



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



February 14, 2025

Welcome to GHLA @ the Capitol, your weekly update about news you need to know related to Georgia's lodging industry and the 2025 General Assembly.

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

Legislative Schedule

This week, the legislature convened for legislative days 14 through 17, engaging in a flurry of activity and debate. Legislators focused their efforts on tackling crucial matters, including insurance reform legislation. The legislature will reconvene on Tuesday, February 18, for legislative day 18. Click [here](#) to view the complete legislative calendar.

Sports Betting and Casino Gaming

[SR 131](#) Sponsored by Sen. Carden Summers (R-Cordele) provides by law for the operation and regulation of sports betting and casino gambling in this state. The legislation would allow up to eight casino licenses in Georgia. It would also create the Georgia Gaming Commission to oversee and license sports betting and casino gaming. Gross revenue will be taxed at 20%, with the first \$2 billion in revenue allocated to the "Georgia Gaming Proceeds Fund." Once the \$2 billion threshold is reached, the General Assembly will allocate an additional \$500 million to distribute evenly among counties until at least \$5 billion has been appropriated. Furthermore, 5% of surplus revenue will be set aside for programs and services to prevent and treat individuals with problematic gaming habits. SR131 is currently awaiting debate in the Senate Regulated Industries Committee.

Short Term Rental Database

[HB 374](#), sponsored by Rep. Momtahan (R-Dallas), allows local governing bodies to establish housing management databases for residential rental properties. The bill details the databases' applicability, registration requirements, penalties for non-compliance, disclosure of ownership by foreign adversaries, and exemptions.

Local governing authorities may create databases for residential and short term rental properties, but they are not allowed to require registration from owners unless they have five or more units. They must register their properties in the database, supplying details such as their name, contact information, property address, and deed information. Any modifications to property details must be reported within 30 days.

Property owners may be exempt from the database requirements, including active-duty military personnel, individuals with serious medical conditions, owners in hospice or palliative care, heirs or estate representatives, and owners experiencing financial

hardship due to natural disasters. Local governments are generally not authorized to perform investigations or inspections of residential rental properties without probable cause, except in relation to housing management database requirements. Penalties may be imposed for failing to register or update information, with escalating fines for repeated violations within a 12-month period:

- a. For a first violation in a 12-month period: \$500.00
- b. For a second violation in a 12-month period: \$750.00
- c. For a third and each subsequent violation in a 12-month period: \$1,000.00.

Tort Reform

[SB 68](#), sponsored by Sen. John Kennedy (R-Macon), provides a substantive and comprehensive revision of provisions regarding civil practice, evidentiary matters, damages, and liability in tort actions. SB 68 received a committee substitute that included language for an exemption to premises liability regarding human trafficking.

Sen. Kennedy raised concerns that the original version of SB 68 might limit the ability of human trafficking survivors to bring legal action against businesses that willfully ignore human trafficking activity on their premises. The substituted version of SB 68 clarifies and ensures that victims of human trafficking (OCGA 16-5-46) are not barred from filing negligent security claims against property owners, even if they were engaged in other criminal activity at the time of their victimization.

[SB 69](#), sponsored by Sen. John Kennedy (R-Macon), enacts the Georgia Access and Consumer Protection Act to regulate third-party litigation financing practices. During the committee hearing, Sen. Kennedy highlighted the involvement of foreign entities in litigation funding and the need for regulations to protect the judicial system.

After a lengthy hearing, SB 68 and SB 69 passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee and now head to the Senate Rules Committee.

"Support Tort Reform to Protect Georgia's Hospitality Industry – Act Today!"

Georgia's hospitality industry is the backbone of our state's economy, welcoming millions of visitors every year and creating countless jobs. But rising costs, fueled by a broken civil litigation system, are making it harder for hotels to thrive. Governor Kemp has made tort reform a top legislative priority, and now is the time to act to ensure our industry's future success. Here are some more ways you can help secure a better legal system for Georgia's hotels:

1. **Take the Impact Survey** - Let us know how tort laws are impacting your business by taking the "**GHLA Tort Reform Impact Survey**"
2. **Email Your Legislators** – Visit www.JusticeNotJackpots.com to urge your State Senator and Representative to support comprehensive tort reform.
3. **Contact Your Lawmakers Directly** – If you have relationships with your local legislators, call or text them and explain how vital tort reform is for Georgia's hospitality sector.
4. **Share This Message** – Forward this email to fellow hoteliers, industry partners, and

colleagues. Encourage them to join the fight for meaningful reform that will protect our businesses.

Blue Law Modernization

[SB 86](#), sponsored by Sen. Jason Anavitarte (R-Dallas), authorizes retail dealers to offer discounts to consumers through premiums, coupons, or rebates on alcoholic beverages purchased for consumption off the premises. This legislation also doubles the amount of tastings an alcohol dealer may provide. SB86 received its first hearing this week and in an effort to support for our local tourism assets, GHLA aligned with the the hospitality coalition to support the measure.

No Pay No Stay, The Innkeeper Reform Act

Another priority for GHLA this legislative season is [HB 183](#), sponsored by Rep. Devan Seabaugh (R-Marietta), expands liens to cover property removed from a room upon the termination of a guest's contract. Also known as the "Innkeeper Reform Act," this proposed legislation aims to close a loophole in the state's squatter laws that permits long-term hotel guests to occupy extended-stay hotels without immediate removal. HB183 currently awaits a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee. A brief summary can be found below:

House Bill 183 (HB183) proposes changes to Georgia law regarding the rights and responsibilities of innkeepers and their guests. The key provisions include:

1. Innkeeper's Lien & Guest Property:

- Innkeepers can place a lien on guest property removed from a room after the guest's contract expires.
- Guest property may be secured and returned upon full payment for services.

