



2024

capitol watch

A "New Feel" State Capitol...

The 2024 Legislative Session and second half of the two year term of the Georgia General Assembly kicked off Monday, January 8th.

The Monday morning sunrise gave shine to the freshly updated paint and lighting throughout the Gold Dome; the result of months-long refurbishment during the offseason. Additionally, new policies laid out for legislators, lobbyists, and guests with the enactment of a "no bag left unattended" policy resulted in a number of individuals losing their overcoats and briefcases to a state patrol sweep.

For the second year in a row, legislators agreed upon an adjournment resolution and set the full legislative calendar for the 40 legislative days of the session.

- Monday, January 8th: Legislative Day 1
- Tuesday, January 9th: Legislative Day 2
- Wednesday, January 10th: Legislative Day 3
- Thursday, January 11th: Legislative Day 4
- Friday, January 12th: Legislative Day 5
- Tuesday, January 16th - Friday, January 20th : Joint Budget Hearings ([CLICK HERE](#) to view schedule. [CLICK HERE](#) to view the hearings)*
- Monday, January 22nd - Friday, January 26th: Legislative Days 6-10
- Monday, January 29th - Thursday, February 1st: Legislative Days 11-14
- Monday, February 5th - Friday, February 9th: Legislative Days 15-19
- Monday, February 12th: Legislative Day 20
- Tuesday, February 13th: Legislative Day 21
- Thursday, February 15th, Legislative Day 22
- Tuesday, February 20th - Thursday February 22nd: Legislative Days 23-25
- Monday, February 26th: Legislative Day 26
- Tuesday, February 27th: Legislative Day 27
- Thursday, February 29th: Legislative Day 28 (CROSSOVER)
- Monday, March 4th - Tuesday March 5th: Legislative Days 29-30
- Thursday March 7th - Friday March 8th: Legislative Days 31-32

- Monday, March 11th: Legislative Day 33
- Wednesday, March 13th - Thursday, March 14th: Legislative Days 34-35
- Monday, March 18th: Legislative Day 36
- Wednesday, March 20th - Thursday, March 21st: Legislative Days 37-38
- Tuesday, March 26th: Legislative Day 39
- Thursday, March 28th: Legislative Day 40 (SINE DIE)

*Georgia Departments of Community Health, Public Health and Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities all present their budgets on Wednesday, January 17th beginning at 8:00am. The Georgia Department of Insurance will follow at 2:30pm.

The 2024 Legislative Session will reconvene at 10:00am Monday, January 22nd, 2023

Governor Brian Kemp State of the State Address

Delivering his sixth State of the State address on Thursday, Governor Brian Kemp laid out a budget-heavy litany of his priorities for the 2024 Legislative Session.

Front and center among Governor Kemp's proposals was his previously announced acceleration of a state income tax cut. The Governor gave notice that he would propose legislation to take the tax rate to 5.39% this year, resulting in a \$3 billion savings for Georgians over 10 years. Notwithstanding this reduction in taxation, Kemp proposed an additional \$1.4 billion in spending for K-12 education in his AFY2024 and FY2025 budgets, making a total of \$12.8 billion allocated to K-12 education. This new spending includes \$2,500 raises for educators, as well as \$104 million in permanent, recurring funding for school safety enhancements.

Educators are not the only public employees in line for raises in the governor's spending plans. Kemp also proposed \$3,000 raises for the state's law enforcement officers and 4% raises for all other state employees. In programmatic spending, the governor highlighted an infusion of \$205 million for the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to expand mental health services, increase the number of crisis beds, and expand crisis intervention services. This additional funding brings the total annual state spending on mental health to \$1.6 billion — an all-time record for Georgia.

Kemp's remarks were not just limited to announcing budget windfalls. He also staked out positions on potentially-divisive policy issues heading into the 2024 election cycle. Most prominently, he called for legislators to support and pass school choice legislation this year, suggesting schools, like private businesses, can benefit from competition.

Immediately following Governor Kemp's State of the State address, the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget released his [AFY2024 and FY2025 Budget Proposals](#). The House and Senate Appropriations Committees will meet next week to dive into those proposals, and we will have more analysis in future editions of the report.

You can watch his annual address in its entirety [HERE](#).

A full copy of his address is available [HERE](#).

New Notable Legislation

SB 336 - Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick, MD

Behavioral Health Coordinating Council - Seeks to allow for certain officials on the Behavioral Health Coordinating Council to be represented by a delegate or agent.

SB 350 - Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick, MD

Sale of Consumable Hemp Products - Seeks to prohibit the purchase or possession of consumable hemp products by individuals under the age of 21 years.

