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Weekly Legislative Report #3

Week Ending January 31, 2025

Back to Work

After several days of budget hearings and meetings delayed or cancelled by snow and ice, the House and Senate returned to the State Capitol for legislative days six (Monday, January 27) through nine (Thursday, January 30). Most committees held "organizational" meetings where they adopted committee rules and introduced members to attendees.

Tort Reform

Governor Kemp unveiled comprehensive tort reform legislation ([SB 68](#) and [SB 69](#)) Thursday at a press conference that drew hundreds to the North Wing of the State Capitol. It was the largest crowd that we old timers could remember. The legislation is aimed at reining in huge jury verdicts Republicans say are making it hard for Georgia citizens and businesses to afford insurance premiums.

“Georgians should have every opportunity to pursue their constitutionally guaranteed day in court, and if were wronged, they should be made whole,” Kemp said during the news conference. “But our businesses and hardworking Georgians need relief from the increased costs of doing business, having car insurance, and getting access to health care. I believe this package accomplishes those goals and strikes the right balance.”

The tort reform legislation the governor is proposing is based on a report the state insurance department released last fall that showed the five-year average of claims has increased by 25%, much faster than Georgia’s population growth. The number of large claim awards of more than a million dollars also has grown steadily.

Please [click here](#) for Governor Kemp’s remarks and details of the legislation. The bills will be carried by Senate President Pro-Tem John Kennedy – one of the very best in the legislature at handling complex legislation.

Calvin Smyre Made History

Calvin Smyre made history as the longest-serving member of the Georgia House of Representatives. Lawmakers unveiled his official portrait Tuesday, the seventh of a Black person to be mounted on the walls of the Gold Dome. “I am grateful beyond words to see this happen in my lifetime,” Smyre said. Smyre was 26 in 1974 when he was elected as a Democrat to the state House. He served 48 years until he stepped down in 2022 at age 74. He’d planned to serve 50 years, but President Joe Biden had nominated him as U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic. However, the U.S. Senate never confirmed his nomination.

Next Week

The legislature will be in session Monday for Day 10 and remain in session through Thursday before taking Friday as a recess day. Committees will begin working full force by holding hearings, debating, amending and passing legislation.

Tracking List

Here are the bills we are tracking. New activity is noted in green. Click on the [Bill Number](#) to access the current version of the bill.

The 2025 Legislative Session is the first session of the 2025-2026 Term of the Georgia General Assembly. Therefore, bills not passed or defeated during this session will be carried over to the 2026 session. Bills pending in the House or Senate Rules Committees at adjournment sine die of the 2025 session will be recommitted to the committee from whence they came.

Sections:

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[Pharmaceuticals](#)

[Public Health](#)

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Aging

[HB 36](#), Guardians and Wards (Rep. Rob Leverett – R)

Relating to guardians and wards, so as to revise the list of providers who are authorized to participate in the process. **Status:** Referred to Judiciary Cmte, [Passed Cmte](#), [Pending Rules Cmte](#)

Business – Tort Reform

[SB 68](#), Tort Reform (Sen. John Kennedy – R)

Civil Practice, substantive and comprehensive revision of provisions regarding civil practice, evidentiary matters, damages, and liability in tort actions. **Status:** [Hopper](#)

[SB 69](#), Tort Reform (Sen. John Kennedy – R)

Georgia Courts access and consumer protection act. **Status:** [Hopper](#)

Business

[HB 116](#), Public Safety; Motor Carrier Compliance Division Rename (Rep. Lauren McDonald III – R)

Relating to the Motor Carrier Compliance Division of the Department of Public Safety so as to change the name of the Motor Carrier Compliance Division of the Department of Public Safety to Commercial Vehicle Enforcement **Status:** [Referred to Motor Vehicles Cmte](#)

[HB 129](#), Ad Valorem Tax; Bona Fide conservation to use property (Rep. Chas Cannon – R)

Relating to preferential assessment for bond fide conservation use property and bona fide residential transitional property **Status:** [Referred Ways & Means Cmte](#)

City & County Governments and Regional Commissions

[HB 92](#), Revenue and Taxation, postpone date (Rep. Shaw Blackmon – R)

Revenue and taxation; postponed date by which local governing authorities can opt out of base year homestead exemption. **Status:** [Referred to Ways & Means Cmte](#), [Passed Cmte by Substitute](#), [Pending Rules Cmte](#)

[HB 137](#), Contracts: Increase Dollar Value of Public Works (Rep. Victor Anderson – R)

Relating to contracts for public work, to increase the dollar value of certain public works contracts exempt from the provisions relating to retention of contractual payments **Status:** [Referred to Governmental Affairs Cmte](#)

[SB 38](#), Development impact fees: Education (Greg Dolezal – R)

Provide for development impact fees for education **Status:** [Referred to Economic Development & Tourism Cmte](#)

