute. The remainder of Part I of the bill makes conforming changes in Titles 15 and 48.

Part II: Unlawful Employment Claims Against the General Assembly: Under this bill, if any claim of an unlawful employment practice made against the General Assembly, or any member, office, or employee thereof, is resolved in whole or in part by a settlement agreement, a memorandum of agreement or understanding, or other similar document, such agreement must be subject to public disclosure with the claimant's identity redacted. This applies to any claims made on or after January 1, 2019. Requests for public disclosure of documents must be made to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, if such request relates to a member of the House of Representatives, or must be made to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor and the Office of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, if such request relates to a member of the Senate. Responsive documents must be produced within three business days of receipt of a request.

Any officer of the General Assembly who knowingly and willfully violates these disclosure requirements by failing or refusing to provide access to records requested or by frustrating or attempting to frustrate access to the records by intentionally making records difficult to obtain is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1,000.00 for the first violation. A negligent violation must result in a penalty not to exceed \$1,000.00. A second or subsequent willful violation within a 12-month period is a felony with a maximum fine of \$2,500.00. Acting in good faith is a defense to any criminal action made pursuant to this part of the bill.

Part III: Red Tape Rollback Act of 2026: This bill revises procedures for the adoption of rules under the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act. Prior to the adoption, amendment, or repeal of any rule, the bill requires agencies to consider the economic impact of the proposed rule and include a statement as to the economic impact of the proposed rule. An agency will presumptively be found to have considered the economic impact of a proposed rule by including an economic analysis of such proposed rule with a copy of such proposed rule and its synopsis.

The bill requires, subject to appropriations, each agency to prepare and submit to the director of the Office of Planning and Budget a report containing an analysis of each rule of such agency on or before July 1,

2027, and at the end of each five-year period ending on July 1 thereafter. A rule is not subject to this reporting requirement if such rule:

- (1) Was promulgated pursuant to a federal government mandate;
- (2) States the general course and methodology of an agency's operations and the methods whereby the public may obtain information or make submissions or requests; or
- (3) Is a rule of practice setting forth the nature and requirements of all procedures made available by an agency.

On or before January 1 of the year a required report is due, the Office of Planning and Budget must establish and publish directions for the form and content of such report. In the year succeeding the date on which a required report becomes due, the Governor must, in the budget report prepared and submitted to the General Assembly, include a statement informing the General Assembly whether each agency has complied, in whole or in part, with the reporting requirements of this bill.

The bill allows a member of the General Assembly to submit a written inquiry to an agency in connection with a required report. An agency in receipt of such inquiry must submit a written response to the member within 30 calendar days of receipt of such inquiry. However, an agency's noncompliance cannot delay consideration of the general appropriations bill. The director of the Office of Planning and Budget must publish on its website final reports as soon as feasible after receipt of such reports.

Part IV: Participation in the Georgia Homeless Management Information System: This bill requires each privately funded organization that operate a shelter or provide outreach services to homeless individuals within 1,000 feet of schools, public parks, public playgrounds, or certain childcare facilities to participate in the Georgia Homeless Management Information System. An owner or operator of any such organization that fails to participate must be issued a noncriminal citation by law enforcement. These provisions do not apply to any privately funded and operated organization that provided outreach services, employment, or social services to fewer than ten individuals during the preceding 12 months.

House Bill 1268

Code Revision Commission Recommended Edits to the Code of Georgia Annotated

- **Sponsors: Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Burchett of the 176th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill incorporates edits to the Official Code of Georgia Annotated as recommended by the Code Revision Commission to revise, modernize, and correct errors in the Code. This bill provides for such revisions to Code sections in the following Titles: Title 3 (Alcoholic Beverages); Title 5 (Appeal and Error); Title 6 (Aviation); Title 7 (Banking and Finance); Title 10 (Commerce and Trade); Title 12 (Conservation and Natural Resources); Title 14 (Corporations, Partnerships; and Associations); Title 15 (Courts); Title 16 (Crimes and Offenses); Title 17 (Criminal Procedure); Title 19 (Domestic Relations); Title 20 (Education); Title 21 (Elections); Title 24 (Evidence); Title 25 (Fire Protection and Safety); Title 26 (Food, Drugs, and Cosmetics); Title 27 (Game and Fish); Title 28 (General Assembly); Title 29 (Guardian and Ward); Title 30 (Handicapped Persons); Title 31 (Health); Title 32 (Highways, Bridges, and Ferries); Title 33 (Insurance); Title 34 (Labor and Industrial Relations); Title 35 (Law Enforcement Officers and Agencies); Title 36 (Local Government); Title 37 (Mental Health); Title 38 (Military, Emergency Management, and Veterans Affairs); Title 39 (Minors); Title 40 (Motor Vehicles and Traffic); Title 43 (Professions and Businesses); Title 44 (Property); Title 46 (Public Utilities and Public Transportation); Title 48 (Revenue and Taxation); Title 49 (Social Services); Title 50 (State Government). This bill inserts a comma following “however, that” each time the phrase appears in various Titles.

Lastly, the bill calls for the reenactment of the statutory portion of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated.

House Bill 1470

Creates Cause of Action for Unsuccessful Actions Under the Americans with Disabilities Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Strickland of the 42nd and Representative Kelley of the 16th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill creates a cause of action for a Georgia person or entity against a claimant when a claimant brings a civil action alleging that such Georgia person or entity *operates a website* that violates the federal Americans with Disabilities Act **and** such civil action is (i) adjudicated on the merits against the claimant, (ii) involuntarily dismissed, or (iii) dismissed based on the claimant's lack of standing.

The person or entity is entitled to recover the following from the claimant and the claimant's attorney:

- (3) Actual damages for the disruption of business or other lost opportunity costs related to the unsuccessful action, or statutory damages of \$10,000, whichever is greater;
- (3) Reasonable attorney fees related to the defense of the unsuccessful action and to the prosecution of an action under this bill; and
- (3) Treble damages when, prior to the entry of judgment in the underlying unsuccessful action, the claimant was given written notice of the provisions of this bill but refused or otherwise failed to voluntarily dismiss such action.

Actions under this bill must be brought within two years after the entry of judgment in the underlying unsuccessful action. This bill must be narrowly construed and cannot be construed to change any other provision of law.

House Resolution 251

Proposes Constitutional Amendment to Provide Nonpartisan Elections for Probate Judges (CA)

- **Sponsors: Senator Strickland of the 42nd and Representative New of the 40th**

Synopsis: Current law provides that superior court judges, state court judges, Justices of the Supreme Court, and Judges of the Court of Appeals are elected on a nonpartisan basis. This resolution proposes a constitutional amendment that requires all probate judges to be elected on a nonpartisan basis. In the event that the resolution passes the Senate and the House with at least two-thirds supermajority, the proposed amendment must be approved by Georgia voters. This resolution includes the proposed language for the voter question.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Senate Bill 478

Revises Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act

- **Sponsors:** Senator S. Watson of the 11th and Representative L. Smith of the 70th
- **Effective Date:** **VETOED May 12, 2026 (V11)**

Synopsis: Current law requires the General Assembly to appropriate 40 percent of all moneys received by the state from sales and use tax collected by sporting goods stores to the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund. This bill would have increased that percentage to 60 percent and would have sunset the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act on June 30, 2039.

Senate Resolution 480

Recognizes the Threat to Georgia's Forests Posed by the Southern Pine Beetle

- **Sponsor:** Senator Brass of the 6th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: This resolution recognizes the significant threat posed by the southern pine beetle to Georgia's forests, recognizes the acute and ongoing challenge of the southern pine beetle outbreak in the western region of Georgia, and encourages Georgia landowners to take all steps necessary to mitigate the spread of this outbreak through proper forest management and adherence to best management practices outlined by the Georgia Forestry Commission.

House Bill 115

Requires Unattended Vessel Checks and Revises Procedures Related to Abandoned Vessels

- **Sponsors:** Senator B. Watson of the 1st and Representative Petrea of the 166th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: This bill requires applications for registration of vessels to include a statement regarding the criminal consequences for failure to remove an abandoned vessel from public water or public property. This bill requires any law enforcement officer or individual authorized by DNR to immediately perform an unattended vessel check (unless an unattended vessel check card is displayed) and to attach a completed unattended vessel check card. *Within 24 hours* of completing the check or discovering an unattended vessel with a check card, a law enforcement officer must determine if it is a stolen vessel. If it is stolen, the law enforcement officer must notify DNR and the law enforcement agency that filed the report of the vessel's location, who then must notify the vessel's owner of its location. This bill prohibits any person other than a law enforcement officer or individuals authorized by DNR from performing unattended vessel checks. Violations are a misdemeanor.

This bill clarifies that any person removing a vessel must seek information about the current owner from DNR *within 72 hours of removal*. If such a person reasonably knows that the vessel is registered or titled in another state, the person must check the other state's vessel records. Any person requested to remove a vessel must remove the vessel no later than one day after the request was submitted. Once receiving notice of removal, the law enforcement agency must determine if the vessel is a stolen vessel. If the vessel was reported stolen, the law enforcement agency must notify the law enforcement agency that received the stolen vessel report, who must then notify the person who filed the police report about the vessel's location and provide the relevant contact information. This bill establishes notice requirements for any vessel removed that is not stolen, being repaired, or being stored by an insurance company.

Within seven days of receiving notice that an unattended vessel has not been removed and is not a stolen vessel, DNR must notify the owner of the location of the vessel and inform the owner that if the vessel is not removed within 30 days the vessel will be deemed abandoned. The notice must also include information detailing the possible consequences for failing to remove within 30 days. This requirement is not applicable within 36 months of the Governor declaring a state of emergency due to a natural disaster affecting the vessel's location. Any vessel owner registered with DNR that fails to remove the vessel from public waters or public property *within 30 days* of receiving this notice is guilty of a high and aggravated misdemeanor.

punishable by a maximum fine of \$5,000.00, a maximum imprisonment term of 12 months, or both. A second or subsequent offense is a felony punishable by a maximum fine of \$50,000.00, a maximum imprisonment term of 5 years, or both. Additionally, the court may order the convicted person to pay restitution to DNR for the reasonable costs or damages associated with the failure to remove the vessel.

House Bill 946

Authorizes Trapping of Feral Hogs Under Certain Circumstances

- **Sponsors: Senator L. Anderson of the 24th and Representative Clifton of the 131st**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes persons to trap feral hogs without a hunting or trapping license, but the hogs must be killed upon capture. This bill authorizes the hunting of feral hogs from motor vehicles on *private property*. Additionally, this bill authorizes the use of unmanned aircraft systems to locate feral hogs, subject to all applicable laws and regulations governing the use of unmanned aircraft systems. This bill repeals certain provisions relating to wildlife control permits for feral hogs.

House Bill 956

Authorizes Certain Actions to Implement a Solid Waste Management Program

- **Sponsors: Senator Goodman of the 8th and Representative Corbett of the 174th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: Current law requires all money appropriated to the Solid Waste Trust Fund to only be used for certain purposes. This bill authorizes these funds to be used to take such actions as may be necessary to implement a solid waste management program, particularly regarding permitting, monitoring, regulation or guidance development, inspections, and enforcement.

House Bill 983

Clarifies Prescribed Burning Requirements

- **Sponsors: Senator Goodman of the 8th and Representative Hagan of the 156th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill clarifies that counties and municipalities may adopt additional notice or permit requirements for burning, but such additional requirements cannot restrict prescribed burning for silviculture purposes. This bill clarifies the definition of prescribed burning as the controlled application of fire to existing vegetative fuels *for silviculture purposes, which is confined to a predetermined area*. This term includes, but is not limited to, burning for site preparation of land for timber cultivation, hazard fuel reduction, understory control, wildlife habitat improvement, natural regeneration, longleaf pine ecosystem maintenance, and timber stand improvement. The bill defines silviculture.

