



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Month Day, Year

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 26 through 28. Wednesday was designated as a committee workday, allowing legislators to focus on reviewing and discussing proposed bills. This week also marked a crucial procedural milestone known as Crossover Day. By this date, any bill introduced in either the House or the Senate must successfully pass through its chamber of origin to continue its journey through the legislative process. The deadline creates a sense of urgency as lawmakers worked to ensure the advancement of their bills. Please click [here](#) to see the entire legislative calendar.

Tourism Day At The Capitol



On Wednesday, hundreds of tourism professionals gathered at the Georgia State Capitol to champion the state's thriving hospitality and tourism industry. The Georgia Hotel & Lodging

Association (GHLA) proudly thanks its members who represented Georgia's 2,298 hotels, which provide 205,248 guest rooms and contribute \$25.4 billion in hotel guest spending.

Tourism is the #1 economic engine in Georgia, generating a remarkable \$79.7 billion in total economic impact. Each year, the state welcomes 171.2 million visitors and supports 463,483 jobs, reinforcing the industry's vital role in driving growth, employment, and prosperity across Georgia.

Tort Reform

As reported last week, House Speaker Jon Burns (R-Newington) along with State Representative Butch Parrish (R-Swainsboro), Chairman of the House Rules Committee, created the Subcommittee of Rules on Lawsuit Reform. This subcommittee is tasked with considering proposed legislation that addresses changes to Georgia's legal environment—[Senate Bill 68](#) and [Senate Bill 69](#).

“The House is committed to working alongside Governor Brian Kemp to pass meaningful, substantive legal reform this session,” said Speaker Jon Burns. “Excessive lawsuits and the rising cost of insurance have impacted our citizens, businesses and communities across the state for too long. That’s why Chairman Parrish and the members of this committee will work diligently to give the governor’s proposals fair consideration and pass legislation that returns balance to our courtrooms and stability to our insurance markets—all while upholding the right of our citizens with legitimate claims to be made whole.”

The House subcommittee held their first hearing last week to discuss SB 68, where the sponsor walked through the proposal and received questions from members, no public testimony was allowed. SB 68, a bill aimed at overhauling Georgia's civil justice system by reforming tort liability, litigation procedures, and damages, was heard for the second time in the House Rules Subcommittee on Lawsuit Reform on March 5, 2025. Multiple witnesses testified both in support and opposition, reflecting the bill's significant impact on lawsuit reform. The hearing focused on key provisions, including limits on noneconomic damages, changes to negligent security liability, and revisions to medical expense recoveries.

Senate Bill 68 continues to progress through the legislative process, with ongoing debate shaping its path forward. The upcoming hearing is expected to focus on premises liability—a crucial issue for our industry—featuring testimony from businesses directly impacted. GHLA remains steadfast in its support of this vital legislation and will keep you informed every step of the way as it advances.

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.

Historic Structure Rehabilitation

[House Bill 360](#), sponsored by Rep. Efration, proposes revisions to the tax credit for rehabilitating historic structures, allowing certain preapproved projects to qualify. To be eligible, recipients must obtain a certificate of occupancy by December 31, 2026.

Notably, this bill is designed to benefit properties within a 10-mile radius of Atlanta’s Cabbagetown Historic District—an area renowned for its rich architectural heritage and vibrant community. By incentivizing investment in historic properties, HB 360 seeks to preserve the neighborhood’s unique character while driving economic growth and revitalization.

Sports Betting

[HB 686](#), by Rep. Marcus Wiedower, known as the “Georgia Sports Betting Act,” amends Georgia’s code to legalize and regulate sports betting. It establishes licensing procedures for operators, taxation policies, and a trust fund to manage proceeds. The bill outlines regulations for online sports betting, responsible gaming measures, and penalties for violations.

Although HB 686 resembles other sports betting bills introduced in previous sessions, this version includes two-factor authentication for online sports betting accounts and eliminates promotional activities for online sports betting. A total of 16 sports betting licenses will be issued, with the Georgia Lottery Corporation maintaining regulatory authority.

Minority Whip Rep. Sam Park proposed an amendment to increase the privilege tax from 20% to 24%. This adjustment will enable increased revenue collection. The committee backed the amendment, which was subsequently adopted. The bill was favorably reported by the House Higher Education Committee.

[HR 450](#), by Rep. Marcus Wiedower, seeks to authorize sports betting in Georgia, allowing the state’s General Assembly to regulate it. The revenue generated from collected taxes would be directed to a trust fund, which would then allocate funds toward the HOPE scholarship, Universal Pre-K, and treatment for gambling addictions. The enabling legislation further clarifies operational details. The question will be presented to voters on the 2026 ballot, asking if Georgians wish to permit online sports betting.

Rep. Sam Park, the minority whip, proposed an amendment to the committee, including language allowing online casino gambling in the ballot question. The Whip argued that this inclusion could potentially double tax revenue, increasing it from \$200 million to \$500 million. However, the amendment ultimately failed. Chairman Martin stated that this claim would

require further review and did not feel comfortable including the language without proper vetting. The resolution was favorably reported by the House Higher Education Committee.

