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Legislative Days 12-16

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This report contains key legislation that continues to move through the General Assembly and new bills that have been dropped.

Healthcare

On Wednesday, Governor Brian Kemp's floor leader, Senator Blake Tillery (R-Vidalia), introduced [SB 106](#) known as the "Patients First Act". The bill authorizes the Department of Community Health to submit a Section 1115 waiver to the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The bill states that the waiver may request an increase in the income threshold up to 100% of the poverty line. The bill also authorizes the Governor to submit a Section 1332 waiver request. This bill was referred to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

The Majority Caucus Chair, Matt Hatchett (R-Dublin), presented [HB 198](#) before the Special Committee On Access to Quality Health Care. This bill essentially removes the state current Certificate of Need (CON) laws and replaces them with new regulations. The bill received a hearing with stakeholders speaking either for or against CON. At the end, no action was taken by the committee. The hospitals and health systems announced a negotiation session with proponents and lawmakers to discuss the current CON program and proposed reform.

Representative Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) presented [HB 62](#), known as "Margie's Law", before the house floor on Monday. The bill requires that a healthcare facility conducting mammograms notify women with dense breast tissue that such tissue may make it difficult to detect cancer through a mammogram and that such women should discuss with their physician whether supplemental tests are warranted. The House chamber passed the bill 166-1 and now moves to the Senate to be considered.

Rep. Darlene Taylor (R-Thomasville) presented [HB 168](#) before the Ways and Means Tax Expenditure Subcommittee. The bill extends a tax exemption regarding the sale or use of tangible personal property to certain non-profit health centers for an additional five years. No action was taken on the bill.

Broadband

The House Chamber passed the first rural-focused legislative initiatives of this session by giving a favorable "Do Pass" on [HB 23](#) by Representative Penny Houston (R-Nashville). The bill amends Title 46 to permit electric membership corporations (EMCs) and their affiliates to deliver broadband services.

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Public Safety

This past week, Governor Kemp signed into law [SB 25](#), authored by Senator Bill Heath (R-Bremen). The bill will clarify the circumstances in which a driver is not required to stop for a school bus. This bill provides that drivers need not stop for a school bus if driving on divided highways separated by a grass or other prohibitive barrier. Current Georgia law is unclear and appears to exempt drivers on multi-lane roadways separated by a turn lane median from stopping.

[HB 270](#) by Representative Jeff Jones (R-Brunswick) prevents driver's licenses or identification cards issued to non-citizens from being acceptable forms of identification for a voter. This bill was referred to the House Government Affairs Committee

Insurance

[HB 63](#) by Representative Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) was passed by the House Chamber 162-1. The bill requires health benefit plans to establish step therapy protocol that establish the specific sequence in which prescription drugs for a specified medical condition are deemed medically appropriate for a particular patient.

The House Chamber also passed and sent [HB 128](#), by Representative Deborah Silcox (R-Sandy Springs), to the Senate. The bill eliminates the requirement for insurers to notify the Georgia Composite Medical Board of agreements to settle claims of medical malpractice when the settlement results in a low payment under a high/low agreement. The bill passed 162-0.

The Life and Health Subcommittee of the House Insurance gave a favorable "Do Pass" on [HB 84](#) by Representative Richard Smith (R-Columbus). The bill requires that a hospital inform a patient, upon request, about the providers who may provide the patient services, the costs of the services, and what providers are or are not in the part of the patient's insurance network. The legislation also requires final billing to be submitted to a patient within 90 days of discharge, completion of services, or final adjudication of charges.

Business

[HB 239](#), authored by Representative Chuck Efration (R-Dacula), amends Title 15 to establish the Georgia Business Court pursuant to the Georgia Constitution. This bill was referred to the House Judiciary Committee. Senator Jesse Stone (R-Waynesboro) dropped the Senate version, [SB 110](#), and it was assigned to Senate Judiciary.

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The House committee on Industry and Labor favorable gave a “Do Pass” on [HB 126](#) by Representative Randy Nix (R-LaGrange). The bill authorizes the Department of Labor to create the “GeorgiaBest” program, a workforce development program to develop employer-identified skills.

Local Government

[HB 322](#) by Representative Tom McCall (R-Elberton) makes changes to local requirements to post bids and proposals on the Georgia Procurement Registry (GPR). Under current law, if a local government extends a bid or proposal for goods or services valued at over \$10,000, they must also post them on the GPR. This bill increases that monetary threshold to only goods or services valued at over \$100,000. In return, however, locals must advertise the bid/proposal on the GPR for the same period of time “as set by ordinance or practice” of the local government. The bill was assigned to the House Governmental Affairs committee.

Military

The House Chamber took up [HB 25](#) by Representative Dave Belton’s (R-Buckhead), The measure provides relief from certain television, internet, and health spa contracts for military personnel called to active duty. The bill passed 173-1

The House Education Committee unanimously recommended a “Do Pass” on [HB 59](#) by Representative Dave Belton (R-Buckhead) allows children of active duty military personnel to register in a local school district based on the parent’s official military orders rather than requiring the family to establish residency.

[HB 232](#) by Representative Heath Clark (R-Warner Robins) provides that dependent children of active duty military members shall be classified as in-state for tuition and fees purposes by the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia. This bill was referred to the House Judiciary Committee.