House Bill 1266

Revises Provisions Related to the Use of Certain Watercrafts on the Ogeechee River

- **Sponsors: Senator Goodman of the 8th and Representative J. Ridley of the 6th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: Current law prohibits a motor in excess of 9.9 horsepower from being used on a vessel operated on the Ogeechee River from the point where it crosses State Highway No. 119 to its point of origin. This bill revises this prohibition by prohibiting *any personal watercraft as defined in O.C.G.A. §52-7-8.2*. That code section defines personal watercraft as a Class A vessel which:

- **(A)** Has an outboard motor or which has an inboard motor which uses an internal combustion engine powering a water jet pump as its primary source of motive propulsion;
- **(B)** Is designed with the concept that the operator and passenger ride on the outside surfaces of such vessel as opposed to riding inside such vessel; and
- **(C)** Has the probability that the operator and passenger may, in the normal course of use, fall overboard.

Such term includes, without limitation, any vessel where the operator and passenger ride on the outside surfaces of the vessel, even if the primary source of motive propulsion is a propeller, and any vessel commonly known as a "jet ski."

House Resolution 1008

Ratifies Revisions to the State-Wide Water Management Plan

- **Sponsors: Senator Echols of the 49th and Representative L. Smith of the 70th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 6, 2026 (Act 425)**

Synopsis: This resolution ratifies the comprehensive state-wide water management plan adopted by the Water Council on December 9, 2025, pursuant to O.C.G.A § 12-5-525.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Senate Bill 76

Creates New Specialty License Plates for Qualifying Military Service Members

- **Sponsors: Senator Echols of the 49th and Representative McCollum of the 30th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2027**

Synopsis: This bill adds the Navy Corps Medal, Marine Corps Medal, Airmen's Medal, Coast Guard Medal, and Combat Infantryman Badge to the list of qualifying "military medal awards" for veteran license plates. Under current law, each active or retired member of the U.S. armed forces is entitled to one such free license plate. For each additional license plate for which a \$25.00 manufacturing fee is required, there must be an additional annual registration fee of \$25.00 as a condition of obtaining an annual renewal of a registration, or an additional registration of \$125.00 as a condition of obtaining a five-year renewal of registration for such license plate. This bill creates a new specialty license plate for U.S. Navy submarine service members, both active and retired, with a \$25.00 manufacturing fee. License plates issued to retired service members must contain the word "RETIRED" in lieu of the name of the county of issuance. This bill also sets rules for application, design, issuance, transfer, and compliance.

This bill also authorizes multipurpose off-highway vehicles to only be operated on highways with a maximum speed of 60 miles per hour or less.

Senate Bill 160

Limited Permit for Individuals whose Licenses are Suspended for Reckless Stunt Driving

- **Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Powell of the 33rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2028**

Synopsis: This bill creates a new limited driving permit contingent upon the installation and monitoring of an intelligent speed assistance device for individuals whose licenses are suspended due to reckless stunt driving. The bill further revises probation, penal, and professional licensing statutes to integrate intelligent speed assistance devices into the state's legal framework. It requires certification, warning labels, and ensures indigent access where devices are court-ordered.

Senate Bill 293

License Plate Updates

- **Sponsors: Senator L. Anderson of the 24th and Representative Corbett of the 174th**
- **Effective Date: July, 1 2026. Part IA: January 1, 2027**

Synopsis: This bill increases penalties for various violations involving license plates, registration, odometer tampering, and certificates of title, with several misdemeanors upgraded to felonies and minimum fines increased. It tightens rules for the use and issuance of dealer and manufacturer license plates, including material/design requirements and new limitations on private use. It creates a new annual permit system for limited operation of unregistered vehicles near business locations. The bill also enhances regulatory oversight of used motor vehicle and parts dealers by increasing bond requirements, mandating Georgia residency or agent, and subjecting the Board to the Administrative Procedure Act. The bill authorizes Department of Revenue to investigate and enforce the bill's provisions.

Senate Bill 384

Optional Five-Year Motor Vehicle Registration

- **Sponsors: Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Momtahan of the 17th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2027**

Synopsis: Current law provides for annual renewal of motor vehicle registrations. This bill provides for an optional **five-year** registration and renewal term for eligible motor vehicles. 'Eligible motor vehicle' is defined as a motor vehicle for which ad valorem taxes are paid in accordance with the alternative tax, excluding commercial and alternative-fueled vehicles. A valid certificate of emission inspection must be submitted during each inspection term within a five-year registration period. DOR is authorized to track compliance, notify individuals of noncompliance, and automatically suspend noncompliant registrations.

For the purposes of aiding in the enforcement of emission inspection requirements, this bill requires emission inspection stations to electronically transmit notice of the issuance of an emission inspection certification to DOR within seven days of issuance. This bill authorizes electronic notification by DOR of failure to comply with emission inspection requirements for individuals who elect a five-year vehicle registration. DOR must electronically notify such individuals 30 days, 20 days, and 10 days prior to the date of any suspension. This bill prohibits credits or refunds for registration fees if a registration is canceled or suspended. The bill makes conforming changes throughout existing Code sections pertaining to motor vehicles and specialty license plates to reflect the optional five-year registration term and incorporate new fee schedules at five times the applicable amounts set forth for standard annual registration and revalidation terms. (*See sections 11 through 28.*) The commissioner is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to effectuate the provisions of this bill.

Senate Bill 399

Mason Sells AED Coordination Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Harbin of the 16th and Representative Bonner of the 73rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill recommends that all persons who have access to or use an AED obtain appropriate training from the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, or other nationally recognized training. This bill requires that all persons and agencies that possess and maintain an AED to notify a public safety answering point of its existence and location. This bill removes the requirement that individuals using an AED make a printed or electronically stored report available to the licensed emergency medical services provider that transports the patient. This bill removes language that: (1) requires DPH to establish an AED program; (2) prohibits emergency medical technicians from using an AED unless the technician has undergone certain steps; (3) allows services licensed by DPH that provide care administered by cardiac technicians or paramedics to use a defibrillator on licensed vehicles without approval by DPH; and (4) suspends or revokes an emergency medical technician's authority to use an AED if he or she violates these provisions. This bill requires all communications officers to successfully complete additional training involving the delivery of high-quality telephone cardiopulmonary resuscitation (T-CPR) and instructions to facilitate the use of AEDs on and after January 1, 2028. The training must follow the most current evidence based nationally recognized guidelines for high-quality telephone T-CPR which incorporate recognition protocols for out-of-hospital cardiac arrests, compression-only T-CPR, and continuing education.

Senate Bill 433

Rio's Law

- **Senator Strickland of the 42nd and Representative Lumsden of the 12th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: On or after January 1, 2027, this bill requires a specially designed "Autism Spectrum Disorder or Developmental Disability" license plate be issued to any owner of a private passenger motor vehicle that complies with motor vehicle laws and who submits an affidavit of a practitioner of the healing arts stating that the owner or his or her spouse, child, or ward is a person with autism spectrum disorder or a developmental disability. After complying with motor vehicle laws relating to registration, licensing, and payment of fees and upon submission of proof of autism or a disability, this bill authorizes any Georgia resident who is the joint owner of a motor vehicle with a person with such disorder or disability to obtain a specialized license plate. This bill authorizes the same for resident motor vehicle owners who are the spouses, parents, or legal guardians of persons with autism or a disability. When an individual with autism or a disability dies, or if the joint ownership of the vehicle ceases for any reason, this bill requires that the specialized license plate be cancelled, and the owner be issued a regular license plate. This bill directs the state revenue commissioner to furnish specialized license plates which must bear the official "Just Bee" symbol or other symbols deemed appropriate. The bill requires that after January 1, 2027, the basic training course for peace officers include training in interactions with people with autism or a disability. This bill requires the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council to develop and implement or approve a training program in collaboration with the Department of Community Health, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, and nonprofit organizations with proven expertise in autism and developmental disabilities.

Senate Bill 524

Specialty License Plates for the Girl Scouts of Georgia and for America's 250th Anniversary

- **Sponsors: Senator Harbin of the 16th and Representative Crowe of the 118th**
- **Effective Date: January 1, 2027**

Synopsis: This bill establishes a specialty license plate honoring the Girl Scouts of Georgia, and requires that the funds raised by the sales be disbursed to the Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta and the Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia Organization. This bill also establishes a specialty license plate commemorating the 250th anniversary of the United States of America's independence. This bill requires the Department of Revenue to include the phrase "250 years of freedom and liberty" in place of the county decal in the design of the specialty license plate.

Senate Bill 569

Emergency Vehicle Light Permits for Towing Companies

- **Sponsors: Senator Strickland of the 42nd and Representative Lumsden of the 12th**
- **Effective Date: VETOED May 12, 2026 (V12)**

Synopsis: This bill adds towing service company vehicles to the definition of 'authorized emergency vehicles' and allows them to apply for emergency light permits under specified conditions. It requires the creation of a statewide towed motor vehicle database by 2027, accessible for vehicle owners to find towed vehicles. The bill streamlines notification requirements for towed vehicles, shortens certain notification deadlines, and replaces previous newspaper advertisement requirements with database entries. It also extends timelines for owners to respond to lien foreclosure notices, establishes re-impoundment procedures for non-compliance, and revises associated fees.

Senate Bill 570

Georgia Human Trafficking Prevention Training Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Still of the 48th and Representative Silcox of the 53rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires annual human trafficking awareness training for all on-site employees of inns and third-party property managers of short-term rental properties in Georgia. The Attorney General, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, must develop or approve training programs. Owners and managers must adopt reporting procedures, retain training records, and comply with existing posting requirements. The bill provides penalties for non-compliance, and exemptions for owner-managed properties and rentals under 15 days per year.

Senate Bill 587

Statewide Animal Cruelty Database; Orders to Locate Vulnerable Individuals

- **Sponsors: Senator Still of the 48th and Representative Camp of the 135th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes superior courts to issue orders to locate children or elderly or disabled persons who are alleged abuse victims and have been moved from a known to an unknown location, upon law enforcement's request during an open investigation. It also requires the creation of a publicly accessible, statewide animal cruelty database maintained by the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia, and requires courts to report convictions and sentencing for relevant offenses.

House Bill 549

Reimbursement of Peace Officer Training Expenses

- **Sponsors: Senator Bearden of the 30th and Representative Seabaugh of the 34th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: Under current law, if the State of Georgia or any county or municipality employs a peace officer and the peace officer is then hired by another agency within 15 months after completing mandated or formalized training requirements, the total expense of training must be reimbursed by the hiring agency to the State of Georgia or any county or municipality which initially paid for his or her training. This bill

extends this timeframe to 36 months. Training expenses eligible for reimbursement are limited to the actual cost of any equipment and materials required by the school, salary and living expenses paid during basic training, and up to 90 days of salary paid during field training.

House Bill 651

Automated Traffic Enforcement Cameras in School Zones

- **Sponsors:** Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative Powell of the 33rd
- **Effective Date:** Multiple

Synopsis: This bill revises provisions related to automated speed enforcement in school zones. It strengthens requirements for signage and permits, tightens oversight and penalties for unauthorized or improper use, and revises how civil penalties may be assessed and collected. The bill requires local referendum approval before such devices can be used, and clarifies that collected funds may not be used for officer salaries. The bill further clarifies the role of courts and prosecutors regarding civil penalties.

