



June 5, 2020

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.

Georgia's Primary Approaches June 9

Tuesday, June 9, is Primary Day in Georgia - GHLA and our public affairs consultants have hosted Zoom interviews with 18 candidates in 16 legislative races. The entire General Assembly is up for re-election in 2020 and the June primary and August runoffs will determine the number of legislative seats where incumbents have retired. We will provide a full report on the results of the primary in next week's update.

Legislature to Resume Session on June 15

This week, House Speaker David Ralston and Lieutenant Governor Geoff Duncan announced that they would resume the 2020 legislative session on June 15. Session was suspended during March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To see the reconvening letter please click [here](#).

The dominating issue for the remainder of session will be the state budget. Passing a state budget is the General Assembly's only Constitutional responsibility. The Governor in Georgia sets the revenue estimate for the legislature to create a spending plan, which has been a difficult task given lagging revenue collections. This week, the Governor indicated that he expects to see an 11% drop in state tax collections. While still a significant shortfall, it's a better figure than initially anticipated. Lawmakers will work to cut around \$2.6 billion for the FY2021 budget beginning on July 1. The original cut for all state agencies was 14% (over \$3.3 billion). For reference, the FY2020 budget was a proposed \$27.5 billion in state funds.

An additional measure that has gained some attention due to the shooting death of Ahmaud Arbery is HB426 by Rep. Chuck Efstration (R-Dacula). This bill would create the first Hate Crimes law in the state and may be followed by a Justice Reform package from the House Minority Leadership. Georgia is one of five states without a law on the books (joined by South Carolina, Arkansas, Wyoming, and Indiana). Opponents of the bill say the intent of a crime is sometimes difficult to prove while supporters of the measure argue that increased penalties may deter crime.

There are some additional issues still live that GHLA will be advocating for during the remaining 11 days of session. HB448 by Rep. Matt Dollar (R-Marietta) is the companion bill to HB276, otherwise known as "marketplace facilitator." HB448 would address the remaining tax collections from short term rentals (STRs) by streamlining the collection of hotel-motel tax (HMT) for STR platforms. The bill extends the \$5 hotel-motel fee to short-term rentals while creating parity with traditional brick and mortar hotels. This bill Crossed Over on March 13 and is eligible for consideration in the Senate. While there is an appetite for this legislation, leadership will be considering few non-budgetary items during the remaining days of session. The team will be working diligently with our partners to push this bill across the finish line.

The push for Safe Harbor legislation has continued since Georgia is working to safely reopen the economy. Business leaders across industries have expressed concern over frivolous lawsuits and have been working to craft a potential bill to offer some protection to businesses that are taking on risk by reopening during a global health crisis. There are several avenues for predatory litigation that only add to the burden that employers are facing today in this crisis. GHLA has been engaged in these discussions and will be advocating in favor of a protection bill.

Senate Passes PPP Flexibility Act

The U.S. Senate passed [H.R. 7010, Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act of 2020](#) by unanimous consent last night. This legislation includes a number of priorities AHLA and GHLA have long been advocating for to improve the PPP, including:

- Changing the forgiveness period for PPP loans from 8 weeks to 24 weeks;
- Extending the covered period for loans to December 31, 2020;

- Changing the restrictions limiting non-payroll expenses from 25% to 40%;
- Changing the loan maturity limit from 2 years to 5 years; and,
- Ensuring full access to payroll tax deferment.

This piece of legislation is critical to providing the hotel industry with the flexibility needed to retain employees and keep the lights on. We expect President Trump to sign this legislation shortly.

Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman of Oversight and Government Reform, introduced [H.R. 7011](#), the Pandemic Risk Insurance Act of 2020 (PRIA). This legislation would create the [Pandemic Risk Reinsurance Program](#), a system of shared public and private compensation for business interruption losses resulting from future pandemics or public health emergencies. Like the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act (TRIA), the federal government would serve as a backstop to maintain marketplace stability and share the burden alongside private industry. It provides for the following:

- Requires insurance companies to offer business interruption insurance policies that cover pandemics, and
- Creates a Pandemic Risk Reinsurance Program to cover losses and protect our economy in anticipation of a resurgence of COVID-19 and future pandemics

This legislation is a priority for AHLA and GHLA and an important step in Congress's prevention efforts against economic losses from future pandemics.

Safe Stay Guidelines Released

AHLA today released an updated version of our [Safe Stay Guidelines](#) as our reopening efforts continue across the country. We updated these guidelines based on recently released guidance and direct feedback from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and input from public health and safety experts.



For your reference, the new updates include:

- Updated introduction letter highlighting the broad endorsements from leading hospitality industry organizations and partner state associations
- Updated text of the Guidelines in the following sections:
 - health checks
 - housekeeping protocols
 - single-use items
 - ventilation/water systems
 - hazard assessments

Since the launch of AHLA's Safe Stay Guidelines, this initiative has been received positively by the media, as well as by elected officials from the White House to small town mayors, and has been endorsed by all major U.S. Hotel brands, travel & hospitality associations, along with individual hospitality associations from all 50 states and Canada. Please join this effort and endorse AHLA's *Safe Stay* Guidelines by [clicking here](#).

Please see the following link for the updated guidelines - [AHLA & GHLA Safe Stay Guidelines](#)

[Visit our main page.](#)

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