



March 21, 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.

GHLA Legislative Highlights

This week, the legislature convened for days 32 through 34, designating Wednesday as a committee workday. With only two weeks remaining before the end of the legislative session, members are increasingly feeling the pressure to move bills out of committee and onto the floor for further debate and voting. The legislature will reconvene on Tuesday, March 25th, for legislative day 35. Please click [here](#) to see the entire legislative calendar.

Tort Reform Update

On Legislative Day 33 (March 20, 2025), [SB 68](#) was brought to a vote on the House Floor. It was presented and described section by section by Rep. James Burchett. Rep. Al Williams, Rep. Shea Roberts, Rep. Omari Crawford, and Rep. Sam Park spoke in opposition to the bill citing the lack of need for SB 68, the importance of juries and how they are at risk under SB 68, and how SB 68 will harm victims of rape and other everyday Georgians. Rep. Chas Cannon spoke in favor of the bill, noting that SB 68 will eliminate inflated expenses, clarify premises liability, and permit evidence of seatbelts evidence which will stabilize insurance costs and allow businesses to invest in growth, create jobs, contribute to a more prosperous Georgia, and foster a fair judicial system.

It is important to note that SB 68 was amended in the House Rules Subcommittee on Lawsuit Reform on Tuesday this week. Chairman Rob Leverett amended the bill to expand the exception for human trafficking victims based on feedback from testimony and committee members. However, many members feel that the exception is still not broad enough.

Rep. Stacey Evans and Rep. Tanya Miller gave the minority report, again highlighting the lack of evidence that tort reform will decrease insurance premiums and the harm this will do to healthcare costs, rape victims, and everyday Georgians attempting to bring claims. Finally, Rep. Butch Parrish, Rep. Rob Leverett, and Rep. James Burchett gave the majority report, where they spoke to the time, efforts, and edits put into this bill as well as addressed criticisms voiced earlier. SB 68 passed 91-82 with bipartisan support and opposition.

SB 68 passed the Senate in the final procedural motion by a vote of 34-21. It will now go to the Governor's desk for signature.



Governor Kemp holds press gaggle following the passage of SB 68.



President Pro Tempore Kennedy and GHLA's **Chris Hardman** share a moment following the passage of SB 68.

As Georgia tort reform nears a vote, supporters, opponents consider impacts

By Doug Reardon ATLANTA, Ga. (Atlanta News First) Published: Mar. 17, 2025 at 9:21 PM EDT



Eric Gray speaking with Doug Reardon on industry tort issues.

Inkeepers Reform Act

[HB 61](#), originally introduced as a bill to establish separate license plates for ambulances and hearses, has since been completely substituted to carry the language from HB 183—Rep. Devan Seabaugh's "No Pay, No Stay" or "Innkeepers Reform Act" bill. Although the original HB 183 did not make it past Crossover Day, our team worked diligently to find a new path forward for this important piece of legislation.

HB 61 was heard this week in the Senate Public Safety Committee. The bill creates clear procedures for innkeepers to remove individuals from their property if their occupancy has expired, been terminated, unpaid or if they lack a valid contract. The bill establishes specific procedures for innkeepers to eject individuals from their premises under certain circumstances:

- A person can be ejected if their occupancy has expired, been terminated, or if they do not have a valid contract with the innkeeper.
- The innkeeper must provide a written affidavit to a law enforcement officer stating the grounds for ejection (e.g., expired or terminated occupancy, no valid contract, and refusal to leave).
- Upon receiving the affidavit, law enforcement is required to eject the person within five days.
- If law enforcement cannot perform the ejection within five days, the innkeeper is authorized to hire an off-duty certified peace officer.



GHLA's Director of Governmental Affairs, Chris Hardman, testified in support of the bill, reinforcing the need for clear enforcement mechanisms. No vote was taken, as this was a hearing-only meeting. The Chairman of the senate public safety committee, Chairman Albers plans to bring the bill up for a vote next week.

Religious Freedom Restoration Act

[SB 36](#) by Sen. Ed Setzler seeks to establish a state-level RFRA that mirrors the federal law, aiming to protect Georgians from state and local government infringement on their religious practices. Proponents argue that the bill is necessary to address a legal gap created by the *Boerne v. Flores* Supreme Court decision, which limited the federal RFRA's application to federal actions. They emphasize that without SB 36, state and local actions are subject only to a "rational basis" standard, while the bill would elevate protection to "strict scrutiny," requiring the government to demonstrate a compelling interest and use the least restrictive means when burdening religious freedom. Supporters also point out that many other states have similar RFRA's and that SB 36 would protect minority religious faiths.

Concerns have been raised about SB 36 potentially enabling discrimination against minority faiths and the LGBTQ+ community, mainly because there is no specific anti-discrimination provision. Critics question whether the state law would override local non-discrimination ordinances, leading to potential conflicts. While supporters argue that the bill won't preempt local laws and aims to address a gap in religious freedom protections, concerns about clarity and its interaction with existing civil rights laws remain. After a whirlwind of failed amendments, the motion to pass SB 36 failed with a vote of 5-7. There was a motion to reconsider.

Legislative Tracking Update

House Resolutions:

[HR 590](#) - House Study Committee on Telecommunications Services and Programs for the Hearing and Visually Impaired; create

[HR 659](#) - House Study Committee on Insurance Market Reform; create

Senate Bills:

[SB 341](#) - "Freedom of Speech and Belief Act"; enact

[SB 342](#) - Emergency Communications Authority; increase in the percentage of all 9-1-1 charges to be remitted to the Peace Officers' Annuity and Benefit Fund; provide

[SB 343](#) - Age Verification of Account Holders; providers of social media platforms from permitting a minor aged 14 years or younger to be an account holder; prohibit

Senate Resolutions:

[SR 424](#) - Senate Study Committee on Franchise Fees; create

[SR 427](#) - Senate Study Committee on Intoxicating Cannabinoids in Consumable Hemp Products; create

[SR 429](#) - Senate Addressing Felony Disenfranchisement in Georgia's Constitution Study Committee; create

[SR 431](#) - Senate Impact of Social Media and Artificial Intelligence on Children and Platform Privacy Protection Study Committee; create

GHLA Full Legislative Tracking Update

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

[Visit our main page.](#)