House Bill 668

Mara Jade Act

- **Sponsors:** Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Thomas of the 21st
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: This bill replaces all references to “guide dog” and “assistance dog” with “service dog” and updates definitions to explicitly include mental impairments and exclude comfort/emotional support animals not trained for specific tasks. This bill creates a misdemeanor offense for interfering with a service dog that they know or should have known to be a service dog and intentionally harassing or inhibiting the dog from performing as a service animal. Upon conviction, this misdemeanor is punishable by a maximum of 12 months imprisonment and/or a maximum fine of \$1,000.00. Subsequent offenses become punishable as misdemeanors of a high and aggravated nature. This bill establishes a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature for harming a service dog, punishable by six to 12 months of imprisonment and/or a maximum fine of \$5,000.00. This bill also creates a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature when a person misrepresents himself or herself as qualified to use, train, or raise a service dog for the purpose of obtaining accommodations or securing rights. If convicted, the offense is punishable by a maximum fine of \$2,000.00 and/or a maximum confinement of 30 days.

The offense of aggravated harming of a service dog is committed when an individual knows or should have known the dog’s status as a service animal and intentionally causes the dog’s death or an injury that materially affects its ability to perform as a service animal. A convicted person is guilty of a felony and subject to two to ten years of imprisonment and/or a maximum fine of \$50,000.00. The court may deviate from the mandatory minimum sentencing at its discretion.

This bill requires restitution to owners for veterinary expenses, restorative training, and, in the event of the death of or permanent impairment of the dog, the full replacement value including training costs. This bill provides exceptions for humane euthanasia and for defending oneself from an attacking service dog.

This bill expands the requirements for service dogs in training, including notification, control, and housebreaking, and clarifies the rights of service dog handlers and trainers to access public places, housing, and transportation. This bill gives businesses the right to exclude service dogs in training if the training requirements are not met but must still offer the person with the disability to obtain the goods or services without the animal’s presence.

House Bill 1086

Preston Fant and Brant Chesney Firefighter Safety Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Albers of the 56th and Representative Chastain of the 7th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires owners of specified buildings to post signage if light-frame truss-type construction or engineered I-joists (EIJ) are present. EIJ refers to structural elements consisting of a thin web of material sandwiched between two flanges, forming an “I” shape. “Light-frame truss-type construction” is defined as a type of construction for which the primary structural elements are formed by a system of repetitive wood or light gauge steel framing members. The posted notice must have a sign or symbol approved by the Safety Fire Commissioner in a manner sufficient to warn persons conducting fire fighting or other emergency services of the existence of EIJ and light-frame truss-type construction. An owner who fails to comply with this bill is subject to civil penalties.

House Bill 1161

Procedures for Motorists Approached by Emergency and Law Enforcement Vehicles

- **Sponsors: Senator Albers of the 56th and Representative Marvin of the 98th**
- **Effective Date: Multiple**

Synopsis: The bill provides new requirements for motor vehicle operators when approached by emergency or law enforcement vehicles, establishes sentencing guidelines for fleeing offenses based on distance, modifies window tinting regulations, updates requirements for automated traffic enforcement safety devices (particularly in school zones), and requires annual reporting of revenues generated by such devices. It also revises procedures for notice and penalties related to automated enforcement citations.

House Bill 1181

Applications for Certificate of Title on Inherited Vehicles

- **Sponsors: Senator McNeel of the 18th and Representative Ballard of the 147th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires an application for certificate of title to contain or be accompanied by the last certificate of title issued to the decedent by another state when the application refers to a vehicle last previously registered in another state and the applicant is receiving the vehicle upon inheritance, devise, or bequest. The last certificate of title must be issued to the decedent. The application must also include any other documents required pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 40-3-34(d) or (e), such as:

1. A certified copy of a will or letters of administration;
2. If no administration is to be had, an affidavit by the applicant indicating the estate is not indebted and the surviving spouse and heirs—if any—have amicably agreed to a division of the estate among themselves;
3. A certificate from the judge of the probate court showing that the motor vehicle registered in the name of the decedent owner has been assigned to the decedent’s survivors as part of their year’s support; or

If the vehicle is the decedent’s only asset, an affidavit stating that the vehicle was the decedent’s only asset, unencumbered, and the applicant is entitled to receive title to the vehicle.

House Bill 1202

Corrects Scrivener’s Error

- **Sponsors: Senator Albers of the 56th and Representative Corbett of the 174th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill corrects a scrivener’s error in O.C.G.A. § 35-6A-17 by replacing a cross-reference to § 35-6A-15 with § 35-6A-16.

House Bill 1283

Family Justice Center Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative Panitch of the 51st**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes counties, municipalities, and district attorneys to establish Family Justice Centers (FJCs) in partnership with nonprofits for coordinated victim services. FJCs are defined as multiagency centers providing co-located support for victims of family violence, sexual assault, child/elder abuse, and human trafficking. When an FJC is operated by a county or municipal government or district attorney, this bill requires a board, consisting of five members, to oversee FJC operations. Nonprofits operating an FJC must file articles of incorporation, adopt bylaws, and maintain a board of directors with representation from government, law enforcement, prosecution, victim services, social services, and nonprofits. This bill also establishes operational requirements, including memoranda of understanding with partners, trauma-informed and accessible services, confidentiality, and non-discriminatory bylaws, for all FJCs regardless of organizational structure. The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council may administer gifts, donations, grants, and distribute funds to support the establishment of FJCs. FJCs must submit performance reports to the Council, and the Council must compile and submit an annual, statewide report on FJC performance. This bill empowers peace officers assigned to FJCs to respond to emergencies outside their usual jurisdictions within the center's service area. Peace officers have the same powers, duties, and immunities as when acting within their normal jurisdiction. This bill also provides immunity from civil liability for employees and volunteers acting in good faith within FJC operations and allows government entities to procure insurance without waiving immunity. Confidentiality for victim information must be maintained, and disclosure of FJC-related records must be restricted. There are exceptions and limitations for government-held records. Records held solely by FJC partners or agencies are not considered in the possession of the state/prosecution for felony or misdemeanor for criminal discovery unless specified.

This bill also requires that rape kits be maintained for ten years rather than a minimum of 12 months.

House Bill 1391

Specialty License Plate Honoring Public Safety Officers

- **Sponsors: Albers of the 56th and Representative Fleming of the 114th**
- **Effective Date: January 1, 2027**

Synopsis: This bill establishes a specialty license plate honoring public safety officers. The funds raised by the sale of this special license plate must be distributed to the Georgia Public Safety Foundation, Inc.

House Bill 1409

Regulates the Use of Secure Web Based Reporting Platforms and Allows Public Disclosure of Certain General Assembly Records

- **Sponsors: Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative Camp of the 135th**
- **Effective Date: VETOED May 12, 2026 (V7)**

Synopsis: This bill defines "secure web based platform" as a type of software that allows for the secure creation and transmission of child abuse or neglect reports ("reports"). This bill adds "firefighters" and "animal service workers" to the list of persons that must report or cause reports of abuse to be made should he or she have reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred.

If a report is made by telephone or other oral communication, this bill requires that it be made to DFCS, a child welfare agency providing protective services as designated by DFCS or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority, military law enforcement, or district attorney. All oral reports must be followed by a written report submitted to DFCS that fulfills certain criteria and includes certain information. This bill authorizes a secure web based platform that utilizes prompts or other methods to assist a person completing the report to provide information deemed relevant or important. DFCS must make its website available for any person to complete and securely submit a report. Such a report must be thoroughly screened and evaluated to determine child safety and whether an allegation of child abuse exists based solely on whether the maltreatment allegations satisfy the definition of child abuse or neglect criteria and applicable law, without regard to the manner or method of submission. By January 1, 2027, DHS must

review and update the applicable chapters of its Child Welfare Policy Manual that address and set forth criteria and standards relevant to the intake, disposition, and investigation of reports of abuse or neglect.

Agencies employing mandated reporters may authorize their employees to create or transmit reports through one secure web based platform designated by the agency. This bill authorizes an agency to designate a secure web based platform if the platform fulfills certain conditions. A reporting agency that utilizes a secure web based platform must notify DFCS at least ten days before implementing the platform, and the notice must identify the name of the platform provider and any domain names utilized by the platform to submit reports.

This bill requires mandatory reporting training for users of any secure web based platforms. Training requirements may be satisfied by a course provided either by DFCS or an organization with demonstrated subject matter expertise in mandated reporting. DFCS may publish learning objectives, but cannot require platform specific training, exclusive delivery methods, or requirements that have the effect of excluding otherwise compliant platforms.

This bill requires documents related to unlawful employment practice claims made against the General Assembly to be subject to public disclosure.

House Resolution 1243

Proposes a Constitutional Amendment to Create the Georgia Next Generation 9-1-1 Fund (CA)

- **Sponsors: Senator Bearden of the 30th and Representative Martin of the 49th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This proposed constitutional amendment authorizes the General Assembly to create the Georgia Next Generation 9-1-1 Fund. Under this amendment, the General Assembly may provide, by law, for the deposit of revenues raised for the purposes of the fund into the fund, and the funds will be exclusively used for the expansion, maintenance, and operation of the 9-1-1 systems in Georgia. Any other appropriation from the Georgia Next Generation 9-1-1 Fund will be void, and any contributions deposited to the fund cannot lapse. The proposed amendment must be approved by Georgia voters.

REGULATED INDUSTRIES AND UTILITIES

Senate Bill 33

Homeownership Opportunity and Market Equalization Act of 2026

- **Sponsors:** Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Dickey of the 134th
- **Effective Date:** Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 461)

Synopsis: This bill requires local governing authorities to use FLOST proceeds to reduce ad valorem property taxes. Proceeds received before July 1 reduce ad valorem property taxes for the current year and proceeds received after July 1 reduce ad valorem property taxes for the subsequent year.

This bill establishes a Local Homestead Option Sales Tax (LHOST), which is any special sales and use tax levied to fund homestead exemptions granted by local Act. This bill creates 159 special districts. Beginning January 1, 2028, each special district must impose an LHOST of 1 percent, as long as this does not exceed the aggregate cap. The LHOST must correspond to the state sales and use tax, including exemptions. The levy of such tax on motor fuel can only be imposed if the retail price of the fuel is not over \$3.00 per gallon. This bill provides requirements on the enactment of a LHOST local act, including timeframe, adoption procedures, and specific terms and conditions for implementation of the LHOST. An LHOST must cease to be imposed on the final day of the maximum period of time, which cannot exceed ten years, as specified in the local Act. The tax may be renewed in the same manner and conditions as the initial imposition of the tax. The renewal cannot be imposed until the expiration of the initial tax.

This bill requires the DOR commissioner to exclusively administer and collect each LHOST. Each sales and use tax return remitting sales and use taxes collected under LHOST must separately identify the location of each retail establishment at which any of the taxes remitted were collected, and must specify the amount of such taxes collected for the period covered by the return to allow the commissioner to determine that all sales and use taxes are collected and distributed according to situs of sale.

This bill establishes administration and collection procedures and penalties for DOR and eligible local governments within a special district. Proceeds must be disbursed directly to the county as soon as possible, to be held in trust for the special district in an interest-bearing account and distributed thereafter. Following the adoption of millage rates and prior to the printing of ad valorem tax bills, the tax commissioner must calculate the amount of the assessed value to be exempted within the special district. The amount of the assessed homestead property's value to be exempted must be calculated based on the total value of all special district homestead property, the net millage rates adopted by each eligible local government, and the net proceeds of the LHOST available in the trust account as of August 1 of such year.