[SB 51](#), State, County, and Municipal Road System (Sen. Ed Setzler – R)

Revise contracting procedures related to the acquisition of certain professional services by counties and municipalities **Status:** [Referred to State and Local Government Operations Cmte](#)

Economic Development

[HB 51](#), GEFA Finance of Natural Gas Projects (James Burchett – R)

So as to authorize GEFA to finance and perform certain duties in connection with projects relating to natural gas. **Status:** [Referred to Natural Resources & Environment Cmte](#)

[SB 13](#), GEFA Finance of Natural Gas Projects (Carden Summers – R)

So as to authorize GEFA to finance and perform certain duties in connection with projects relating to natural gas. **Status:** Referred to Regulated Industries & Utilities Cmte

Elections

Environmental & Natural Resources

Government – General

[SB 46](#), “Government Serves the People Act”: enact (Marty Harbin – R)
To improve government service delivery in this state; to provide for the appointment of a State of Georgia Government Service Delivery Lead within the Georgia Technology Authority to coordinate such efforts
Status: Referred to Government Oversight Cmte

[SB 37](#), Georgia Board for Artificial Intelligence: “AI Accountability Act”: enact (John Albers – R)
So as to require that all governmental entities develop and maintain artificial intelligence system usage plans **Status:** Referred to Economic Development and Oversight Cmte

Health – General

[HB 102](#), Community Health; Georgia Quality Reporting Project (Rep. Sharon Cooper – R)
Provide for the establishment of the Georgia Quality Reporting Project **Status:** Referred to Public and Community Health Cmte

[HB 118](#), Education; Relating to early care and learning (Rep. Rick Townsend – R)
So as to revise the requirements of childcare learning center and family childcare learning homes; require that such centers and homes maintain at least one portable airway clearance device **Status:** Referred to Education Cmte

Hospitals -- CON (Certificate of Need)

Hospitals

Insurance

Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities

Military Base Support

Pharmaceuticals

[HB 139](#), Pharmacies: Prohibit drug manufacturers and wholesaler (Rep. Todd Jones – R)
To prohibit drug manufacturers and wholesalers from preventing a licensed pharmacies from acquiring and dispensing drugs purchased from entities that participate in particular federal drug discount program **Status:** Referred to Health Cmte

[SB 5](#), Certification of private review agents (Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick – R)
Relating to certification of private review agents, so as to provide for health insurers to implement and maintain a program. **Status:** Referred to Insurance & Labor Cmte

[SB 60](#), Pharmacy Benefits Manager (Sen. Chuck Hufestler)

So as to provide that such managers have a duty of care to insureds, health plans, and providers **Status:** Referred to Insurance and Labor Cmte

Public Health

[HB 43](#), Disadvantaged Community Drinking Water Program (Rep. Viola Davis – D)
To establish the Disadvantaged Community Drinking Water Program, to provide for requirements. **Status:** Referred to Natural Resources Cmte

[HB 46](#), Maternal Mortality Review Cmte (Rep. Viola Davis – D)
To provide for the composition of the Maternal Mortality Review Committee. **Status:** Referred to Public & Community Health Cmte

[HB 83](#), Cigarette tax increase (Rep. Michelle Au – D)
Increase tax rate on a pack of cigarettes. **Status:** Referred to Ways & Means Cmte

[HB 84](#), Increase tax rate on consumable vapor products (Rep. Michelle Au – D)
Relating to taxes on tobacco and vaping products, so as to increase the rate of the tax on consumable vapor products; to provide that the proceeds derived from such increase are intended to be appropriated for healthcare purposes. **Status:** Referred to Ways & Means Cmte

[HB 89](#), Maternal Mortality Review Cmte (Rep. Sharon Cooper – R)
Public Health, Department of; require healthcare providers, facilities, and pharmacies to provide the Maternal Mortality Review Committee with psychiatric or other clinical records. **Status:** Referred to Public & Community Health Cmte, Passed Cmte by Substitute

[HB 96](#), Revenue and taxation; Pack of cigarettes (Rep. Sam Park – D)
Relating to taxes on tobacco and vaping products, so as to increase the rate of the tax on each pack of cigarettes to the national average tax on cigarettes **Status:** Referred to Insurance Cmte

[HB 124](#), Insurance for pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders (Rep. Mitchell Scoggins – R)
Relating to require coverage for healthcare services for pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders such as streptococcal infection (PANDAS) **Status:** Referred to Insurance Cmte

Study Committees

Taxes

Transportation

[HB 76](#), Require public hearings for local projects of significant impact (Rep. Stacey Evans – D)
To require public hearings for local transportation projects of significant impact. **Status:** Referred to Transportation Cmte

[HB 164](#), Truck Weights (Rep. Steven Meeks – R)
Relating to dimensions and weight of vehicles and loads; to provide for the enforcement of such provisions. **Status:** Hopper

Workers' Comp

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