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Weekly Legislative Report #21

Week Ending June 5, 2020

Make That Only 11% cuts

State budget writers will be reworking the figures once again after Gov. Brian Kemp announced last week that cuts of 11%, instead of 14%, would allow Georgia to balance its books for the coming fiscal year beginning July 1. The 3% difference rounds to nearly a billion dollars that the General Assembly won't now need to trim, but still leaves about \$2.6 billion legislators need to cut below the current year's spending. Kemp said he would release a new official revenue estimate in the coming weeks.

New Routines at the Capitol

House and Senate leaders have agreed to reconvene the General Assembly on June 15; however, it won't be the same old routine for legislators, lobbyists or the public. Restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will mean changes in the traditional habits of the gold dome. We understand that rules are being drafted that are expected to:

- Limit the number of members on the floor at any one time.
- Have members not involved in a particular debate watch the proceedings via monitors from their offices.
- Hold the voting period open longer than usual so that members have time to walk to the chamber to cast their votes. (Many offices are located in a multi-story building across the street.)
- Reserve the Senate-side elevator for Senators only.
- Close the Senate's fourth floor overlook gallery to the public and transpose it into the new press box for the news media. (This would remove reporters from glass enclosed booths at the back of the chamber.)
- Limit to 750 the number of visitors inside the Capitol at one time.
- Open committee hearings to the public, but with very limited social distance seating.

- Require lobbyists and other visitors to make an appointment to visit a member's office - no just stopping by.
- Drop the page program and all special recognitions of dignitaries, teams and visitors.

The June 9 Primary Election

More than a million people have already voted in Tuesday's primary election, most of those using absentee ballots. Mailed ballots will still be counted if they arrive by the time polls close on election day. Approximately 224,000 people had early-voted in person by midday Friday, but polls stayed open in some places until the wee hours of the morning. One of our Capitol acquaintances stood in line for eight hours on Friday, completing her vote in south Fulton County at 1:23 a.m. She said there were another 40 to 50 people still in line at that time. Tuesday's vote will select the Democratic and Republican primary winners for local, state and federal elections . . . except in those cases where a runoff is required. The runoff election will be held on August 11.

Next Week

In addition to Tuesday's election, several major budget hearings will be held next week. Both the Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Community Health and on Higher Education will meet Monday. The Senate's Human Development and Public Health budget subcommittee will meet on Wednesday.

The COVID-19 Count

The Sunday noon number on the [DPH web site](#) for Georgia COVID cases is 51,359. There have been 2,178 COVID-related deaths in the state.