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## *Governmental Affairs*

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### **Weekly Legislative Report #2**

Week Ending January 25, 2019

#### **The Budget and Economy**

Not a whole lot of new information was made public last week as the legislature focused its attention on the \$27.5 billion budget request submitted by Governor Brian Kemp. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees met mid-week in joint session to hear from the Governor, state agency heads and state economist Kenneth Heagheny. The General Assembly itself was in recess.

Kemp spoke directly to the overflow hearing room for 11 minutes, sticking to the same points about the budget he made during the state of the state address the previous week – \$3,000 pay raises for teachers, 2% raises for state employees, \$150 million to replace Georgia’s voting system, and selling bonds to raise more than \$1 billion for bridge construction and other infrastructure.

Heagheny, who heads Georgia State University’s Fiscal Research Center, assured legislators that the state’s economy continues to grow, albeit slowly. “My takeaway is an economic outlook that is quite positive but slowing,” he said. He predicted the state would need a little more than 3% growth in revenue during the upcoming budget year that begins July 1 to meet spending expectations. That’s less than was collected in taxes during FY 2018 and about on target thus far in FY 2019. Heagheny was upbeat about having \$2.5 billion in reserve coffers to buffer against a coming recession. “Unfortunately, we don’t know exactly when that will come, but it will come,” he said.

Heagheny raised several factors that could impact the official outlook. Beginning this month, online retailers must collect and remit to the state sales tax on shipments they make to Georgia. And, while the federal income tax reductions passed in 2017 have provided some boost in state revenues, that effect will be countered as the lower state income tax approved last year takes hold.

#### **Dems Pick New Party Leader**

Former State Representative and House Minority Leader DuBose Porter from Dublin has been the Chairman of the Georgia Democratic Party since 2013. Porter announced last year that he planned

to retire from the post, and on Saturday the party turned to a fresh face, State Senator Nikema Williams from Atlanta. Elected in 2017, Williams was an active Stacey Abrams supporter and promised to build on the success of the party during the November election. Williams served as Vice President of Policy for Planned Parenthood and temporarily as Acting Chair of the Democratic Party in 2013 between the resignation of Mike Berlon and the election of Porter.

### **Next Week**

The General Assembly will convene on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday next week, then get out of town to avoid the much ballyhooed congestion expected for Super Bowl activities. Local news outlets predict as many as one million people attending various concerts, parties and special events, not to mention the game itself. In addition to routine business on the chamber floor, committees will begin to hold hearings on bills, and subcommittees of the House Appropriations Committee will begin to drill down into specific line items in various agency budgets.

### **Tracking List**

Here are the bills we are tracking. **New activity is noted in red.** Click on the [Bill Number](#) to access the current version of the bill.

The 2019 Legislative Session is the first session of the 2019-2020 Term of the Georgia General Assembly. Therefore, bills not passed or defeated during this session will be carried over to the 2020 session. Bills pending in the House or Senate Rules Committees at adjournment sine die of the 2019 session will be recommitted to the committee from whence they came.

### **Business**

[SB 20 Counties and Municipal Corporations; Establishment of banking improvement zones in underserved areas](#) (Sen. Michael Rhett-D)

Relating to general provisions relative to provisions applicable to counties and municipal corporations, so as to provide for the establishment of banking improvement zones to encourage opening of banks in areas underserved by banks; to provide for definitions; to provide for application and standards of approval for a banking improvement zone; to provide for the establishment of an agreement for the deposit of public funds in banks within a banking improvement zone. **Status:** Referred Banking and Financial Institutions Cmte

### **City & County Governments and Regional Commissions**

[HB 22 Public Utilities and Public Transportation; telephone cooperatives and their affiliates to provide broadband services](#) (Rep. Penny Houston-R)

Relating to public utilities and public transportation, so as to specifically authorize telephone cooperatives and their broadband affiliates to provide broadband services; to authorize certain financing and partnerships for the provision of broadband services. **Status:** Referred Economic Development & Tourism Cmte

[HB 23 Public utilities and public transportation; electric membership corporations and their affiliates to provide broadband services](#) (Rep. Penny Houston-R)

Relating to public utilities and public transportation, so as to specifically authorize electric membership corporations and their affiliates to provide broadband services; to authorize certain financing and partnerships for the provision of broadband services; to prohibit cross-subsidization between the provision of broadband services and an electric membership corporation's natural gas activities or electricity services activities. **Status:** Referred Economic Development & Tourism Cmte

[SB 2, Public Utilities and Public Transportation; electric membership corporations and their affiliates; authorize; broadband services](#) (Sen. Steve Gooch-R)

Relating to public utilities and public transportation, so as to specifically authorize electric membership corporations and their affiliates to provide broadband services; to authorize certain financing and partnerships for the provision of broadband services; to prohibit cross-subsidization between the provision of broadband services and an electric membership corporation's natural gas activities or electricity services activities. **Status:** Referred Regulated Industries and Utilities Cmte

[SB 17, Public Utilities and Public Transportation; authorize telephone cooperatives and their broadband affiliates; provide broadband services](#) (Sen. Steve Gooch-R)

Relating to public utilities and public transportation, so as to specifically authorize telephone cooperatives and their broadband affiliates to provide broadband services; to authorize certain financing and partnerships for the provision of broadband services **Status:** Referred Regulated Industries and Utilities Cmte

### **Health – General**

[HB 26, Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact; enter into an interstate compact](#) (Rep. Dave Belton-R)

Relating to psychologists, so as to enter into an interstate compact known as the "Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact"; to authorize the State Board of Examiners of Psychologists to administer the compact in this state; to revise provisions relating to exceptions to licensure. **Status:** Referred Interstate Cooperation Cmte

### **Hospitals**

[SB 16, "Interstate Medical Licensure Compact Act"](#) (Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick-R)

Relating to physicians, assistants, and others, so as to enter into an interstate compact known as the "Interstate Medical Licensure Compact Act"; to authorize the Georgia Composite Medical Board to administer the compact in this state; to require fingerprint records checks; to provide for application of an expedited license; to provide for a coordinated information system; to provide for joint investigations and discipline; to provide for a commission to administer the compact among the member states. **Status:** Referred to Health and Human Services Cmte

### **Insurance**

[SB 18 "Direct Primary Care Act"](#) (Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick-R)

Relating to kinds of insurance, limits of risks, and reinsurance, so as to provide definitions; to provide that direct primary care agreements are not insurance; to exempt such agreements from regulation as insurance; to provide for discontinuance of services under certain circumstances. **Status:** Referred to Health and Human Services Cmte

### **Study Committees**

[SR 19 Create Georgia Commission on Freight and Logistics](#) (Sen. Brandon Beach-R)

A resolution creating the Georgia Commission on Freight and Logistics **Status:** Referred to Senate Transportation Cmte

[HR 37 Create Georgia Commission on Freight and Logistics](#) (Rep. Kevin Tanner-R)

A resolution creating the Georgia Commission on Freight and Logistics **Status:** Referred to House Transportation Cmte