



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Welcome to GHLA @ the Capitol, your weekly update about news you need to know related to Georgia's lodging industry and the 2020 General Assembly. GHLA's legislative team will be your eyes and ears under the Gold Dome.

Senate Introduces Additional Human Trafficking Legislation

This week the First Lady of Georgia applauded the Georgia General Assembly for their next addition to the package of anti-human trafficking bills for this session. Senator Brian Strickland (R-McDonough) introduced SB435, otherwise known as "The Debbie Vance Act." The bill creates a mechanism for survivors of human trafficking to restrict access to their criminal records when they relate to human trafficking offenses. The legislation was developed in conjunction with WellSpring Living, members of the GRACE Commission, as well as other advocacy groups.

"Very often, when people are trafficked, they come out of that trafficking situation with criminal arrests and convictions, everything from prostitution to drugs to shoplifting. Those types of crimes can keep a survivor from getting a job, it can keep a survivor from getting housing, getting housing assistance, from getting an education," commented Camila Zolfaghari with Street Grace.

Regulated Industries Subcommittee Hears Alcohol Legislation

HB674 by Chairman Alan Powell (R-Hartwell) and HB879 by Chairman Brett Harrell (R-Snellville) were both heard in Regulated Industries Subcommittee earlier this week. Powell's bill seeks to create a streamlined permitting process for alcohol permitting for businesses by 2021. The Department of Revenue came to weigh in on the enactment of the legislation and indicated that an effective date for 2022 would allow them enough lead time to create the mechanism by which all permitting and applications could be on one portal.

Chairman Harrell's legislation would allow for alcohol delivery in the state of Georgia, the legislation was clarified in subcommittee to exclude package stores which effectively eliminates the ability to order liquor. The legislation is intended to only be for alcohol and beer delivery. The background checks for those delivering will be a higher standard than is required for ridesharing companies currently, which was emphasized several times by bill sponsors in response to concerns raised in the committee.

Film Tax Credit Audit Bill

Georgia is working diligently to remain the Hollywood of the South by inserting transparency and integrity into the film tax credit. Representative Matt Dollar (R-Marietta) is working on an audit transparency bill that will allow the state to examine how credits are applied and issued to address recent concerns on the benefit of the program. Currently production companies that travel into the State of Georgia can receive a tax credit of up to 30% of reported in-state expenditures when they spend at least \$500,000.

The bill, HB1037, was filed in response to the Department of Audits and Accounts review of the program. It will require mandatory audits of expenditures. The Director of the Georgia Screen Entertainment Coalition commented that the film industry has been at the table working with legislators to ensure this program is operated successfully. Their top priority is preserving the program that has built a thriving industry. Proponents argue the program has attracted investments, created jobs, and boosted tourism.

Push for Civil Justice Continues

There was a press conference this week on the tort reform bills introduced earlier this session. Some of the proposals are intended to halt runaway jury verdicts and correctly distribute blame when someone is injured and seeks compensation. This legislation will be subjected to ongoing debate this session, mostly between businesses, insurers, and the trial lawyers.

Senator Gooch (R-Dahlonega) introduced SB390 and SB415 in response to these concerns. Note: SB415 is a more limited version of SB390. The legislature will work to get SB415 through its first committee on Friday. This bill is supported by a wide array of stakeholders, such as the National

Federation of Independent Business. They have argued the bill discourages frivolous claims and lawsuit abuse against business-owners in Georgia.



Georgia's Political Calendar

Date	Event
March 2-6, 2020	Candidate qualifying - All members of the General Assembly
March 24, 2020	Georgia Presidential Primary Voting
April 9-12, 2020	Masters in Augusta
May 19, 2020	Georgia Primary for state races, county commissions, etc.
July 21, 2020	Georgia Primary Runoffs (candidates must receive 50%+1)
Nov 3, 2020	General Election
Dec 1, 2020	General Election runoffs for state elections
January 5, 2021	General election runoff for federal elections (i.e. Special election for U.S. Senate)

New Bills of Interest

SB 435 by Sen. Brian Strickland (R-McDonough) promoted by First Lady Marty Kemp and Governor Brian Kemp aimed at helping human trafficking victims restrict criminal records associated with that trafficking (Passed Judiciary, awaiting Rules).

HB1000 by Rep. Tommy Benton (R-Jefferson) allows the Town of Braselton to levy an excise tax to fund tourism product development (Referred to Intergovernmental Coordination).

HB1005 by Rep. Robert Dickey (R-Jefferson) allows the City of Forsyth to levy an excise tax to fund tourism product development (Referred to Intergovernmental Coordination).

HB1042 by Speaker David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) allows Fannin County to levy an excise tax to fund tourism product development (Referred to Intergovernmental Coordination).

SB442 by Sen. Ligon (R-Brunswick) which seems to prohibit amendments to property owners' association instruments and covenants that restrict rental of residential lots and plots (Referred to Judiciary).

[SB434](#) by Sen. Sally Harrell (D-Atlanta) would ban plastic bags & polystyrene in food establishments & grocery stores and charge a \$.10 fee for every \$25 worth of merchandise to use paper bags (Referred to AG and Consumer Affairs).

Legislative Tracking Update

Please [click here to go to our Legislative tracking page](#) for the complete list of bills we are watching.

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