The bill provides how the tax commissioner must calculate the amount of homestead property which may be exempted from all ad valorem taxes imposed within special districts with a single eligible local government or special districts with one or more eligible local governments. If the proceeds exceed the amount necessary to provide full property tax relief, these proceeds must be applied in a manner to reduce the net millage rates in an equal percentage across all eligible local governments in the special district. If an eligible local government fails to submit its adopted millage rates by September 1, the tax commissioner must use 90 percent of such eligible local government's prior year's net millage rates in the calculation. The county must only disburse the lesser of such amount and the net millage rate actually levied. The county must disburse LHOST funds from the trust account to each eligible local government within 30 days of an eligible local government mailing ad valorem tax bills. No LHOST may be imposed upon the sale of tangible personal property which is ordered by and delivered to the purchaser at a point outside of the special district or upon the sale or use of buildings and construction materials when the contract for which the materials are purchased or used was advertised for bid prior to the local referendum held for LHOST. The LHOST must be in addition to any other local sales and use tax. The imposition of any other local sales and use tax must not affect the authority of a county, municipality, or special district to impose the LHOST. The bill excludes the difference between the assessed value and the net taxable assessed value of all properties granted a base year homestead exemption or ad valorem tax exemption from the equalized adjusted school

property tax digest for the purpose of calculating the local five mill share and equalization grants. The bill raises the allowable percentage for a local school systems reserve fund from 15 percent to 25 percent of the year's total budget.

This bill requires special elections relating to a proposed increase in revenue by a local governing authority, including a question or measure that could result in an increase in taxes, to be held only on the specified dates. This bill makes the state-wide base year homestead exemption mandatory for all political subdivisions by repealing subsection (i) of § O.C.G.A. 48-5-44.2, which allows local governing authorities to adopt a resolution opting the governing authority out of the exemption. This bill clarifies the definitions for *adjusted base year assessed value* and *base year assessed value*. If an applicant becomes ineligible for the homestead exemption with respect to a particular homestead property, and thereafter, becomes eligible and applies for the exemption on such property, the base year assessed value for the homestead must be calculated in accordance with current law as if the applicant were a new applicant who had not been previously granted an exemption.

This bill clarifies which local officials must complete revisions and assessments of taxpayer returns. If a county board of tax assessors discovers a factual error in the tax digest which is not of benefit to the taxpayer and which relates to an improperly or mistakenly applied homestead exemption that was not due to any intentional misrepresentation or fraudulent act on the part of the taxpayer, the tax commissioner is prohibited from retroactively assessing the difference in taxes actually paid and the amount of taxes that would have been assessed but for the mistakenly applied homestead exemption.

Senate Bill 146

Establishes Regulations and Protections for Cemeteries and Burial Grounds

- **Sponsors: Senator Williams of the 25th and Representative Petrea of the 166th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises procedures for issuing disinterment/reinterment and disturbance permits and revises permit provisions for family burial plots.

Disinterment/Reinterment and Disturbance Permits: This bill revises the requirements for disinterment and reinterment permit applications. Applications to DHS must include certain information. This bill clarifies that any disinterment and reinterment or other final disposition for which a permit is issued must be supervised, monitored, or carried out by a licensed funeral director. This bill revises the definition of abandoned cemetery. Current law prohibits any known cemetery, burial ground, human remains, or burial object from being knowingly disturbed by the owner or occupier of the land without a permit. This bill clarifies that this prohibition is not impacted by a county or municipal corporation's decision or lack thereof regarding preserving or protecting such cemeteries or burial grounds.

This bill requires a county or municipal corporation to accept and consider any application for a disturbance permit and requires a written decision on any such application regardless of whether the county or municipal corporation takes any action to preserve or protect the cemeteries or burial grounds. No disturbance permit can be issued unless the cemetery or burial ground constitutes an abandoned cemetery. This bill adds a minimum requirement for disturbance permit applications. This bill clarifies notice requirements for disturbance permits and requires specific information. The governing authority must consider the disturbance permit application at a public hearing within 45 days after the governing authority is satisfied all reasonable notice efforts were made. This bill revises notice requirements for these permit public hearings. This bill clarifies what information the governing authority must consider when making its disturbance permit application decision. This bill establishes notice requirements for any public hearing about disturbance permits conducted by the governing authority of any county with a population in excess of 290,000. This bill clarifies when a person with a disturbance permit can begin or resume activities after an appeal has been filed. This bill creates legal remedies for violating disturbance permit requirements.

Family Burial Plots: On or after July 1, 2026, a person cannot establish a family burial plot without a permit from the governing authority of the county or municipal corporation (“governing authority”) where the proposed plot is located. No permit can be issued unless the family burial plot meets the minimum requirements. At a minimum, the governing authority’s disturbance permit application must include information regarding evidence of land ownership for the family burial plot location or evidence that the landowner(s) consent to the family burial plot. The governing authority may impose additional requirements for family burial plot permits. If denied such a permit, within *30 days*, the person may file an appeal in the superior court of the county where the proposed plot is located. This bill establishes the penalties and remedies for violations of the family burial plot requirements.

Entering Upon Another’s Land for Certain Purposes: If a descendant of a deceased human being whose remains are interred, entombed, or inurned on another’s land is denied entry upon the land, such a descendant may bring an action against the owner in the superior court with jurisdiction. When granting an order allowing the descendant entry upon the land, the superior court may specify the date and time for the descendant to enter and remain upon the land, grant the descendant the right to enter the land periodically, and impose any limitations on the descendant’s ability to enter the land to prevent unreasonable interference with the owner’s use and enjoyment of the land. This bill similarly authorizes an *individual with reasonable grounds to believe* that he or she is a descendant of a deceased person whose remains may have been interred, entombed, or inurned on another’s land to bring a civil action. The superior court may grant an order authorizing entry for the purpose of discovering the human remains and conducting genealogical research. The superior court may also specify dates and times for such entry and impose any limitations on entry to prevent unreasonable interference with the owner’s use and enjoyment of the land.

Senate Bill 162

The Paul Brock Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Hufstetler of the 52nd and Representative Cooper of the 45th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: No later than January 1, 2027, the Georgia Composite Medical Board (“GCMB”) must modify its data management software system to streamline and automate the licensing process for physicians, physician assistants, and anesthesiologist assistants. This system must be fully operational for other healthcare providers licensed by GCMB no later than January 1, 2027.

This data system may:

1. Organize, verify, and store the licenses of healthcare providers, allowing for a single verification process that results in authorization state wide, provided that a healthcare facility, licensee, or applicant inputs the credentialing information and agrees to such authorization;
2. If available, be customizable so that a healthcare facility can add requirements to meet such facility’s rules, regulations, or bylaws;
3. Allow any healthcare facility to accept the information for licensing as acceptance for credentialing and any healthcare provider to add additional requirements for credentialing in their facility;
4. Allow for administrative approval of licenses by GCMB to provide for physicians, physician assistants, and anesthesiologists assistants to be available for employment immediately upon meeting all requirements; and
5. Perform any other functions GCMB deems necessary to improve licensing processes.

Senate Bill 485

Requires REAL-ID Compliant IDs for Nail Technicians; Authorizes Certain Applicants to Take the Social Work Licensing Exam in Their Final Semester; Revises a Certain Definition Relating to Applied Behavioral Analysis

- **Sponsors: Senator Payne of the 54th and Representative Powell of the 33rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises certain provisions relating to nail technicians, applicants for a social work license, and the practice of applied behavior analysis.

Nail Technicians: On or after July 1, 2028, nail technician applicants must submit a photocopy of a REAL-ID compliant driver's license or ID card with their applications. Additionally, beginning on or after July 1, 2028, holders of a nail technician certificate must, at renewal, submit a photocopy of a REAL-ID compliant ID. This bill requires all nail technicians to display a copy of their compliant ID alongside their certificate of registration in a conspicuous place in their beauty shop, beauty salon, or barber shop. This bill requires beauty shops/salons training nail technician apprentices to submit a copy of the apprentice's REAL-ID compliant ID and to also display a copy of such ID in the beauty shop, beauty salon, or barbershop.

Applicants for a Social Work License: This bill authorizes an applicant for a social work license, who is enrolled in a master's degree in social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, to take the master's social work licensing examination during the applicant's final semester.

Practice of Applied Behavior Analysis: As it relates to the practice of applied behavior analysis, current law defines *certifying entity* as the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, Inc., or its successor, or another entity that conducts programs to certify professional practitioners of behavior analysis that are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies or the American National Standards Institute as identified by the board. This bill revises the definition of *certifying entity* by requiring a certifying entity for the Behavior Analyst Certification Board to be a non-profit organization exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

Senate Bill 553

Repeals and Reenacts Provisions Related to Certain Construction Trades

- **Sponsors: Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Seabaugh of the 34th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill repeals and reenacts Title 43, Chapter 14 relating to electrical contractors, plumbers, conditioned air contractors, low voltage contractors, and utility contractors. This bill reestablishes the State Construction Industry Licensing Board consisting of 27 members including five divisions: (1) the Division of Electrical Contractors; (2) the Division of Master Plumbers and Journeyman Plumbers; (3) the Division of Conditioned Air Contractors; (4) the Division of Low Voltage Contractors; and (5) the Division of Utility Contractors. All board members are appointed by the Governor for four-year terms. The board chairperson is rotated among the five divisions and each division elects a division chairperson to serve for two-year terms.

The bill reestablishes the board's powers including, but not limited to, investigative and disciplinary powers (e.g., may suspend or revoke licenses, issue cease-and-desist orders, assess maximum civil penalties of \$10,000.00 per violation). This bill establishes maximum penalties for violations of cease-and-desist orders. Additionally, the relevant board division, local inspection authority, or appropriate prosecuting attorney may file an injunction petition against violators. This bill clarifies local governments' powers including bonding options for licensed conditioned air contractors or licensed plumbers. Local governing authorities are not prohibited from adopting and enforcing codes at the local level. However, local governments cannot require any person licensed under this bill to comply with additional licensing requirements imposed by the local governing authority.

This bill lists all contractor types and applicable licensing requirements. This bill defines each divisions' license classifications (e.g., Electrical Contractor Class I and II, Master Plumber Class I and II, Journeyman Plumber) and clarifies the applicable education, experience, and examination requirements. Relevant licenses and certificates must be renewed every two years. It establishes a streamlined licensure process for current or former military members and establishes reciprocity in licensing for out-of-state applicants who have met substantially similar requirements. This bill authorizes the Division Director to administratively approve applications that meet all requirements consistent with current law. This bill removes the three-recommendation letter requirement and replaces it with affidavits from licensed supervisors verifying the applicant's completion of qualifying work. This bill establishes applicability provisions and clarifies what this code section does not prohibit.

This bill revises the definition of "small business" as it relates to certain tax deductions by striking a reference to another code section and replacing it with a tiered system based on number of employees or gross receipts.

House Bill 185

Dietetics and Nutrition Practice Act; Dietitian Licensure Compact Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Brass of the 6th and Representative Ehrhart of the 36th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 436)**

Synopsis: This bill repeals and reenacts Title 43, Chapter 11A as the Dietetics and Nutrition Practices Act. This bill establishes a dual licensure system for dietitians and nutritionists. Specifically, this bill establishes education, supervised practice, and examination requirements for both professions. Both licenses require applicants to complete 1,000 hours of supervised practice experience under a qualified supervisor within five years of earning the required degree for such professions. This bill establishes requirements for qualified supervisors. This bill revises statutory construction provisions to clarify who these provisions do not affect.

