



March 28, 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 legislative days 35 through 37. Wednesday served as a committee workday. The Senate faced a hard procedural deadline this week, needing to pass all bills out of committee that they wanted to have eligible for the floor on Sine Die (LD 40). The Senate worked tirelessly with late-running committees to achieve this milestone. We are one week away from the end of the session. The legislature will reconvene on Monday for LD 38. Please click [here](#) to see the entire legislative calendar.

Tort Reform Update

[SB 69](#), part of Governor Kemp's tort reform legislation, aims to tackle the growing, unregulated third-party litigation funding (TPLF) industry by enhancing consumer protections and addressing potential foreign influence in the judicial system. The committee substitute introduced key modifications, including raising disclosure requirements for ownership in litigation finance from 5% to 10%, prohibiting foreign adversaries from participating in litigation financing, setting a \$25,000 funding threshold for joint and several liabilities, and adjusting the effective dates for certain sections. Legislators raised concerns regarding the bill's language, the discoverability of TPLF agreements, and the possible effects on legitimate third-party lenders.

Testimonies from industry experts and advocates provided additional context. Jack Kelly of the American Litigation Finance Association expressed concerns that the definition of "litigation financier" could potentially encompass general financing entities and suggested an amendment to exclude specific financial institutions. Pam Bracher with GMTA underscored that unchecked consumer litigation financing threatens the civil justice system and raised concerns about the discoverability threshold. Michelle Mortimer of the Institute for Labor Reform highlighted that the U.S. holds a significant share of the global litigation financing market. Phil Goldberg noted the rapid growth of the litigation financing industry.

SB 69 passed out of the Rules Subcommittee and the standing committee this week. The bill received a vote of 98-69 on the House Floor. The House transferred the bill back over to the Senate, where it will await the final procedural motion before reaching the Governor's desk.

No Pay No Stay

[HB 61](#), originally introduced as a bill to establish separate license plates for ambulances, has since been completely substituted to carry the language from HB 183—Rep. Devan Seabaugh’s “No Pay, No Stay” or “Squatters” 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, or if they lack a valid contract. The bill requires innkeepers to submit a sworn affidavit to law enforcement, who must act within five days. If they do not, the innkeeper may hire an off-duty certified peace officer to perform the removal. 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. Chairman Albers encouraged continued dialogue and announced that a new substitute version of HB 61 will be introduced next week.

HB61 simply clarifies innkeeper-guest relationships in Georgia:

- **Clear Stay Agreements:** Guests enter into a contract stating their stay period and removal terms, with a copy given 24 hours before expiration.
- **Innkeeper’s Rights:** After expiration, innkeepers can deny access, secure belongings, and charge reasonable storage fees.
- **Guest Removal:** If a guest refuses to leave, hotels can file a legal notice, and law enforcement must remove them as trespassers immediately.
- **Guest vs. Tenant:** A guest remains a guest, no matter how long they stay, unless both sides sign a written tenant agreement.
- **Late Payments:** Accepting late payments doesn’t create a landlord-tenant relationship or stop removal.

This law strengthens innkeepers’ rights and streamlines removing overstaying guests

We are happy to report the Senate Public Safety Committee voted 7-2 in favor of House Bill 61. It is now rules-calendar-eligible to be taken up by the full Senate.

Religious Freedom Restoration Act

[SB 36](#), introduced by Sen. Ed Setzler, seeks to establish a state-level Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) in Georgia, similar to the federal RFRA, to enhance religious freedom protections. Proponents argue it fills a legal gap from the Supreme Court’s *Boerne v. Flores* decision by applying “strict scrutiny” to state actions affecting religious freedom. They believe it will protect minority religious faiths, as many other states have similar laws.

However, critics are concerned that SB 36 could permit discrimination against minority faiths and the LGBTQ+ community due to the absence of a specific anti-discrimination provision.

There are questions about whether the law would override local non-discrimination ordinances, raising issues about its clarity and interaction with existing civil rights laws.

SB 36 was restored to its original version and passed out of the House Judiciary Committee this week. The bill now sits in House Rules.

Legislative Tracking Update

House Bills:

[HB 809](#) - Motor vehicles; minimum speed limit of 50 miles per hour on certain highways; provide

[HB 812](#) - Buildings and housing; revise process by which a local governing body may propose amendments to state minimum standard codes

[HB 817](#) - Georgia Meat Transparency and Source Verification Act; enact

[HB 819](#) - Jasper County; levy an excise tax

[HB 822](#) - Courts; prohibit inclusion of Georgia-specific content on all future Georgia bar examinations for attorney licensure

[HB 826](#) - Overtime Income Tax Exemption Act; enact

[HB 830](#) - Insurance; establish State Oversight Board within office of the Commissioner of Insurance

[HB 855](#) - Thomasville, City of; excise tax; expenditure of certain proceeds; revise provisions

[HB 863](#) - Georgia Small Business Set-Aside Act; enact

[HB 864](#) - End Corporate Ownership of Georgia Homes Act; enact

[HB 871](#) - Local government; additional authorized investments; provide

House Resolutions:

[HR 685](#) - House Study Committee on Mental Health Workforce Development; create

[HR 712](#) - House Study Committee on Protecting Working Families; create

[HR 754](#) - House Study Committee on Street Lighting Along State Routes; create

[HR 755](#) - House Study Committee on Electric Franchise Fees for Unincorporated Areas; create

[HR 756](#) - General Assembly; preserve access to safety and justice for all survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking; encourage

[HR 757](#) - House Study Committee on Civil Rights Protections; create

[HR 815](#) - House Study Committee on Exploring the Potential for Humanoids and Robotics in Georgia Workforce Development; create

[HR 816](#) - House Study Committee on an At-Risk Populations Abuse Registry; create

[HR 817](#) - House Study Committee on Governmental Use of Drones and Unmanned Aircraft from Foreign Adversaries; create

Senate Bills:

[SB 349](#) - Hancock County; levy an excise tax pursuant to subsection (b) of Code Section 48-13-51 of the O.C.G.A.; authorize the governing authority

[SB 354](#) - Torts; cause of action for appropriating an individual's indicia of identity; provide

[SB 361](#) - Property Owners' Associations; authorization of liens and use of assessments; provide

[SB 364](#) - Insurers; new penalties for insurers that knowingly give false or misleading information to the Commissioner of Insurance; provide

[SB 365](#) - "Georgia Meat and Organic Produce Transparency and Safety Act"; enact

Senate Resolutions:

[SR 441](#) - Federal Workers; action to attract to Georgia and encourage federal investment in the state; urge

[SR 444](#) - Senate Civil Rights Protections Study Committee; create

[SR 445](#) - Department of Community Affairs; investigate the abusive practices of homeowners' associations; encourage

[SR 474](#) - Senate Study Committee on Higher Education Affordability; create

[SR 476](#) - Senate Study Committee on Local School System Flexibility Options; create

[SR 482](#) - Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC); create a study committee; urge

[SR 489](#) - Senate Study Committee on Inclusive Educational Settings for Students with Disabilities; 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.](#)