



**Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Legislative Report February 9th, 2021
Days 9-12**



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Lawmakers gathered under the Gold Dome this week and we are finally seeing more action in committee meetings. While bills continue to be introduced by legislators, we are already seeing some move out of their assigned committee. This report contains a COVID update from Governor Brian Kemp and legislation that we are closely monitoring for our members.

Covid-19 Update:

On February 3, Governor Brian Kemp and Commissioner Kathleen Toomey M.D, M.P.H, announced that Georgia has administered and reported 1,030,872 doses of the coronavirus vaccine, including providing the first shot to over 502,393 seniors. As of this afternoon, Georgia has administered 66% of the total shipment of vaccines from the federal government. Currently, COVID-19 vaccination in Georgia is eligible to the 1A+ population, including seniors over the age of 65, first responders, law enforcement personnel, and healthcare workers.

Economic Development

[HR 11](#) by Representative Wes Cantrell (R-Woodstock) received a favorable “Do pass” in the subcommittee. This resolution creates the study committee on “Innovative Ways to Maximize Global Talent” and was sent over to the full committee on Small Business Development for their consideration.

[HB 86](#) by Representative Ron Stephens (R-Savannah) known as the “Georgia Lottery Mobile Sports Wagering Integrity Act” received a favorable “Do pass” by the House Economic Development and Tourism Committee. This bill would allow online mobile sport betting legal in Georgia and give additional tax revenue to the state lottery. This bill has now been sent over to the House Rules Committee for their consideration.



[HB 273](#) by Representative Mandi Ballinger (R-Canton) 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. This bill has been assigned to the House Regulated Industry Committee.

[HB 182](#) by Representative Marvin Lim (D-Norcross) establishes an “Entrepreneur Learner’s Permit” under the State Department of Economic Development. Individuals starting new businesses can obtain this permit, which then waives all of their local government filings, permitting, and licensing fees required of their business.

[HB 278](#) by Representative Heath Clark (R-Warner Robins) permits small brewers and other brewers to sell a limited quantity of malt beverages at retail on the premises for consumption on and off of the premises and to eliminate the daily quantity limitation on sales by brewers directly to consumers. This bill was referred to the House Regulated Industries Committee.

Business:

[HB 112](#) by the Majority Whip Trey Kelley (R-Cedartown) received a favorable “Do pass” in committee and has been sent to the House Rules Committee for their consideration. Specifically, this bill would extend the protections from liability claims regarding COVID-19 from expiring on July 14, 2021 for another year to July 14, 2022.

[SB 1](#) by Senator Dean Burke (R-Bainbridge) would require businesses that provide self-funded, employer-sponsored health insurance plans to submit healthcare claims data to the Georgia All-Payer Claims Database (APCD). This would include all Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) plans. Under this proposal, failure to submit health insurance information to the APCD could result in the loss of certain tax incentives for which existing Georgia businesses, as well as prospective businesses, may qualify. This bill received its first hearing last Monday but no action was taken by the Finance committee.

[SB 52](#) by Senator Bruce Thompson (R-White) known as the “Data Protection Act”, provides businesses with an incentive to voluntarily invest in proactive cybersecurity programs by adhering to best practice industry standards. Businesses that adhere to these standards would have a legal affirmative defense against lawsuits after a data breach. There is a scheduled hearing for this bill in the Senate Science and Technology Committee this week.

[HB 317](#) was introduced by Representative Ron Stephen (R-Savannah). This bill would require online lodging platforms such as Airbnb and VRBO to collect and remit county and city hotel/motel taxes on short-term rentals (STRs) that are hosted via those platforms. These are taxes currently due from the STR owner but, in many cases, not being collected. This bill would improve tax collection, reduce the burden on STR owners to collect



the tax and create parity with traditional hotels and motels that are currently collecting hotel/motel taxes. The bill would also add the \$5 per night state transportation fee to STR stays; currently, that fee only applies to stays at traditional hotels and motels.

[HB 147](#) by Representative Clark relates to providing licensure by endorsement for professionals from another state who meet substantially similar standards to those in Georgia in the other states. The bill was tabled in committee to work out language relating to professions and boards not under the Secretary of State, such as dentistry and medicine, for which an out of state licensee may not have passed a national licensing exam similar to the one Georgia requires.

Immigration:

[HB 228](#) by Representative Charlise Byrd (R-Woodstock) would mandate the Department of Driver services to issue licenses with the words “BEARER NOT A U.S. CITIZEN - NOT VOTER ID” to any driver's license in which the holder isn't a US citizen. This includes individuals who are US permanent residents or have different immigration status. This bill also mandates the Department of Driver Services to participate in the E-Verify (RIDE) program of the United States Department of Homeland Security. This bill was assigned to the House Special Committee on Election Integrity.

[HB 295](#) by Representative Pedro Marin (D-Duluth) would allow the Department of Driver services to issue “Driver Cards” to anyone who isn't a US citizen and who currently cannot get a driver's license, especially undocumented immigrants.

Elections:

[HB 270](#) by Representative Barry Fleming (R-Harlem) passed the House Special Committee on Election Integrity this week, changing the date by which counties must send absentee ballots from the Friday before an election to 10 days before the election. This will better ensure that voters' absentee ballots will be counted and help counties in administering elections, particularly during the period that counties are transitioning from advance to in-person voting on election day.

Senate President Pro Tempore Butch Miller (R-Gainesville) introduced [SB 89](#) this past week. This legislation aims to address low-performing county election superintendents. Specifically, the state will offer support, training, and other assistance to low-performing superintendents based on criteria to be developed. However, if a superintendent fails to show improvement or adherence to state election laws, the State Election Board may suspend and replace them.