Georgia Board of Examiners of Licensed Dietitians and Licensed Nutritionists: This bill increases board membership from seven to nine and requires the Governor to appoint the members with confirmation by the Senate. The board must meet quarterly instead of annually. This bill reestablishes the board's duties and powers and authorizes the board to conduct national background checks by submitting fingerprints to the FBI through the Georgia Crime Information Center. This bill revises provisional licensure requirements, which are only valid for a year and cannot be renewed.

Dietitian Licensure Compact: This bill enters Georgia into the Dietitian Licensure Compact. The Compact preserves the regulatory ability of Georgia to protect public health and safety through Georgia's system of licensure while allowing licensure portability through a Compact Privilege granted to qualifying professionals. Specifically, the Dietitian Licensure Compact Commission does not have the power to define the requirements for the issuance of a Single State License to practice dietetics. This bill establishes the terms and conditions for exercising the Compact Privilege. The bill establishes the Compact Commission's membership, voting, and meeting requirements and other duties and powers, including forming the Executive Committee. The Compact Commission must develop and maintain a coordinated data system, and Member States must submit a uniform data set on all individuals to whom this Compact applies.

House Bill 219

Authorizes Certain Boards to Conduct a Professional Health Program

- **Sponsors: Senator Hufstetler of the 52nd and Representative Stephens of the 164th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes the Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists and the Georgia Board of Nursing to conduct a professional health program to monitor and rehabilitate impaired healthcare professionals. An impaired healthcare professional is responsible for all costs associated with participating in the professional health program. This bill defines impaired healthcare professional. The Boards may provide pertinent information regarding healthcare professionals to an entity for its purposes in conducting a professional health program. This

information is privileged and confidential and not subject to open records law, court subpoenas, or discovery proceedings. Any entity that contracts with the Boards is immune from civil or criminal liability related to its performance of any functions or duties under the contract.

House Bill 571

Radiologist Assistant Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Albers of the 56th and Representative Hawkins of the 27th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 5, 2026 (Act 404)**

Synopsis: This bill establishes the minimum qualifications and requirements for a radiologist assistant license and prohibits any person from acting as a radiologist assistant, including holding him or herself out as a radiologist assistant, without a valid license. Radiologist assistant licenses are valid for two years and must be renewed biennially on the renewal date established by the Georgia Composite Medical Board (GCMB). GCMB may require completion of continuing education hours for radiologist assistant license renewal and may establish the number of hours and categories to be completed. A person with an expired or inactive license may have his or her license restored by: making application to GCMB, filing proof of his or her fitness to have the license restored (*e.g.*, sworn evidence certifying active practice in another jurisdiction), and paying the required restoration fee.

If the person has not maintained an active practice in another jurisdiction satisfactory to GCMB, then GCMB must determine, by an evaluation program established by rule, the person's fitness to resume active status. GCMB may require the person to complete an evaluated clinical experience and examination. A person who properly notifies GCMB may elect to place his or her license on inactive status and is excused from any renewal fee payments until notifying GCMB of his or her desire to resume active status. A radiologist assistant with an inactive license is prohibited from practicing radiology. This bill allows a person whose license expired while he or she was on active duty within the United States Armed Forces or the state militia, or in training under supervision of the United States required for induction to military service to have his or her license renewed or restored without paying a lapsed renewal fee if the listed conditions are met.

This bill authorizes a radiologist to use the services of a radiologist assistant under the on-site direct supervision of the radiologist as long as the radiologist assistant is duly qualified and licensed as required. A radiologist assistant may with general supervision perform *other noninvasive procedures* unless the procedures are expressly restricted by GCMB. Radiologist assistants may perform *other procedures* under general supervision as may be authorized by GCMB. Any rules and regulations adopted by GCMB related to the radiologist assistant practice must be consistent with the guidelines adopted by the listed entities. This bill establishes GCMB's powers and responsibilities regarding radiologist assistant licensure. This bill requires GCMB to appoint an advisory committee and establishes membership requirements as well as the committee's advisory duties and responsibilities. This bill also provides for statutory construction.

House Bill 1254

Revises Provisions Regarding Various Professions

- **Sponsors: Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Reeves of the 99th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises provisions relating to cemeterians, auctioneers, geologists, and hearing aid dealers and dispensers.

Cemeterians: This bill repeals Chapter 8B of Title 43 relating to cemeterians. This bill removes the State Board of Cemeterians and transfers its regulatory and licensure functions to the Secretary of State and makes conforming changes. This bill vests the Secretary of State and the State Board of Funeral Service with all administrative powers and other powers necessary for enforcing this code section. This bill creates a Cemeterians Advisory Group, consisting of five members, to provide advice to the Secretary of State on matters necessary to carry out its responsibilities. This bill requires all registered cemetery owners to develop, implement, and maintain business continuity and succession plans and to provide such plans to the Secretary of State. Current law prohibits a preneed escrow trust fund from being invested in or loaned

to any business controlled by the preneed dealer, a person who owns a controlling interest of a *cemetery owner* that is not a natural person, or an affiliate of any of these persons or entities. This bill revises this prohibition to cover a “person who owns a controlling interest of a *preneed dealer* that is not a natural person” and “*any cemetery or cemetery controlled by such persons*”.

Auctioneers: This bill repeals and reenacts Chapter 6 of Title 43 relating to auctioneers. Effective July 1, 2026, this bill dissolves the Georgia Auctioneers Commission and transfers its regulatory and licensure functions to the Secretary of State. Notwithstanding this dissolution, the auctioneers education, research, and recovery fund remain in existence solely to administer, defend, and pay claims arising from acts, representations, transactions, or conduct of a licensee and to fund continuing education for auctioneers. On and after July 1, 2026, the Secretary of State serves as the successor administrator for all such matters. This bill establishes recovery fund procedures. This bill reestablishes minimum eligibility criteria, application, and license renewal requirements. This bill also reestablishes continuing education, licensure reciprocity, and disciplinary provisions related to auctioneers. The refusal to grant an auctioneer license cannot be considered a contested case within the meaning provided in the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act. Every licensed auctioneer must maintain an active escrow or trustee account to hold and disburse funds belonging to others arising from auction activities. This bill establishes how such funds must be handled and requires every licensed auctioneer to provide to the Secretary of State information identifying the escrow or trustee account.

Geologists: This bill repeals and reenacts Chapter 19 of Title 43, renaming it the Registration of Professional Geologists Act. This bill abolishes the State Board of Registration for Professional Geologists and vests regulatory authority over geologists, including licensure, with the Secretary of State. To carry out such duties and responsibilities, the Secretary of State must seek the advice of industry representatives, stakeholders, or subject matter experts. This bill reestablishes minimum eligibility criteria, application, and license renewal requirements. This bill also reestablishes continuing education, licensure reciprocity, and disciplinary provisions for geologists. The refusal to grant such a license cannot be considered a contested case within the meaning provided in the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act. This bill allows the Secretary of State to assess a maximum civil penalty of \$10,000.00 for a violation of this code section.

Hearing Aid Dealers and Dispensers: This bill repeals and reserves Chapter 20 of Title 43 relating to hearing aid dealers and dispensers. Specifically, this bill dissolves the State Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Dispensers and consolidates its functions into the State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology, and *Hearing Aid Dispensing*. Beginning July 1, 2026, this bill increases the Board’s membership from eight to *ten members*. This bill establishes membership composition requirements. This bill adds the “Georgia Hearing Aid Dispensers Act” as Article 3 of Chapter 44 of Title 43. It establishes licensure, apprenticeship, and consumer protection requirements for the practice of dispensing prescription hearing aids. The refusal to grant such a license cannot be considered a contested case within the meaning provided in the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act.

RETIREMENT

Senate Bill 23

Alternative Investments by Retirement Systems

- **Sponsors:** Senator Albers of the 56th and Representative Thomas of the 21st
- **Effective Date:** **VETOED May 12, 2026 (V8)**

Synopsis: This bill allows certain large retirement systems—excluding ERS and TRS—to invest up to ten percent of the total assets of their funds in real estate, with a stipulation against investments in single-family homes as a material component. This bill also allows retirement systems to retain real estate investments acquired before a drop in asset value. This bill increases the allowable percentage of alternative investments for eligible large retirement systems from ten percent to 15 percent and prohibits ERS from exceeding 10 percent of its assets.

Senate Bill 143

Revisions to the Firefighters' Pension Fund and Integrates Certain Judges into JRS

- **Sponsors:** Senator Albers of the 56th and Representative McDonald III of the 26th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026, if concurrently funded

Synopsis: This bill revises retirement benefit rules for members of the Georgia Firefighter's Pension Fund, permitting some retirees to continue working while drawing benefits, clarifying eligibility and vesting for partial benefits, and updating reemployment and creditable service accrual conditions. It also creates new provisions for full-time Georgia Tax Court judges with JRS.

Senate Bill 150

Expands Rehiring Program for Retired Teachers

- **Sponsors:** Senator Hickman of the 4th and Representative Ballard of the 147th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026, if concurrently funded

Synopsis: This bill permits public school systems to employ a TRS beneficiary as a full-time teacher if the beneficiary has obtained 30 years of creditable service, and whose primary responsibility is academic instruction in the areas of mathematics, special education, CTAE, reading, writing, or English language arts. This bill requires that any instructor in the area of reading, writing, or the English language arts from pre-kindergarten through grade 12 hold a current dyslexia or reading endorsement approved by the PSC. This bill extends this opportunity to beneficiaries with 30 years of credible service, provided they have been retired for a minimum of 12 months before returning to work in a full-time capacity. The bill extends these provisions to July 30, 2030. This bill removes the term “RESA” and replaces it with “public school system” in reference to determining and reporting areas of highest need. The areas of highest need for each public school system must be reported to TRS on an annual basis until July 1, 2029. This bill prohibits the termination, resignation, or nonrenewal of any teacher previously hired under these provisions due to a change in a public school system’s areas of highest need. The date by which a state auditor must conduct and publish a performance audit concerning the provisions of this Code section is extended from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2029.

Senate Bill 216

Director of the Prosecuting Attorneys Qualifications Commission to Join JRS

- **Sponsors:** Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative Gullett of the 19th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026, if concurrently funded

Synopsis: The bill allows individuals employed as the director of the Prosecuting Attorneys Qualifications Commission, on or after July 1, 2026, to become members of the Judicial Retirement System. However, an individual so employed as of June 30, 2026 who is not already a member of the Judicial Retirement System must remain a member of the Employees’ Retirement System unless he or she elects to join JRS on or before June 30, 2027. An individual making the election must notify the board and pay the remaining amount necessary to pay for the full actuarial cost associated with the transfer of service. Upon such election and payment, ERS must transfer all paid employer and employee contributions with regular

interest to JRS. The individual must receive service in JRS toward vesting only in the full amount of the service rendered as an employee while a member of ERS and for which credit was allowable in ERS. For the purposes of this retirement system, for each such member, his or her earnable monthly compensation is the full rate of regular monthly compensation paid from state funds to the member employee for his or her full working time.

Senate Bill 261

Magistrates Retirement Fund

- **Sponsors: Senator Harbin of the 16th and Representative Carson of the 46th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026, if concurrently funded**

Synopsis: This bill revises the membership of the Board of Commissioners of the Magistrates Retirement Fund of Georgia and increases the monthly dues that a member of the Fund must contribute to 4 percent of the member's maximum average monthly compensation. The bill also changes the formula used to calculate retirement allowances under the Fund. Under the bill, a member must be paid a monthly sum equal to 5 percent of his or her average final monthly compensation for each year served up to 28 years.

