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Legislative Session at Halfway Point

HB1178, almost identical to **SB449**, passed. The so-called Parent's Bill of Rights allows parents to see all educational materials and to opt their children out of sex education. Many of the provisions in the bills already exist in state law rendering it an unnecessary extra workload for educators.

SB588 mandates open school board meetings and hampers the ability of boards to cut off or eject rowdy meeting attendees. Opponents say everything the bill addresses is already state law and boards need the ability to run efficient meetings. Given the rise in challenges to school board authority and, in some cases, the threat of physical harm, school boards are already struggling to close the learning gap caused by the pandemic and ensure the safety and wellbeing of students.

SB377 and the similar **HB1084** were rewritten to eliminate provisions that prohibited classroom discussions of race at state colleges and universities, and that mandated financial penalties for K-12 schools that do not comply. Both bills passed making it illegal to teach critical race theory except at the university level.

SB601 would expand the state's school voucher program, giving a $6000 scholarship to almost all of Georgia's 1.7 million K-12 students to attend a private school. This replaces an earlier House bill torpedoed by an ill-advised mailer from a right-wing group.