



## March 15, 2024

Welcome to GHLA @ the Capitol, your weekly update about news you need to know related to Georgia's lodging industry and the 2024 General Assembly.

GHLA's legislative team will be your eyes and ears under the Gold Dome.

### Legislative Schedule

The legislature met Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday of this week for Legislative Days 33-35. Tuesday served as a committee workday. With only two weeks left to pass legislation, the House and Senate are kicking into high gear. [Click here](#) to see the rest of the legislative calendar. The legislature will reconvene on Monday, March 18th for LD 36.

### GHLA and Lodging Industry Recognition



*Senator Derek Mallow (D-Savannah) speaks to Senate Resolution 778, recognizing March 14, 2024 as Georgia Hotel and Lodging Industry Appreciation Day*

### GHLA Appreciation Day

During points of personal privilege Senator Derek Mallow took the well to commend the hotel industry throughout the state; "We appreciate the Georgia Hotel & Lodging Association for what they do because without them, we won't have any tourists coming to our state."

The Georgia Hotel and Lodging Appreciation was on Thursday, March 14th. Sen. Derek Mallow and Rep. Ron Stephens, who are both champions for the hotel industry and economic development, carried resolutions in their respective Chambers.

Please [click this link](#) to view Sen. Mallow's Point of Personal Privilege in the Senate. You can find the language for [SR778](#) and [HR1462](#) here. Thank you to everyone in the hotel and lodging industry for the hard work and dedication to being such an essential part of Georgia's economic development.

### **Marketplace Innkeeper**

[SB534](#) by Senator Mallow (D-Savannah) "Fair Business Practices Act of 1975"; failure of a marketplace innkeeper to provide a consumer with an itemized receipt detailing certain taxes and fees is an unlawful business practice; provide" was amended in House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs to include language from [HB1101](#) by Representative Mainor (R-Atlanta) "Fair Business Practices Act of 1975; require cash overpayments to be remitted by merchants in the form of store credit under certain circumstances." The friendly amendment would require businesses that accept cash and do not have exact change to provide store credit in an instance of overpayment. Most notably, the underlying legislation would require Short Term Rental platforms and Online Travel Agencies to provide a detailed and itemized receipt detailing each tax and excess fee imposed on a rental including onerous and often misleading booking fees, cleaning fees, etc. GHLA has been a strong proponent of this important piece of legislation in an effort to both level the playing field of all lodging establishments and combat deceptive practices of such platforms. SB534, as amended, passed unanimously out of committee and is now in House Rules Committee. We are grateful to Senator Mallow for his tireless efforts in moving SB534 through the legislative process.

### **Human Trafficking Prevention Hotline**

[SB370](#) by Sen. Mike Hodges (R-Brunswick) requires certain establishments to provide human trafficking hotline information clearly visible in business restrooms, including hotels. The goal is to ensure ample resources and encourage reporting for victims or concerned individuals. SB370 now awaits the Governor's signature to become law.

### **Swipe Fee Study Committee**

[HR1135](#), by Representative Todd Jones (R-South Forsyth) "House Study Committee on Credit Card Fee on State Sales and Excise Tax and Their Impact on Georgia Merchants and Consumers; create." was also heard and passed out of House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs this week. HR1135 would create an opportunity for GHLA, along with all businesses, to come to the table during the off-season, to study the impact excessive taxes have on industry. The proposed study committee, as outlined, is a crucial step towards understanding the full extent of the problem and identifying potential solutions. By examining the impact of swipe fees on both merchants and consumers, as well as exploring topics such as fraud liability, consumer prices, and the competitiveness of the payment card marketplace, the committee can provide valuable insights and recommendations for legislative action. GHLA signed on to a letter of support along with several other business groups and associations, and we look forward to identifying potential solutions throughout the process.

### **COVID Liability Protection**

[\*\*SB430\*\*](#) by Sen. Greg Dolezal (R-Cumming) repeals certain warning requirements for COVID-19 liability claims. The bill will allow businesses to remove warning signs around their establishment in relation to Covid-19. SB430 passed the House floor on LD 34 and now awaits the Governor's signature.

### **Soap Box Derby**

[\*\*HB1026\*\*](#) by Rep. Leese Hagan (R-Lyons) would designate the Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby as the official soap box derby of Georgia. Georgia does not currently have an official soap box derby; however, the Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby was the second largest in the country, narrowly behind the Akron, Ohio Derby. Lyons, Georgia benefits greatly from the tourism the derby brings each year. This bill was passed out of the Senate Economic Development & Tourism committee on LD 35 as a committee substitute.

The committee substitute combined the Soap Box Derby language with HB1440 by Rep. Vance Smith (R-Pine Mountain). HB1440 is titled the "Richard H. Smith Georgia CHIPS Advancement in Research and Economic Development Act" and acts as an incentive to attract semiconductor companies to locate or relocate to the state of Georgia by offering grant and loan programs. The perfected committee substitute combines the language of both bills to bring various forms of economic prosperity to the great State of Georgia.