Senate Bill 285

Remittance of a Portion of Premium Taxes to the Peace Officers' Annuity and Benefit Fund

- **Sponsors: Senator Robertson of the 29th and Representative Martin of the 49th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires counties and municipalities to remit 1.5 percent of certain insurance premium tax distributions to the Peace Officers' Annuity and Benefit Fund. The Fund will receive and use these remittances solely for member benefits, and such funds are protected from lapse. The bill expresses intent to appropriate an additional amount equal to 0.5 percent of state insurance premium taxes annually to the Fund, subject to appropriations. Beginning July 1, 2027, the board may increase the benefit multiplier for retirees from \$30.00 to \$35.00 per month per year of service.

Senate Bill 452

Increases 401(k) Employer Contribution Threshold for State Law Enforcement Officers

- **Sponsors: Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Carson of the 46th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: On and after July 1, 2026, for any participating member who (1) is a state law enforcement officer; (2) has attained five years or more of creditable service in the plan; and (3) contributes at least 5 percent of his or her salary into his or her 401(k) account, an employer must contribute an additional amount equal to 2 percent of the member's compensation for each year of such member's creditable service that exceeds five years. However, the total rate of any employer's contribution pursuant to this bill must not exceed 15 percent of the member's compensation.

This bill defines the term "state law enforcement officer" as:

1. A peace officer employed by the Department of Community Supervision; or
2. A sworn law enforcement officer certified by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council who is vested by law with the duties of a peace officer.

Senate Bill 489

Authorizes the Board to Set Monthly Dues and Increases Fees and Fines

- **Sponsors: Senator Goodman of the 8th and Representative C. Cannon of the 172nd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes the Board of Commissioners of the Judges of the Probate Courts Retirement Fund of Georgia to determine the monthly dues members are required to pay on and after July 1, 2026. The dues must be between \$105.00 and \$150.00, and the amount must be determined annually based on several factors. This bill removes language regarding monthly dues deadlines. This bill increases the portion of marriage license fees paid to the Board from 20 percent to 25 percent and changes where the applications and licenses must be filed from the Department of Community Health to the Department of Public Health.

This bill also increases the civil filing fee from \$2.00 to \$5.00 per filing and increases the fine collected or bond forfeited in criminal and quasi-criminal probate court cases from \$3.00 to \$5.00.

House Bill 438

Updates Retirement Age and Benefits for Sworn Law Enforcement Officers

- **Sponsors: Senator Williams of the 25th and Representative Crowe of the 118th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026, if concurrently funded**

Synopsis: This bill lowers the normal retirement age to 55 for all sworn law enforcement officers, noncommissioned officers, and troopers in the Department of Public Safety, officers and agents of the GBI, game wardens, alcohol and tobacco officers and agents, and the commissioner and deputy commissioner of the Department of Public Safety. It also updates eligibility for disability benefits and allows these groups to purchase up to five years of creditable service.

House Bill 1234

Provides for the Assignment of Life Insurance Benefits for Funeral Services

- **Sponsors: Senator Williams of the 25th and Representative D. Taylor of the 173rd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill requires group term life insurance benefit payments due from ERS, LRS, or JRS to a named beneficiary be assignable by said beneficiary to a person licensed by the State Board of Funeral Services in order to pay the cost of funeral services for the deceased individual. To make the assignment, the named beneficiary must authorize it in writing and attach a notarized copy of the contract between the beneficiary and the licensed funeral director or embalmer who is providing the services and a copy of the former member's death certificate.

RULES

House Bill 14

Georgia Music Office and Music Ready Communities Act

- **Sponsors:** Senator Cowser of the 46th and Representative Carpenter of the 4th
- **Effective Date:** **VETOED May 12, 2026 (V1)**

Synopsis: This bill creates the Georgia Music Office to facilitate the growth of Georgia's music industry in communities across this state through state-wide support, promotion, and cultivation of Georgia's rich music heritage, musicians, and vibrant music industry. The Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs must select a director to lead the office and appoint department personnel to administer the office's functions.

The office must serve certain functions, including: promoting in-state music production and associated tourism; serving as a promotion office and information clearing-house; coordinating and marketing programs and initiatives to foster the economic and community development of Georgia's music business; providing industry contacts; serving as a liaison between the industry and government offices and agencies; publicizing significant industry developments; developing and marketing listings of music festivals and other events; and facilitating industry expansion. Additionally, the office must certify cities and counties as Music Friendly Georgia Certified Communities. Any city or county seeking this certification must host a Music Friendly Georgia workshop for the purpose of educating local leaders and stakeholders regarding the office's functions.

Establishment of the office is subject to appropriations or other available funding.

House Bill 117

Disclosure of Foreign Imported Shrimp

- **Sponsors:** Senator B. Watson of the 1st and Representative Petrea of the 166th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: This bill requires all commercial food service establishments serving imported shrimp to conspicuously display disclosures stating "FOREIGN IMPORTED" alongside menu items containing such imported shrimp, or display disclosures stating "FOREIGN IMPORTED SHRIMP" on placards visible to the public.

House Bill 1020

District Attorney Compensation Reform Act; Judicial Retirement System Updates

- **Sponsors:** Senator Hatchett of the 50th and Representative Reeves of the 99th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: This bill revises provisions related to the compensation of district attorneys and assistant district attorneys, authorizes locality pay by counties to district attorneys in lieu of county salary supplements and abolishes most county salary supplements paid to district attorneys, suspends the operation of local laws, ordinances, or resolutions that use a district attorney's salary for the calculation of the salary or compensation of other officers, officials, or employees, and updates provisions related to retirement benefits for JRS members joining on or after July 1, 2026.

➤ Sections 1-7 – District Attorney Compensation Reform Act

Section 2: Compensation Options for Current District Attorneys

This bill revises the compensation structure for district attorneys in Georgia. District attorneys in office as of July 1, 2026, may opt-in to the new compensation plan by filing a written notice with the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia and relevant county authorities. The decision to opt-in is final, irrevocable, and must be exercised no later than January 1, 2030. The failure to opt-in constitutes an election to continue to receive compensation and supplements as previously calculated by law in effect on June 30, 2026.

For district attorneys who do not opt-in to the revised compensation structure, the bill provides that they will continue to be compensated in precisely the same manner as they were compensated as of June 30, 2026, to prevent any decrease in their salary, allowance, or county supplements during their terms of office. Interim district attorneys will be treated the same as elected district attorneys for purposes of compensation options available to them pursuant to this bill.

Sections 3 & 4: County Supplements and Locality Pay

Section 3 of this bill repeals subsection (d) of Code Section 15-18-10.1, which prohibits counties from increasing an aggregate county salary supplement paid to a district attorney or other state-paid position if such supplement is \$50,000 or more.

Section 4 of this bill prohibits counties from providing county salary supplements to district attorneys, except for those grandfathered into previous compensation structures pursuant to Section 2 of this bill, beginning July 1, 2026. Instead, the bill authorizes counties to provide locality pay to district attorneys. The bill expressly states that in no event may the annual locality pay provided to a district attorney or circuit public defender in aggregate exceed the lesser of: (1) 10 percent of the state annual salary paid to district attorneys; or (2) the total of \$20,608.05.

Counties may still provide local salary supplements to a district attorney who enters a contract to act as a solicitor for a county's probate or magistrate court, or to provide certain other services. Counties may also continue providing fringe benefits to district attorneys in the same manner as provided on June 30, 2026. Additionally, the bill requires an additional supplement for district attorneys who opt-in to the revised compensation plan in the event that the aggregate state annual salary and locality pay do not equal or exceed the aggregate salary and county supplements paid to a district attorney at the time he or she exercised the option to participate in the revised plan. The bill further clarifies its effect on existing and future retirement benefits.

Sections 5 & 6: Compensation for ADAs & Calculation of Salary for District Attorneys

This bill revises the existing compensation structure for assistant district attorneys. The minimum salaries for each class of ADAs are revised as follows:

Class	Current	Revised
ADA I	\$38,124.00	\$78,000.00
ADA II	\$40,884.00	\$93,082.00
ADA III	\$45,108.00	\$111,562.00
ADA IV	\$52,176.00	\$134,291.00

This bill repeals existing salaries set for district attorneys (45-7-4(a)(21)) and the Judge of the Georgia Tax Court (45-7-4-(a)(19.2)). The bill further provides that the annual salary for district attorneys will be set by the General Assembly via the General Appropriations Act, provided that such salary does not exceed 88 percent of the salary provided to superior court judges.

Section 7: Compensation Based on a District Attorney's Salary

This bill suspends all local laws, ordinances, or resolutions in effect as of July 1, 2026, which provide for compensation to be paid to a state, county, or local officer, official, or employee based on a percentage or similar mathematical relationship to any district attorney's salary, so as to prevent automatic salary increases for others as a result of the new district attorney pay structure. The suspension does not apply to local laws, ordinances, or resolutions adopted after July 1, 2026, and does not affect the compensation paid to any circuit public defender.

The suspension will automatically terminate for all judges as of July 1, 2027, and will remain in place for others affected until otherwise modified by law. Upon the termination of such suspension, the bill prohibits retroactive payments to be made to any person for compensation that he or she may have otherwise received if not for the suspension.

➤ **Sections 8-14 – JRS Updates**

This bill creates a new benefit formula for members joining the Judicial Retirement System on or after July 1, 2026, including detailed provisions regarding creditable service, retirement age, and benefit calculations. The right of a member to receive benefits will vest after the member obtains ten years of creditable service, provided that no member receives a retirement benefit prior to age 60. A member's accumulated contributions will be 100 percent vested and nonforfeitable at all times. Any member retiring with 16 years or more of creditable service will receive a benefit equal to 66.66 percent, plus 1 percent for every year of creditable service over 16 years, of the member's salary. No member may receive more than 24 years of creditable service.

For a member who joins on or after July 1, 2026, if he or she has not reached age 65 on the effective date of his or her retirement, the monthly retirement benefit must be calculated using only the years of creditable service attributable to such member's service in any covered position **except that of a superior court judge or district attorney**. Such member would be eligible for benefit recalculation upon reaching age 65. The bill makes conforming changes to relevant Code sections.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

House Bill 986

Revises Operation Procedures for Personal Delivery Devices

- **Sponsors:** Senator Ginn of the 47th and Representative T. Jones of the 25th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Current law requires personal delivery devices to emit a sound when approaching and within certain proximities to individuals and vehicles. This bill requires such when in motion. This bill also increases the maximum speed a personal delivery device may travel upon a sidewalk, shared use path, safety zone, or crosswalk from four to seven miles per hour.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS

Senate Bill 605

Additional Grounds for Discipline, Removal, or Involuntary Retirement of DAs and Solicitors-General

- **Sponsors:** Senator Cowsert of the 46th and Representative T. Smith of the 18th
- **Effective Date:** Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 499)

Synopsis: This bill provides the following additional grounds for the discipline, removal, or involuntary retirement from office of a district attorney or solicitor-general:

- Failure to make reasonable efforts to strictly comply with the Crime Victims' Bill of Rights;
- Failure to make reasonable efforts to comply with public records inspection laws;
- Knowingly authorizing or making a decision based on any of the following factors outlined in Code section 15-18-32(i)(2):
 - (A) Undue bias or prejudice against the accused or in favor of persons with interests adverse to the accused;
 - (B) An undisclosed financial interest in the outcome of the prosecution;
 - (C) An undisclosed conflict of interest;
 - (D) Factors that are completely unrelated to the duties of prosecution; or
 - (E) A stated policy, written or otherwise, which demonstrates that the district attorney or solicitor-general categorically refuses to prosecute any offense or offenses of which he or she is required by law to prosecute;
- Failure to make reasonable efforts to comply with criminal discovery laws; and
- Failure to make reasonable efforts to comply with the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct, specifically referencing Rule 3.8, relating to special responsibilities of prosecutors.

