



Senate District 15 – Session Update – 2021

2021 Amended Fiscal Year Budget Update

Last week, our Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously approved the proposed Amended Fiscal Year (AFY) budget which keeps many of the House recommendations, except for a few areas in which we were able to find savings and redirect funding. Below is a quick highlight of our Senate version of the 2021 AFY budget.

- \$11 million in bond financing for the Georgia Department of Public Health, \$150,000 for nursing staff and \$7.5 million for the governor's emergency fund.
- \$50,000 for the state to hire a chief labor officer to oversee all unemployment insurance benefits and respond to financial audit requests.
- Additional \$3 million for the GA World Congress Center to promote Georgia Historical Society would receive \$50,000 instead of the \$24,000 originally proposed.
- \$150,000 for the Georgia Secretary of State's office to push through temporary permits for nurses to administer COVID-19 vaccines.
- \$286,000 to hire a chief medical officer, a deputy commissioner of public health and a chief data officer to support the agency with COVID-19; two additional Department of Public Health positions.
- \$18 million to replace and upgrade the public health surveillance system for vaccinations.

This budget now heads to the Rules Committee, the final stop before a full Senate vote. If the House agrees with our Senate changes, it then goes to the Governor for his final signature. Next, we turn our eyes towards the Full 2022 Fiscal Year Budget. Once passed by the House, we will begin Senate budget proceedings.

Sponsored Legislation

I have been honored to sponsor numerous pieces of legislation over the years. This year, I bring forward a bipartisan measure, Senate Bill 54, which was authored to assist in judiciary discretion regarding the placement of minors. If passed this bill will grant judicial discretion in determining the right of a surviving parent to custody of a child when the surviving parent is criminally charged with the murder or voluntary manslaughter of the other parent. More simply put, in the case of a surviving parent being criminally charged, the Judge may delay a final determination of the child's custody until after the resolution of the criminal charge.

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COVID-19 Update

Our attempts to combat COVID-19 remain at the forefront as we closely monitor the state's high demand for vaccines. As of last week, Georgia has shipped all its Moderna allocations and administered nearly 70 percent of the state's current vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna). To date, one million Georgians have received the vaccination and more than 500,000, 65 and older, have received their first dose.

In order to ensure Georgians, receive timely and needed vaccinations, Gov. Kemp recently signed an executive order to allow more medically trained professionals to safely administer the COVID-19 vaccine. For information regarding the 1A+ phase of Georgia's vaccine distribution and other important COVID-19 facts, please visit <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine>.

Please be on the lookout for further updates as we make our way through this year's legislative session. As always, we encourage you to follow our work within the General Assembly. We also encourage you to reach out with questions or concerns regarding legislation. Your input is especially important, as we work to ensure our district values are accurately represented. Thank you for allowing me the honor of serving as your voice under the Gold Dome.