### **Cornbread the State Bread of Georgia**

[\*\*HB1048\*\*](#) by Rep. Kasey Carpenter (R-Dalton) would make cornbread the official state bread of Georgia. The bill states that cornbread is "inextricably associated" with the food history and traditions in Georgia and highlights the Prater's Mill Country Fair in Whitfield County. HB1048 passed out of the Senate Economic Development & Tourism committee this week as a committee substitute, with language including the creation of the "Georgia State-wide Music Office Act."

The "Georgia State-wide Music Office Act" language is from a bill authored by Sen. Sonya Halpern (D-Atlanta). Administered by the Department of Economic Development, the office will focus on the statewide growth of Georgia's booming music industry.

### **High Demand Career List**

[\*\*HB982\*\*](#) by Rep. Matthew Gambil (R-Cartersville) requires the State Workforce Development Board to develop, approve, and annually publish a High-demand Career List identifying those careers most critical to the state's current and future workforce needs. The high demand career list will help state and local education agencies to focus education and career pathways into filling those high demand jobs. This bill would not require annual legislation to update the list - the Board will have the ability to keep the list dynamic. HB982 passed the Senate on LD 34.

### **Studying the Payment Processing Ecosystem**

[\*\*HR1135\*\*](#) by Rep. Todd Jones (R-South Forsyth) would create a study committee to

take a look at the impact of taxes collected on credit card swipe fees and to see where and how the money moves once a card is swiped. The study committee would allow for deliberation on the risk versus reward of the swipe fees. This is a great educational opportunity for the legislature and the state to learn more about the payment processing ecosystem. Georgia is a hub for processing centers and there is a seven in ten chance that when a card is swiped, it is processed in Georgia. The resolution passed unanimously out of the House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs committee this week.

### **Short-term Rental Itemized Receipts**

[SB534](#) by Sen. Derek Mallow (D-Savannah) requires a marketplace innkeeper to provide a consumer with an itemized receipt detailing certain taxes and fees and failure to do so is an unlawful business practice. This includes short-term rentals, such as Airbnb and VRBO. The STR company would be in charge of reporting the itemized list of fees. The bill aims to combat deceptive fees and promote transparency. SB 534 passed out of the House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs committee with language from Rep. Mesha Mainor (R-Atlanta) that requires businesses that do not have exact change from cash-paying customers to provide store credit for the change.

### **Corporate Income Tax**

[HB1023](#) sponsored by Rep. Bruce Williamson (R-Monroe) seeks to match the rate of income tax imposed on corporations to that imposed on individual taxpayers. The bill extends the due date on or after January 1, 2025 to finalize the corporate tax returns. The Senate Finance Committee approved the bill this week and it is currently pending in Senate Rules.

### **Legislative Tracking Update**

#### **House Bills:**

- [HB1459](#) - Georgia Agricultural Trust Fund; exempt sale or use of diesel exhaust fuel
- [HB1463](#) - Chattahoochee Hills, City of; levy an excise tax
- [HB1468](#) - Camden County; levy an excise tax
- [HB1471](#) - Cherokee County; levy an excise tax
- [HB1472](#) - Bartow County Community Improvement Districts Act; enact
- [HB1476](#) - Forsyth County; levy an excise tax

#### **House Resolutions:**

- [HR1352](#) - Flood Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery Joint Study Committee; create
- [HR1353](#) - House Study Committee on Funding for Flood Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery; create
- [HR1354](#) - House Coastal Area Regional Workforce Mobility and Connectivity Study Committee; create
- [HR1384](#) - House Study Committee on Assessing the Semester and Quarter Systems at USG and TCSG Institutions; create
- [HR1416](#) - House Study Committee on Felony Sentencing and Punishment in Georgia; create
- [HR1418](#) - House Study Committee on the Use of Local Fees to Support Affordable

Housing; create

[HR1433](#) - House Study Committee on the Eradication of Homelessness; create

[HR1462](#) - Georgia Hotel and Lodging Industry Appreciation Day at the state capitol;  
03/14/24; recognize

[HR1477](#) - House Study Committee on Offshore Wind Energy; create

**Senate Bills:**

[SB576](#) - Ride Share Network Services and Transportation Referral Services; display of  
a second license plate; require

[SB577](#) - State Court of DeKalb County; landlords to remove personal property following  
execution of writs of possession within seven days; provide

**Senate Resolutions:**

[SR747](#) - Historic Rural Church Trail; local governments and regional commissions for  
Regions 5, 7, and 12; establishment; urge

[SR750](#) - Resolving to End the Persecution and Discrimination against the Jewish  
community; condemn Jew-hatred

[SR754](#) - Senate Cumulative Impact of Pollution on Economic Development and Growth  
Study Committee; create

[SR778](#) - Georgia Hotel and Lodging Industry Appreciation Day; recognize March 14,  
2024

**GHLA Full Legislative Tracking Update**

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