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Senate Bill 447

Revises Certain Permit Provisions

- **Sponsors:** Senator Dixon of the 45th and Representative Anderson of the 10th
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: Private Professional Providers: Upon submission by the private professional provider of a copy of an approved inspection report to the local governing authority, this bill requires such inspection to be deemed approved as a matter of law. The local governing authority has two business days after submission to notify the private professional provider of any deficiencies in such inspection report. This bill requires the private professional provider to submit a corrected inspection report after receiving the notice. However, in no event, can any deficiency in an inspection report or a correction to such report prevent the completion of work that has been approved by the private professional provider or otherwise delay the progress of the project related to such inspection.

Control of Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Permits: This bill requires local issuing authorities to specify in clear and unambiguous language the criteria for approving these permits. During the first five days after filing of the permit application, the local issuing authority must determine whether the application is complete and whether external review is required. If required, the local issuing authority must notify the external reviewer of the filing of the application. If after the five-day period, the local issuing authority fails to provide notice that the application is incomplete, the application must be deemed complete. If the permit has been denied or deemed not accepted, and the applicant then resubmits a modified form of the application to address the deficiencies, the local issuing authority must issue or deny the permit as soon as practicable, but in any event not later than: (1) 20 days after the first resubmission by the applicant; or (2) 14 days after any subsequent resubmission by the applicant. However, for any review following resubmission, the local issuing authority may not issue any comments on aspects of the application that are not related to its initial comments or any changes made in a resubmission. These provisions do not apply to any development of regional impact, as determined by DCA.

If the local issuing authority requires compliance with additional regulatory items beyond erosion and sediment control (e.g., storm-water management or utility approval), all such requirements are subject to the timeframes described above. If the local issuing authority is required to utilize a state agency, local government other than the local issuing authority, or utility provider to conduct a portion of its plan or permit review, the local issuing authority must provide a list of the items requiring external review to the applicant. The review time frames are tolled while the external reviews are conducted by a state agency. If the local issuing authority does not issue or deny a permit within the prescribed time frame, the local issuing authority must refund all fees associated with the applicant's permit application.

This bill prohibits local issuing authorities from denying or deeming not accepted a permit application for any reason not authorized by relevant law. Upon denial or nonacceptance, local issuing authorities must provide a written list of reasons with sufficient information and documentation supporting each reason for denial or nonacceptance. If an applicant resubmits the application with material additions unrelated to the cited reasons, the local issuing authorities must address the additions. Material additions must be deemed a new application subject to the review time frame. An applicant aggrieved by a local issuing authority's failure to comply with any of these requirements may petition the superior court for mandamus relief, and the petition must receive priority on the court's docket.

In any county in which an airport is owned or operated either by the county or a local authority and the airport is adjacent to 9,000 acres or more of property currently or formerly owned by a municipality that has no incorporated territory within such county and any county adjacent to such county, the review time frames imposed do not apply unless a local Act is adopted making these time frames applicable to such county. However, the local Act is contingent upon the Act being approved by a majority of voters of the county voting in a referendum.

Local Government General Provisions: This bill applies the requirements listed above to counties and municipalities when issuing permits. In the event the local authority does not issue or deny a permit within the prescribed time frame, the local issuing authority must refund all fees collected with the applicant's permit application. This bill authorizes mandamus actions for any individual aggrieved by a local issuing authority's failure to comply with these requirements. These mandamus actions must receive priority on the court's docket.

This bill requires all local governments to maintain a public website or application with real-time tracking for all building permit applications, which must display the listed information. The information must be: (1) searchable by permit number, property address, or parcel ID; (2) free to use and not require a login or registration; and (3) in a continuously accessible and reasonably usable format. Local governments must ensure that permit status information is accurate and updated in real time. A local government may provide a direct public-link to a third-party permitting or records management system.

House Bill 244

Revises Annual Audit Requirements of Local Governments

- **Sponsors: Senator S. Watson of the 11th and Representative C. Cannon of the 172nd**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill updates requirements for annual audits by local governments. Current law requires local governments to conduct an annual audit for the fiscal year *if their population exceeds 1,500 or they have expenditures of \$550,000.00 or more*. If the local government does not meet either of these conditions, the local government must conduct an audit at least once every two fiscal years. Under this bill, only a local government which has expenditures of \$2.5 million or more *must* perform an annual audit of financial affairs and transactions for the fiscal year.

Under the bill, a local government which spends less than \$2.5 million each fiscal year *may* conduct an audit using a special purpose framework prescribed by the state auditor. The state auditor must develop reporting templates for such local governments to use. The state auditor must establish an effective date to begin reporting under the special purpose framework. Alternatively, if the local government spent \$1 million or less in their most recent fiscal year, it may file an annual report of agreed upon procedures for that fiscal year. However, a local government may not file such an annual report for more than four consecutive years. Local governments filing annual reports must perform an audit, according to generally accepted government auditing standards, at least every fifth year.

This bill authorizes the state auditor to grant exceptions to a local government's audit filing requirements if the local government demonstrates that unusual circumstances resulted in expenditures exceeding the threshold amounts triggering an audit. The bill requires public officers and employees serving a given county or consolidated government, including county constitutional officers and state officers and employees specifically assigned to the local government, to cooperate with the county or consolidated government when preparing the required financial statements and audit reports. This bill creates penalties for failing to comply with these requirements. The state auditor may waive enforcement of penalties against county constitutional officers for good cause.

House Bill 295

Allows Real Property Owners to Submit Compensation Claims Under Certain Circumstances

- **Sponsors: Senator Dixon of the 45th and Representative Gaines of the 120th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill allows owners of a parcel of real property to submit a written claim for compensation to the local government in which the real property is located if certain conditions are met. Such conditions include: (1) The local government adopts and enforces a policy, pattern, or practice of: (A) failing to comply with the laws prohibiting immigration sanctuary policies or laws regarding verifying lawful presence within the United States, or (B) declining to enforce existing laws, ordinances, or other legislation prohibiting illegal camping, loitering, obstructing public thoroughfares, panhandling, possession or use of controlled

substances, shoplifting, or public intoxication or public urination while trespassing on private property; or (2) The local government maintains a public nuisance and: (A) the owner incurs documented expenses to mitigate the effects of such on the owner's real property, or (B) the fair market value of the owner's real property is reduced by the same.

This bill requires the owner to elect how the compensation amount is determined: (1) the documented expenses incurred that were reasonably necessary to mitigate the effects of a public nuisance to the owner's real property, or (2) the reduction in fair market value of the property resulting from the same. Compensation is limited to the amount of ad valorem property taxes paid on the affected property in the prior tax year. Claims for compensation must be administered in accordance with O.C.G.A §48-5-380 (relating to refunds of taxes and fees by counties and municipalities). This bill establishes the procedures owners must follow for compensation claims including the required information for such claims. A claim must be submitted in writing to the local government within the tax year in which the events occurred. An owner may submit a claim relating to a particular parcel of real property once per tax year. If the claim is denied as administratively incomplete, the owner may revise and resubmit the claim to ensure it is administratively complete. If the policy, pattern, practice, or public nuisance remains in place after the owner's claim is submitted, and the owner continues to suffer monetary damages, the owner may file subsequent claims in subsequent tax years.

Local governments must act on compensation claims within 30 days and pay accepted claims within 30 days. If the local government rejects or does not respond to the claim within 30 days, the owner may bring an action in the superior court with jurisdiction. This bill establishes notice and burden of proof requirements regarding superior court actions for such claims. This bill does not apply to claims based on (1) certain prosecutorial decisions, (2) executive clemency actions, (3) acts or omissions required by federal or state law, and (4) actions taken by district attorneys, solicitors-general, or other elected county officers not subject to the local government's control or the employees of such officers. This bill waives the sovereign immunity of local governments to the extent necessary to enforce this bill. This bill authorizes mandamus actions for any individual aggrieved by certain local government or custodial authority violations. These actions must receive priority on the court's docket.

House Bill 1245

Walker County Board of Education Elections

- **Sponsors: Senator Dixon of the 45th and Representative Cameron of the 1st**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 552)**

Synopsis: Currently, the Walker County School District is divided into five education districts and its members are elected at-large by all voters in the school system. This bill requires future members of the Board to be elected by qualified voters within their respective education districts. This bill revises the process for filling Board vacancies—specifying appointment procedures depending on when a vacancy occurs during a term.

House Bill 1316

Removes the Five-Year Residency Requirement for the Homestead Exemption for Certain Walker County Residents

- **Sponsors: Senator Dixon of the 45th and Representative Tarvin of the 2nd**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 556)**

Synopsis: Current law grants an exemption from Walker County school district ad valorem taxes for educational purposes to each resident of the Walker County school district *who has lived in such district for five years or more* and who is 75 years or older on or before January 1 of the year in which the application for exemption is made (or any subsequent year of application). This bill removes the five years or more residency requirement for that exemption.

House Bill 1317

Authorizes the Governing Authority of the City of Fort Oglethorpe to Levy an Excise Tax

- **Sponsors: Senator Dixon of the 45th and Representative Horner of the 3rd**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 12, 2026 (Act 649)**

Synopsis: This bill authorizes the governing authority of the City of Fort Oglethorpe to levy an excise tax pursuant to subsection (b) of O.C.G.A. § 48-13-51 (authorizing governing authority of each municipality to levy excise taxes subject to certain conditions). The enactment of this bill is subsequent to the adoption of a resolution by the governing authority of the City of Fort Oglethorpe on December 8, 2025. The City's resolution specifies the subsequent tax rate, identifies the projects or tourism product development purposes, and specifies the allocation of proceeds. This bill lists the terms of this resolution.

House Bill 1526

Repeals a Former Local Constitutional Amendment for Early County

- **Sponsors: Senator Dixon of the 45th and Representative Greene of the 154th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 12, 2026 (Act 669)**

Synopsis: This bill repeals the statutory law originating from a 1962 local constitutional amendment that provided a five-year local ad valorem property tax exemption for new or expanded manufacturing/processing plants in Early County. However, any property receiving this exemption on the effective date of this bill continues to receive the exemption for the remainder of the unexpired five-year period.

House Bill 1543

Establishes a Homestead Exemption from Certain Chattooga County Ad Valorem Taxes

- **Sponsors: Senator Dixon of the 45th and Representative Lumsden of the 12th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 585)**

Synopsis: Currently, there is a \$40,000.00 homestead exemption from certain ad valorem taxes levied by, for, or on behalf of the Chattooga County School Districts for residents of that district who are 70 years or older and whose gross income does not exceed \$20,000.00. This bill revises this exemption for each resident of the Chattooga County School District who is senior citizen and whose income for the immediately preceding taxable year does not exceed **\$38,000.00**. This bill also increases the value of the exemption in steps over a two-year period. For tax year 2027, the exemption is **\$41,150.00**. For tax year 2028 and subsequent years, the exemption is **\$55,000.00**. These changes take effect only if approved by a local referendum. This bill specifies procedures for conducting the referendum including notice requirements and ballot language.