HB 686 and HR 450 passed out of the House Higher Education Committee just in time for Crossover Day. These measures were included in one of the late-in-the-day supplemental calendars. This development occurred a week after the Senate versions did not receive a favorable recommendation from the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee. Despite momentum behind the legislation, the constitutional amendment and enabling bill were not brought up for a vote.

Social Bills

[HB 671](#), by Rep. Carmen Rice, establishes the right of action against individuals who knowingly or negligently engage in "restricted sexual conduct" or "sexually explicit conduct" in the presence of a minor, or who knowingly or negligently allow a minor to be present while another person engages in such conduct. The bill grants the Department of Public Health and the Department of Revenue the authority to fine, suspend, or revoke the licenses of certain businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, and places that sell alcohol, if these establishments allow minors to enter while sexually explicit or restricted sexual conduct occurs on their premises. This bill passed out of the House Judiciary Committee this week but failed to receive a vote on the House floor by Crossover Day.

[SB 36](#), by Sen. Ed Setzler, pertains to religious freedom and prohibits the government from burdening a person's exercise of religion, except in certain circumstances. The bill was up for debate on the Senate floor earlier this week with the bill author stating the intended purpose is to protect the religious freedoms of people of faith at the state and local levels. Opponents, primarily Democrats argued that the bill is not needed and will harm minorities by allowing discrimination under the guise of religious freedom. There are also concerns that implementing this legislation would negatively impact the state's economy and business ecosystem. The bill ultimately passed the Senate on a party line vote of 32-22.

Legislative Tracking Update

House Bills:

[HB 683](#) - Buildings and housing; residential fire sprinkler requirements; provisions

[HB 685](#) - Bartow County Community Improvement Districts Act; enact

[HB 686](#) - Georgia Sports Betting Act; enact

[HB 687](#) - Property; landlord and tenant; security deposits; provisions

[HB 689](#) - Housing; establish a homelessness prevention program

[HB 691](#) - Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency; create Georgia Resilience Office

[HB 700](#) - Commerce and trade; limit amount of surcharges charged by merchants for purchasers using credit cards

[HB 702](#) - Representative Democracy Enforcement Act; enact

[HB 707](#) - Landlord and tenant; limitations on rent increases for seniors and veterans; provide

[HB 708](#) - Renters' Bill of Rights Act; enact

[HB 710](#) - Landlord and tenant; certain limits on increases in rental amounts charged for residential properties; provide

[HB 711](#) - Georgia Firearms and Weapons Act; enact
[HB 712](#) - Ad valorem tax; prohibit property bills from including any nontax related fees or assessments
[HB 713](#) - Georgia Legislative Integrity and Representation Act of 2025; enact
[HB 715](#) - Fair and Future Ready Housing Act; enact
[HB 721](#) - Motor vehicles; transportation referral service providers and ride share network services; provisions
[HB 723](#) - Income tax; expenses incurred in the provision of a warming center to unsheltered individuals on certain days of inclement weather; provide tax credit
[HB 725](#) - Property; certain rental agreements; provide landlord duties
[HB 726](#) - Commerce and trade; surcharges charged by merchants for purchasers' use of credit cards; limit amount
[HB 730](#) - Chatham-Savannah Authority for the Homeless; provide for membership
[HB 731](#) - Alternative Homestead Option Sales and Use Tax Act of 2025; enact
[HB 732](#) - Glynn County; levy an excise tax
[HB 733](#) - Georgia Insurance Consumer and Policyholder Advocacy Act; enact
[HB 737](#) - Haralson County; levy an excise tax

House Resolutions:

[HR 449](#) - House Study Committee on Modernization of the Traffic Violations Bureau; create
[HR 450](#) - General Assembly; authorize sports betting in Georgia; provide by law - CA
[HR 462](#) - State of Georgia; people have power to enact, repeal, or amend general statutory law by direct initiative and referendum process; provide - CA

Senate Bills:

[SB 313](#) - Enforcement Methods; investigations or inspections of certain residential rental property when there is a reasonable suspicion of a code violation; provide
[SB 315](#) - Property Owners' Associations; property owners' associations to provide disclosures and certain documents before a lot sale closes; require
[SB 318](#) - Contracts; certain agreements involving parallel pricing coordination as unenforceable contracts in general restraint of trade with respect to residential rental properties; prohibit
[SB 320](#) - "Georgia Civil Rights Act of 2025"; enact
[SB 321](#) - Workers' Compensation; chapter shall not apply to employees of an employer covered by and providing coverage under the federal Longshore and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act, 33 U.S.C. Section 901; provide
[SB326](#) - Relating to handicapped persons, so as to provide for a program for support service providers to assist blind and deaf-blind individuals in navigating employment and higher education opportunities

Senate Resolutions:

[SR 311](#) - Senate Study Committee on Recovery Residences; create
[SR 323](#) - Senate Study Committee on Making Georgia the No. 1 State for Tourism; 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.](#)

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