2. Ejection of Guests:

- Guests can be removed if their contract expires, their stay is terminated, or they lack a valid agreement.
- Innkeepers can file an affidavit to request law enforcement to remove such individuals.
- Sheriffs, deputies, constables, or marshals must enforce ejections within five days.
- If law enforcement is unavailable, innkeepers can hire off-duty certified officers for ejections.

3. Presumption of Guest Status:

- Any individual receiving accommodations on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis is presumed to be a guest, regardless of the duration of their stay.

4. Implementation:

- Conflicting laws will be repealed.

The bill strengthens innkeepers' authority to remove guests and secure unpaid property while clarifying legal procedures for enforcement.

We are grateful to the author for championing such an important piece of legislation for every hotel in the state. GHLA strongly supports House Bill 183.

Legislative Tracking Update

House Bills:

[HB 343](#) - Georgia Living Wage Act; enact
[HB 345](#) - Insurance; prohibit raises in liability insurance rates for five years

[HB 347](#) - Georgia Pro-Birth Accountability Act; enact

[HB 353](#) - Georgia Music Office and Music Ready Communities Act; enact

[HB 360](#) - Revenue and taxation; rehabilitation of historic structures; revise tax credit

[HB 367](#) - Georgia Equity and Fairness Commission Act; enact

[HB 369](#) - Motor vehicles; sale of food or beverages; provide vehicle equipment standards

[HB 374](#) - Local government; residential rental property; establish housing management databases

[HB 375](#) - Income tax; exclude overtime compensation

[HB 376](#) - Income tax; rehabilitation of certified structures; increase amount of tax credits

[HB 377](#) - Buildings and housing; manufactured homes; provisions

[HB 383](#) - Georgia High School NIL Protection Act; enact

[HB 392](#) - Georgia Tax Court; certain events; revise dates

[HB 393](#) - Safer Cycling in Georgia Act; enact

[HB 395](#) - Labor and industrial relations; minimum wage; provide for an increase

[HB 398](#) - Food, drugs, and cosmetics; authorize production and sale of cottage food items with certain exemptions, requirements, and disclosures

[HB 399](#) - Property; require certain residential landlords to have in-state staff to manage tenant communications

[HB 400](#) - Community Housing Options Increase Cost Efficiency (CHOICE) Act; enact

[HB 401](#) - Insurance; prohibit insurers from considering advertising costs when making or using insurance rates

[HB 403](#) - Property; enhance protections for homeowners and tenants by revising or repealing certain provisions inhibiting housing stability

[HB 410](#) - Insurance, Department of; efficiency in the practices; provide

[HB 415](#) - Homeowners Protection Act; enact

[HB 416](#) - Local government; enterprise zones; revise class of retailer from which fees may be collected

[HB 423](#) - Emergency telephone number 9-1-1 system; Next Generation 9-1-1 systems and services; provide

[HB 425](#) - Revenue and taxation; purchase of an emergency power generator to convenience stores and grocery stores; provide tax credit

[HB 431](#) - Consumer Inflation Reduction and Tax Fairness Act; enact

[HB 447](#) - Crimes and offenses; crimes of gift card theft, gift card forgery, and gift card fraud; provide

[HB 453](#) - Georgia Red Flag Protective Order Act; enact

[HB 454](#) - Vince Dooley Battlefield Trust Fund Act; enact

[HB 455](#) - Bingo; properties used for games; limit number of sessions; provisions

[HB 456](#) - Ad valorem tax; additional period to appeal certain property assessments; provide

[HB 466](#) - State symbols; marsh tacky horse as official Georgia heritage horse breed; designate

House Resolutions:

[HR 208](#) - General Assembly; prohibit use of racially derogatory or discriminatory school mascots, logos, or team names in Georgia public schools

[HR 209](#) - General Assembly; Workplace Safety and Heat Protection Act; urge passage

[HR 250](#) - Local government; adopt an alternative method of appraisal and assessment of real property located within the county for taxation; provide - CA

[HR 257](#) - House Special Committee on Oversight of Federal Funds; create

Senate Bills:

[SB 127](#) - Contracts with Small Businesses; automatic renewal provisions; defintions; provide and revise

[SB 135](#) - "Coastal Island Preservation Act"; enact

[SB 141](#) - Revenue and Taxation; the appeal and protest period from 30 days to 45 days for tax assessments; extend

[SB 144](#) - Fertilizers or Pesticides; a manufacturer cannot be held liable for failing to warn consumers of health risks above those required by the United States Environmental Protection Agency; clarify

[SB 151](#) - "Joint Development Authority of North Fulton Municipalities Act"; enact

[SB 155](#) - "Georgia Insurance Premium Reduction Act"; enact

[SB 156](#) - "Georgia Insurance Premium Reduction Act"; enact

[SB 164](#) - Trade Practices; surveillance based price discrimination and surveillance based wage discrimination; prohibit

[SB 167](#) - Commerce and Trade; private entities that employ certain AI systems to guard against discrimination caused by such systems; provide

[SB 168](#) - Individual Tax Rates; reduction of the state income tax over time; revise provisions

[SB 170](#) - Georgia Interagency Council for the Homeless; create

[SB 172](#) - Speed Detection Devices; all laws relative to enforcement of speeding violations in school zones through the use of automated traffic enforcement safety devices; repeal

[SB 180](#) - High Demand Apprenticeship Program; opportunities for apprenticeship sponsors to enter into apprenticeship program contracts with State Board of the Technical College System of Georgia; provide

Senate Resolutions:

[SR 167](#) - Recognition of Marriage; only the union of man and woman; repeal - CA

GHLA Full Legislative Tracking Update

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