House Bill 1544

Homestead Exemption from Chattooga County Ad Valorem Taxes for Certain Persons

- **Sponsors: Senator Dixon of the 45th and Representative Lumsden of the 12th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 586)**

Synopsis: This bill establishes a **\$70,000.00** homestead exemption from Chattooga County ad valorem taxes for county purposes for residents aged 70 or older whose household income does not exceed \$38,000.00 for the immediately preceding year. The exemption is contingent upon approval by local referendum in November 2026. If approved, the exemption applies to all taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2027. The exemption does not apply or effect any state ad valorem taxes, county or independent school district ad valorem taxes for educational purposes, or municipal ad valorem taxes for municipal purposes. Eligible residents must apply, but current recipients under a previous similar exemption are automatically enrolled. The exemption automatically renews from year to year so long as the person granted the exemption occupies the residence as a homestead. This exemption is in lieu of and not in addition to any other homestead exemption applicable to Chattooga County ad valorem taxes for county purposes. The bill specifies election procedures and establishes legal remedies if election duties are not fulfilled.

STATE INSTITUTIONS AND PROPERTY

House Resolution 1050

Provides for the Lease and Conveyance of State-Owned Property

- **Sponsors: Senator Harbison of the 15th and Representative Greene of the 154th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 501)**

Synopsis: This resolution provides for the conveyance or lease of state-owned real property in Clayton, Dawson, Dekalb, Dougherty, Effingham, Floyd, McDuffie, McIntosh, Polk, Richmond, and Troup counties. This resolution gives the legal description of each property being sold or leased and describes the consideration for each.

House Resolution 1051

Authorizations of Easements on State-Owned Property

- **Sponsors: Senator Harbison of the 15th and Representative Greene of the 154th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 11, 2026 (Act 502)**

Synopsis: This resolution authorizes the grant of non-exclusive easements in state-owned property located in Baldwin, Bartow, Bulloch, Camden, Catoosa, Chatham, Chattooga, Clayton, Colquitt, DeKalb, Emanuel, Glynn, Habersham, Hall, Laurens, Long, McDuffie, Morgan, Muscogee, Oconee, Paulding, Peach, Talbot, Tift, and Walton Counties, GA and Hamilton County, TN. These easements will be used for the construction, installation, operation, and maintenance of facilities, utilities, roads, and any ingress and egress within property owned by the state.

TRANSPORTATION

Senate Resolution 624

Dedicates Roads, Roundabouts, Bridges, and Intersections

- **Sponsors: Senator Setzler of the 37th and Representative Jasperse of the 11th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill dedicates various roads, roundabouts, bridges, and intersections to specific individuals.

House Bill 297

Georgia Transportation Efficiency Authority Act

- **Sponsors: Senator Anavitarte of the 31st and Representative Anderson of the 10th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 12, 2026 (Act 708)**

Synopsis: This bill repeals certain Code Sections relating to the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and the Atlanta-region Transit Link “ATL” Authority (ATL Authority). This bill creates the Georgia Transportation Efficiency Authority (GTEA) to manage Georgia transit. GTEA must serve as the entity for approval of state-wide transportation plans and transportation improvement programs prepared by transportation management areas. All assets, property, and legal rights and obligations of GRTA transfer to GTEA on the effective date of this bill. This bill requires that the ATL Authority become known as GTEA, with its status and functions transferring to the new authority.

House Bill 944

Updates Reference Date for Regulations

- **Sponsors: Senator Bearden of the 30th and Representative McDonald III of the 26th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill revises the reference date for “present regulations” from January 1, 2025, to January 1, 2026.

House Bill 1230

Regulates the Operation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems Above Places of Incarceration

- **Sponsors: Senator Still of the 48th and Representative T. Jones of the 25th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill prohibits any individual from knowingly and intentionally operating, or allowing another to operate from his or her property, an unmanned aircraft system to deliver contraband, capture images, or otherwise engage in criminal activity above a place of incarceration. Prior authorization from the warden or the superintendent to photograph or record a place of incarceration with an unmanned aircraft system may serve as evidence of a noncriminal intent. However, failure to secure such prior authorization does not evidence a criminal intent. This bill authorizes a law enforcement officer or agency to take reasonable and necessary mitigation measures against an unmanned aircraft system operating over a place of incarceration for the purposes of committing a criminal offense. Unmanned aircraft systems operated in violation of these provisions are contraband and may be seized, taken, removed, or destroyed or disposed of by law enforcement at the expense of the owner.

House Bill 1277

Regulates Project Cost Thresholds

- **Sponsors: Senator Gooch of the 51st and Representative Barton of the 5th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: This bill raises the cost threshold for environmental evaluation of public roads or airport projects from \$100 million to \$200 million, and authorizes annual inflation adjustments starting July 1, 2027. The adjustment must not result in an increase by more than the annual rate of inflation as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor.

This bill replaces previous reporting requirements by requiring that the DOT provide an annual fiscal year report on public fund investment in transportation. The report must be made available to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 15 of each year. This bill removes the requirement for the commissioner of transportation to develop and publish project benchmarks for annual benchmark-based project progress reports and maintain detailed online project status reports.

This bill repeals the biennial reporting requirement on potential public-private partnership undertakings. This bill updates reporting requirements for design-build and alternative contracting projects. Design-build contracting reports must now include the considerations for any project awarded on a best value basis and a summary of projects undertaken. Alternative contracting reports must now include a comparative benefit analysis and summary of projects undertaken.

This bill repeals the limit on the amount of design-build projects DOT may award. This bill also increases the property value threshold for negotiated sale of surplus property from \$75,000 to \$150,000. On July 1, 2027, and each July 1 thereafter, this bill authorizes DOT to annually adjust the value threshold. The adjustment must not result in an increase by more than the annual rate of inflation as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor.

This bill allows for online public auctions of such surplus property. If the highest offer is less than the appraised value but within 15 percent of such value, DOT may accept the offer and convey the property. This bill revises an Act relating to regulation and taxation of electricity used as motor vehicle fuel and electric vehicle charging stations (Ga. L. 2023, p. 376/SB 146) by extending the effective date for certain provisions relating to revenue and taxation.

House Bill 1434

Regulates Local Government Power Over Airports

- **Sponsors: Senator Dickerson of the 21st and Representative Jenkins of the 136th**
- **Effective Date: July 1, 2026**

Synopsis: By January 1, 2027, every airport sponsor in Georgia must identify the airport affected area for its airport and notify any airport affected governing body—the governing authority of a county, municipality, or other political subdivision—that an airport affected area is located within its territory. An “airport affected area” is defined as any area of air, land, or water lying beneath a civil airport imaginary surface. By July 1, 2027, and after public notice and a public hearing, every airport affected governing body must adopt and enforce certain regulations. At minimum, these regulations must include limiting the height of buildings, structures, and objects of natural growth to keep airport imaginary surfaces obstruction free. This bill provides that each airport affected governing body is responsible for enforcing necessary regulations. Before granting any variance that may create an obstruction, the governing body must notify an airport sponsor of the requested variance. The sponsor will determine if the variance violates any regulations for civil airport imaginary surfaces. If an airport affected governing body does not enact or enforce the required regulations, it will be ineligible for funding through the local maintenance and improvement grant program for three years, or until it enacts or enforces the regulations, whichever is sooner.

House Resolution 1300

Dedicates Roads, Bridges, Intersections, and Roundabouts

- **Sponsors: Senator Dolezal of the 27th and Representative Ford of the 170th**
- **Effective Date: Signed May 12, 2026 (Act 720)**

Synopsis: This bill dedicates various roads, roundabouts, bridges, and intersections to specific individuals.

VETERANS, MILITARY, AND HOMELAND SECURITY

House Bill 985

Revises Eligibility for Interment in Georgia Veterans Cemeteries

- **Sponsors:** Senator Williams of the 25th and Representative Bonner of the 73rd
- **Effective Date:** July 1, 2026

Synopsis: Current law authorizes the Department of Veterans Service to verify eligibility for interment in Georgia veterans cemeteries using federal national cemetery standards. This bill revises the definition of “full term of service” as the agreed length of enlistment or commissioned service, or at least 24 consecutive months if conscripted. The bill provides that individuals eligible for interment include those who qualify under federal national cemetery standards and individuals meeting the requirements of the Burial Equity for Guards and Reserves Act. An individual qualifies under this provision if he or she completed a full term of service and became deceased on or after August 1, 1990, and meets one of the following: (1) is either a reserve component member discharged under honorable conditions or who died while serving under honorable conditions; (2) a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps member who died under honorable conditions while a service member; or (3) a spouse, minor child, or unmarried adult child of such service member.

The bill adds eligibility for an individual who was a Georgia resident at the time of death and who served honorably with a Hmong Laotian special guerrilla unit in support of the United States Armed Forces between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975, and who was lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States. A family member must submit documentation to the Department of Veterans Service, including: (1) an affidavit describing when, where, and in what unit and capacity the individual served; (2) any available corroborating witness affidavits; (3) any available official documentation of service; (4) any additional supporting documents; and (5) a copy of the individual’s United States Certificate of Naturalization or identifying registration number.

The bill further authorizes the Veterans Service Board or its designee to allow burial of an individual who substantially, but not completely, meets eligibility requirements. Federal prohibitions relating to certain criminal offenses that bar burial in national veterans cemeteries apply to Georgia veterans cemeteries. The Department of Veterans Service may charge burial fees based on the federal national cemetery burial allowance or another amount determined appropriate by the commissioner, and such fees must be deposited into the state general fund.

STUDY COMMITTEES

Senate Resolution 432

Senate Higher Education in Prison Study Committee

- Sponsor: Senator Harrell of the 40th

Senate Resolution 482

Georgia Nuclear Power Study Committee

- Sponsor: Senator Bearden of the 30th

Senate Resolution 533

Senate Study Committee on Enhancing Public Safety and Civic Health

- Sponsor: Senator Donzella of the 28th

Senate Resolution 545

Senate Paid Student Teaching Study Committee

- Sponsor: Senator Kemp of the 38th

Senate Resolution 553

Senate Study Committee on Funding for Charter School Capital Improvements

- Sponsor: Senator Halpern of the 39th

Senate Resolution 610

Senate Study Committee on Improving and Increasing Recycling

- Sponsor: Senator Hatchett of the 50th

Senate Resolution 622

Joint Study Committee on Evaluating Escalating Costs in Georgia's Foster Care System

- Sponsors: Senator Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and Representative Camp of the 135th
- **Appointed**

Senate Resolution 771

Senate Study Committee on Adoption and Permanency Affordability

- Sponsor: Senator Robertson of the 29th
- **Appointed**

Senate Resolution 789

Senate Study Committee on the Impact of Artificial Intelligence

- Sponsor: Senator James of the 28th

Senate Resolution 890

Senate Study Committee on Protecting Free and Fair Markets in Georgia

- Sponsor: Senator Halpern of the 39th

Senate Resolution 925

Senate Study Committee on a Museum of African American History and Culture of Georgia

- Sponsor: Senator Halpern of the 39th

Senate Resolution 927

Senate Pharmacy Benefits Managers and Consumer Access to Prescription Medications Study Committee

- Sponsor: Senator Hatchett of the 50th

Senate Resolution 952

Senate Rosenwald Schools Study Committee

- **Sponsor: Senator Davenport of the 17th**

Senate Resolution 978

Senate Study Committee on Higher Education Funding

- **Sponsor: Senator Burns of the 23rd**

House Resolution 1416

Joint Study Committee on Generational Sustainability of Family Farms

- **Sponsors: Senator Goodman of the 8th and Representative Dickey of the 134th**
- **Appointed**