

Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Legislative Report March 2nd, 2021
Week Seven



Jimmy A. McDonald
GHCC General Counsel and Director of Government Affairs

The McDonald Firm, LLC
4480 South Cobb Dr. Suite 252H
Smyrna, Georgia 30082
jmcdonald@themcdonaldfirm.net

Lawmakers convened under the Gold Dome on Monday, February 22, for legislative day 20, and worked through Friday, February 26, for legislative day 24. We expect the volume of bills moving through the legislative process to pick up as lawmakers have until March 8th (Crossover day) to pass their bills out of the chamber they originated. We will continue to monitor and promote legislation that is important to our members and their interest.

Gov. Kemp Announces Expanded Criteria for COVID-19 Vaccine

Governor Kemp announced that beginning March 8, 2021, vaccinations will be available for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their caregivers, parents of children with complex medical conditions, all K-12 educators and school staff, and pre-K and DECAL staff.

"Provided that our supply continues to increase, and this expansion goes well, we plan to further expand criteria to include more Georgians with severe underlying health conditions who are not currently eligible. We will finalize that timeline in the coming days, and DPH will continue to work with providers to ensure their criteria is up to date." Kemp said.

Economic Development:

HB 86 by Rep. Stephens (R-Savannah) provides a regulatory framework for the Georgia Lottery Corporation to administrate mobile sports betting through the issuance of licenses to qualified applicants. This new version contains three main changes. 1) the tax rate was increased from 14% to 20% to bring the bill in line with Tennessee's law. 2) The problem gambling program language was reverted to line up with the Lottery Corporation's current program. 3) The definition of fantasy sports was clarified. The bill received a motion "Do Pass" in committee and awaits a vote on the House floor.

☎ 404-929-9998
📍 270 Peachtree St. NW. Suite 2200. Atlanta, GA 30303

📺 @Ghcc1 📺 @Ghcc_news
📺 @Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

[SR 135](#) by Sen. Mullis (R-Chickamuaga) would amend the Constitution to allow for sports betting. The new substitute would specifically allocate funds generated through sports betting for need-based college scholarships, rural health care improvements, and rural broadband expansion. The percentages for each type of spending would not be specified to allow for the legislature to exercise its discretion in the spending based on the specific needs. Senator Mullis also authored [SB142](#) which is the enabling legislation that includes alterations to the licensing fee structure which now consist of a \$10,000 application fee and \$100,000 annual licensing fee. Both SR135 and SB142 received a favorable “Do Pass” and moved onto the Rules Committee.

[HB 273](#) by Rep. Mandi Ballinger (R-Canton) passed the House Chamber and has been sent over to the Senate. This bill would allow cities and counties to call for a ballot question on liquor package sales by resolution or ordinance. Additionally, it would provide uniformity to the referendum process by referencing the Georgia elections code.

The House Committee on Government Affairs passed [HB 435](#) by Rep. Victor Anderson (R-Cornelia). Current law requires all local government public works construction contracts valued at over \$100,000 to go out for public bid. This bill allows an exception for contracts that were competitively procured by the state or through a cooperative purchasing organization, certified by the state as a source of supply.

[HB 587](#) by Rep. Bruce Williamson (R-Monroe) received a favorable “Do Pass” in the Ways and Means Committee. This bill provides a second round of funding, increases the application fee, and provides for an annual maintenance fee for the Georgia Agribusiness and Rural Jobs Act. This legislation also provides additional job tax credits for medical equipment and supplies manufacturers, pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturers, and provides a job tax credit for high-impact aerospace defense projects. Lastly, it extends an income tax credit for expenditures on the maintenance of railroad tracks owned or leased by Class III railroads.

Business:

[HB 636](#) by Rep. William Boddie (D-East Point) seeks to mandate 10-minute rest breaks for every four hours worked for all eligible hourly employees in the state. This bill was referred to the House Industry and Labor Committee.

[HB 306](#) by Rep. Stan Gunter (R-Blairsville) allows the board of directors of a corporation to determine that an annual shareholders' meeting may be held virtually in whole or in part unless the articles of incorporation or bylaws provide otherwise. This increased flexibility is a continuation of the Governor's executive action that has been successful during this pandemic state of emergency. HB 306 was voted out of the House of Representatives this week by a 169-0 vote and now heads over to the Senate.

[HB 468](#) by Representative Kasey Carpenter (R-Dalton) provides that, during a Governor-declared public health state of emergency, any business may continue or resume its operations if it complies with applicable health and safety measures outlined in the Governor’s statutory emergency powers. This bill received a favorable “Do Pass” in committee and has been sent to the Rules Committee.

Taxes:

[HB 265](#) by Rep. David Knight (R-Griffin) is the annual legislation matching our state tax code to the federal tax code. By doing this, HB 265 provides the simplicity and predictability needed for a business-friendly tax environment. This update included matches to all federal laws regarding the taxation of Paycheck Protection Program funds as well as other federal pandemic recovery programs. The uniformity of tax rules assists in fiscal planning for businesses of all sizes across Georgia. HB 265 has been unanimously passed in both the House and Senate and has been sent to the Governor.

[HB 586](#) by Rep. Sam Watson (R-Moultrie) known as the “Georgia Economic Recovery Act of 2021 would extend various sales tax exemptions and create a new sales tax exemption. The new exemption from sales taxes would be created for tickets to fine arts performances through December 31, 2022. This bill passed the Ways and Means Committee and was sent to House Rules.

Healthcare:

[HB 307](#) by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta), “The Georgia Telehealth Act” would authorize healthcare professionals to provide telemedicine services from home. This bill would also make it possible for patients to receive telemedicine services from home, work, or school without first requiring an in-person visit. As introduced, this bill would allow the prescription of medicine post-visit, prohibit separate deductibles, and require virtual visits to be as thorough and consistent with an in-person visit. This bill had a House floor vote on Monday, February 22 and it passed by a 158-0 vote.

Immigration:

[HB 228](#) by Representative Charlice Byrd (R-Woodstock) was heard in the House Election Integrity committee this past week. This bill would mandate the Department of Driver Services to issue driver’s licenses with the words “Barrier Not U.S. Citizen, Not Eligible to vote” to anyone who is not a U.S. citizen in Georgia. No action was taken by the committee on this bill due to the lack of clarity by the author on how exactly this bill would help protect the ballot box.

We are expecting a vote on [HB 120](#) by Rep. Kasey Carpenter (R-Dalton) this upcoming week. Specifically, this bill would allow DACA recipients in Georgia to pay in-state tuition rates when attending college or technical schools if they meet certain requirements.