



February 23, 2024

Welcome to GHLA @ the Capitol, your weekly update about news you need to know related to Georgia's lodging industry and the 2024 General Assembly. GHLA's legislative team will be your eyes and ears under the Gold Dome.

Legislative Schedule

This week the legislature was in session Tuesday-Thursday for legislative days 23-25. Crossover Day is scheduled for this Thursday, February 29. This was a busy week for both House and Senate committees with lots of bills moving through the legislative process in hopes of making the Crossover Day deadline.

Click [here](#) to see the rest of the legislative calendar. The legislature will reconvene on Monday, February 26th for Legislative Day 26.

New Senator Enters The Chamber

The newly elected Sen. Tim Bearden was sworn into the Senate this week. Sen. Bearden filled the seat for District 30 after former Sen. Mike Dugan resigned earlier this year to run for a congressional seat. Sen. Bearden is no stranger to the General Assembly, having served in the Georgia House of Representatives from 2005-2011. Click [here](#) to view Sen. Bearden's legislative page.

Georgia Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)

[SB180](#) by Sen. Ed Setzler (R-Acworth) restricts state and local government from burdening a person's exercise of religion, even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability. The bills proponents claim it mirrors federal RFRA law that does not apply to state or local levels though opponents were quick to repeal that it does not contain an establishment clause. The bill author stated that the rationale for the bill is to balance personal freedom with rational basis for individuals practicing their faith. SB180 passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee on a 6-3 vote and is eligible for Crossover Day on LD 28. GHLA will continue to oppose any legislation that gives the perception that Georgia is an unwelcoming state.

Human Trafficking Legislation

[SB512](#) by Sen. Shawn Still (R-Norcross) combines three bills in a perfected committee substitute. The bill creates a new commission, the Victims of Human Trafficking Fund Commission, to protect all victims of human trafficking, not just children. The funds will only be used on such victims to pay for care, rehabilitation, and social services. The bill also includes language for hotel and motel human trafficking training. SB512 passed

out of the Senate Public Safety committee this week and is eligible to be on the floor for Crossover Day. GHLA has been and will continue to work with Senator Still as this important legislation moves through the legislative process.

[SR616](#) by Sen. Shawn Still (R-Norcross) is a constitutional amendment that would appear on the ballot in November that would allow additional penalties for individuals convicted of human trafficking. The penalty would allow for civil forfeitures to fund the Victims of Human Trafficking Fund.

[HR1255](#) by Rep. Eric Bell (D-Jonesboro) seeks to create the House Study Committee on Combating Human Trafficking in Major Transportation Areas.

Premise Liability Tort Reform Legislation

Entitled the Georgia Landowners Protection Act, [SB186](#) by Sen. Greg Dolezal (R-Cumming) revises Georgia's premise liability laws following on a number of appellate decisions that highlighted inequities and inconsistencies in Georgia law. This bill has seen a lot of movement over the last year, having made it out of committee in 2023 and being recommitted back at the beginning of session this year. SB186 was favorably reported by the Senate Insurance and Labor committee this week. GHLA is supportive of this measure.

[HB1371](#) by Rep. James Burchett (R-Waycross) would clarify liability regarding third-party criminal activity. This bill amends Chapter 3 of Title 9 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated on tolling of limitations, changing provisions relating to tolling of limitations for a civil cause of action arising from criminal activity.

Phasing Out Subminimum Wage

[HB1125](#) by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) phases out the payment of subminimum wage to persons with disabilities and requires that employers must pay individuals with disabilities at least half of the federally mandated minimum wage. This bill was favorably reported by the House Industry and Labor committee and awaits further decision in the House Rules committee.

Legislative Tracking Update

House Bills

[HB1287](#) - Property; liens on condominiums and lots related to collection of property association fees and assessments; repeal certain provisions

[HB1294](#) - Georgia Environmental Finance Authority; finance and perform certain duties for projects relating to natural gas facilities; authorize

[HB1300](#) - Ad valorem tax; intent to increase property tax; revise advertisement

[HB1308](#) - Property; protections for homeowners, condominium owners, and property owners in community associations; provide

[HB1309](#) - Evidence; creative or artistic expression evidence is inadmissible at trial; provide

[HB1312](#) - Agriculture, Department of; regulation and taxation of electricity used as motor fuel and electric vehicle charging stations; extend effective date of provisions

[HB1329](#) - State government; regulation and taxation of fantasy contests; authorize and provide

[HB1337](#) - Mableton, City of; levy an excise tax

[HB1345](#) - Peace Officer Standards and Training Council; minimum number of basic training courses and required content for peace officers; provide

[HB1353](#) - Landlord and tenant; repeal prohibition on local governments regulating amount of rent; provisions

[HB1355](#) - Home Based Businesses Entrepreneurship Act; enact

[HB1359](#) - Ad valorem tax; refund for loss of property value or expenses due to failure of local governments to enforce certain laws; provisions

[HB1364](#) - Torts; liability of owners and occupiers of land; weapons; provisions

[HB1371](#) - Torts; clarify liability regarding third-party criminal activity; provisions

House Resolutions

[HR1135](#) - House Study Committee on Credit Card Fee on State Sales and Excise Tax and Their Impact on Georgia Merchants and Consumers; create

[HR1136](#) - General Assembly; law for sports betting, pari-mutuel betting, and casino gambling; authorize - CA

Senate Bills

[SB512](#) - Victims of Human Trafficking Fund and the Victims of Human Trafficking Fund Commission; create

[SB514](#) - Kidnapping, False Imprisonment, and Related Offenses; required human trafficking training program for hotels; provide

[SB516](#) - Unfair or Deceptive Practices in Consumer Transactions; making of false or misleading statements regarding the limited supply of or the duration of discounted purchase prices for consumer goods; add example

[SB521](#) - Labor and Industrial Relations; protections for freelance workers; provide

[SB522](#) - "Donna's Law"; enact

[SB525](#) - Commerce and Trade; sale of ethanol gasoline within the state; prohibit

[SB534](#) - "Fair Business Practices Act of 1975"; failure of a marketplace innkeeper to provide a consumer with an itemized receipt detailing certain taxes and fees is an unlawful business practice; provide

[SB548](#) - "Fair Business Practices Act of 1975"; merchants from refusing to accept cash for purchases; prohibit

[SB549](#) - "Fair Business Practices Act of 1975"; retailers from conditioning the issuance of refunds on the buyer returning goods to any place; prohibit

Senate Resolutions

[SR616](#) - Victims of Human Trafficking Fund; allocation of certain additional penalties and assessments; provide -CA

[SR623](#) - Dept of Natural Resources, Dept. of Economic Dev., and Dept. of Community Affairs; cooperate in crafting strategies to promote outdoor recreation; encourage

GHLA Full Legislative Tracking Update

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