



**The American
Institute
of Architects**



AIA- Week 4

It's no secret that the Governor and the Legislature are in discord over the AFY20 and FY21 budget. The Governor has tasked all agencies with cutting their budgets by 4% and then 6%. Following initial budget hearings legislators expressed many concerns over some of the cuts fearing service to Georgians would suffer. The House and the Senate have agreed to take a "winter break" and sort out these issues. The Legislature adjourned on February 5th and will convene again on February 18th. Speaker Ralston has asked that all the focus be on the budget and no other committees meet. He has also encouraged Representatives to attend Appropriations hearings.

Hot Topics

Below are some newsworthy issues that are of general interest.

Calendar

As mentioned above, the legislature has passed a new calendar. This calendar takes us through Day 28 - Crossover Day. Crossover Day is the day that bills must have passed one Chamber in order to remain in play for the current legislative session.

See below for the updated legislative schedule:

Day 13 - February 18th
Day 14 - February 19th
Day 15 - February 20th
Day 16 - February 21st
Day 17 - February 24th
Day 18 - February 25th
Day 19 - February 26th
Day 20 - February 27th
Day 21 - February 28th
Day 22 - March 2nd
Day 23 - March 3rd
Day 24 - March 4th

Day 25 - March 5th
Day 26 - March 9th
Day 27 - March 10th
Day 28 - March 12th (Crossover Day)

Budget

As mentioned above, the budget is the number one focus of the legislature. It is the **only** bill that is required to pass each year within the forty days of the legislative session. Below you can find the Governor's proposed budget as well as the list of budget hearings that will be held next week.

<https://opb.georgia.gov/budget-information/budget-documents/governors-budget-reports>

<http://calendar.legis.ga.gov/Calendar/?Chamber=House>

<http://calendar.legis.ga.gov/Calendar/?Chamber=Senate>

Legislation of General Interest

HB 731 - (Representative Ron Stephens) This bill increases the current amount of taxation on tobacco products. The tax rate for Cigars goes up from 23 to 42 percent of the wholesale cost. For cigarettes, the tax price goes from 37 cents to \$1.87 for one pack of 20 cigarettes. And then loose or smokeless tobacco goes from 10 percent to 42 percent.

HB 864 - (Representative Bonnie Rich) This bill allows for an excise tax on any vaping products. The tax amount would be 7%. It also requires any manufacturer or distributor to obtain a vapor license.

SB 298 - (Senator Renee Unterman) This bill would prohibit the sales or purchasing of vaping and tobacco products for anyone under the age of 21. It would also make it mandatory for school systems to include education on vaping products in their curriculum. This is mandatory each year for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade. It also prohibits distribution within 500 feet of a school or playground.

HB 113 - (Representative John Carson) This bill is an update on the 2018 "Hands-Free" law. This bill seeks to increase the current fines as well as double the fines in school and work zones. It will also eliminate the current amendment that allows a judge to dismiss a fine if the driver showed proof that they have purchased a hands-free device for his or her car.

Relevant Legislation

HB 777 - (Representative John Corbett) This bill deals with changing the standards for wood construction. The bill mandates that the State of Georgia review and update standards to the 2021 building codes as adopted by the International Code and Council. The bill was referred to the Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee

Referred to House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee

HB 773 - (Representative Scot Turner) The bill would provide for reciprocal licensing of professions, occupations and trades for individuals who are licensed outside of Georgia if the individual is currently licensed in at least one other state, country or province or other subdivision and is in good standing in all licensed entities. The licensee must have been licensed for one year, be verified by the regulating entity, have previously passed an exam regulating the license if required, have not had their license revoked, has not voluntarily surrendered their license for unprofessional conduct and has not had disciplinary action or a complaint filed against them.

Referred to House Regulated Industries Committee

Tort reform bill info

We are expecting an omnibus tort reform package to drop next week when legislators return. This bill will include items such as premises liability, medical malpractice, phantom damages, contractual protection, nuisance laws and more. There is a coalition of over forty organizations pushing the bill which will most definitely be met with harsh opposition by trial lawyers. This issue is always a battle at the Legislature and we will continue to keep you updated as the bill progresses.

SB 292 - (Senator Harrell) This bill requires local governments to adopt state-wide standard codes. It also requires local governments to have more stringent codes where state-wide codes do not exist. It allows for some exemptions in farm buildings and structures.

Referred to Senate committee of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs

SB 302 - (Senator John Albers) This bill provides for independent economic analyses to be procured by the Office of Planning and Budget for certain tax benefits upon request by the chairpersons of the House Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committee.

Passed Committee and now heads to Senate Rules

SB 315 - (Representative Lindsay Tippins) The bill addresses decisions involving waivers of liens and notices of nonpayment in contractor/subcontractor relationships. If the bill is passed, contractors may bring a breach of contract action even if they do not perfect their lien rights. The bill also adds an additional 30 days for the contractor to perfect their lien to bring the time to 90 days.

Passed Senate Judiciary Committee

AIA Day at the Capitol

Thank you to everyone who joined us at the Capitol on Thursday, February 6th for AIA Day at the Capitol. It was great to hear from Charlotte Davis with the Georgia Municipal Association on HB 302 and SB 172 on design standards, Ron Stephens on destination resorts and the historic tax credit, Meghan Hanson on tort reform efforts and Janice Wittschiede on licensing. We appreciate your involvement and look forward to working with you further towards AIA's advocacy goals.