HB 844 - Rep. Ginny Ehrhart

Practice of Nutrition and Dietetics Act - Seeks to provide for the licensure of dietitian nutritionists and nutritionists.

HB 855 - Rep. Michelle Au, MD

Safe Storage Tax Credit Act - Seeks to provide for a tax credit for certain eligible expenses incurred for firearm safe storage devices; to provide for an aggregate annual cap.

HB 856 - Rep. Michelle Au, MD

Urgent Insulin Safety Net Program Act - Seeks to make insulin accessible to individuals who are in urgent need of a short-term affordable insulin supply, provide for a pharmacy to dispense one additional short-term affordable urgent insulin supply under certain conditions and require the Department of Community Health to develop an application form, an information sheet, and satisfaction surveys regarding such program.

HB 857 - Rep. Michelle Au, MD

Continuing Insulin Safety Net Act - Seeks to make insulin accessible, under certain conditions, to an eligible individual who needs an affordable supply of insulin for up to one year, with the option to renew annually, allow the pharmacy to collect a copayment not to exceed \$75.00 for insulin dispensed through such program, and provide for re-orders and renewals; to provide for the development of an application form, an information sheet, and satisfaction surveys.

HB 872 - Rep. Lee Hawkins

Dental Student Service Cancellable Loans - Seeks to expand the service cancellable loan program for physicians and other health care providers in underserved areas to include dental students.

HB 874 - Rep. Lee Hawkins

School Automatic Defibrillators - Seeks to require automated external defibrillators in all schools, provide for the establishment of emergency action plans to address a person in cardiac arrest, provide for internal response teams, and provide for practice drills.

HB 883 - Rep. Devan Seabaugh

State Boards Teleconference - Seeks to authorize county boards of health to conduct meetings via teleconference.

HB 897 - Rep. Jordan Ridley

Medical Freedom Act - Seeks to repeal the authority of the Department of Public Health and all county boards of health to require persons to submit to vaccinations against or other measures to prevent contagious or infectious diseases.

Senate Health and Human Service Committee

HB 571 - Rep. Deborah Silcox

Alzheimer's and Related Dementias State Plan - Seeks to change the reporting requirements, and the advisory council will submit a midpoint report on the state plan. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved to Senate Rules to be on the Senate Floor on Monday, January 22nd.

Senate Regulated Industries Committee

SB 172 - Sen. Bill Cowsert

Sports Betting - Seeks to establish a seven-member sports betting commission authorized to grant at least six licenses for sports betting operations. The legislation includes provisions aimed at protecting bettors from fraudulent sports betting operators as well as provisions to help problem gamblers avoid crippling financial losses. The legislation is known in General Assembly parlance as an “enabling” bill, designed to fill in the details of an accompanying constitutional amendment. This legislation additionally passed Senate Rules and is now 'laying on the table' awaiting Senate floor action.

HB 455 - Rep. John LaHood

Provider Safe Haven - Seeks to provide confidentiality protections to participants in a wellness program for health care workers. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved onto the Senate Rules Committee. Additionally, Senator John Albers will carry the legislation on the Senate floor.

House Health Committee

A hearing only was held on Rep. Karen Mathiak's upcoming proposal to amend Georgia's law on newborn screening in order to add Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy to the current listing of diseases.

HB 434 - Rep. Lee Hawkins

Radiologist Assistants - Seeks to provide for the licensing of radiologist assistants. This legislation received a Do Pass and now sits in the House Rules Committee.

HB 502 - Rep. Deborah Silcox

Georgia Cosmetic Laser Services Act - Seeks to update the definition of “cosmetic laser services” and addresses supervision requirements, eliminating the requirement for a senior cosmetic laser services practitioner to be “on-site”. This legislation received a Do Pass and now sits in the House Rules Committee.

To find any bill, go to www.legis.ga.gov and use the search box at the top left of the page. There is also an advanced search option that allows you to find bills by keyword or sponsor.

Physicians Day at the at the Capitol 2024

The date is set for **Wednesday, February 7, 2024 from 7:30am - 1:00pm**

Legislators and Constitutional Officers will be invited to attend the luncheon. We will be meeting with individual legislators throughout the morning hours on the House and Senate ropes.

Click [**HERE**](#) to register now!



For legislative highlights and review, watch *Lawmakers*, which airs on **Georgia Public Broadcasting** at **7PM** every night the Georgia General Assembly is in session.

We will be sending out legislative updates regularly throughout the 2024 session, so keep an eye on your inbox to stay updated on all of the happenings from under the Gold Dome.

More information: Please reach out to our office at 770.435.5586 or reach out to us personally via our cell phones.

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