



**The American
Institute
of Architects**



AIA - Week 23

On Monday, we reconvened to continue the 2020 legislative session. This week was full of surprises and kept us on our toes. We finally have an adjournment resolution that is explained later in the report, but it has Sine Die on Friday of next week. The budget and hate crime bills have remained the top priority of the general assembly and we expect to see decisions on those soon. We are looking forward to this last week of session!

White House Action

On Tuesday, June 16th President Trump signed an executive order focused on police reform. The order provides for federal incentives from the Justice Department to local police departments who are meeting higher standards in the use of force and de-escalation training. Among these standards, the order also calls for the banning of the use of chokeholds except when an officer feels their life may be at risk. The President's order also emphasizes the importance of mental health by incentivizing local departments to not only bring in experts on mental health, but also experts on addiction and homelessness. Lastly, the President's order will establish a database to track officers with multiple instances of misconduct.

Budget

The Senate passed their version of the FY2021 budget by a vote of 34 to 15. Prior to the Legislative Session, the Governor's office requested all agencies cut their budgets by 14%, which was then reduced to 11% after improvements in revenue projections. This 11% is equal to a total of \$2.6 billion in funds. Senate Appropriations Chairman Blake Tillery admitted there are some cuts that are tough but necessary particularly in education which makes up 54% of the state's budget and in the area of healthcare. Below are some of the cuts reflected in the Senate version of the budget.

Healthcare:

- The Georgia Board for Health Care Workforce saw cuts to loan repayment awards for rural health care providers as well as for funding that supports medical schools, residency and fellowship programs
- \$27.4 million was cut from the Department of Public Health
- \$122 million was cut from the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

- Some funding was restored to DBHDD for autism services and schools based mental health
- \$2.3 million was restored for cancer services

Education:

- Pre-K funding remains in tact as it is funded by the lottery - this is not guaranteed as we further dissect the impact of the recession on lottery funds
- \$1.04 billion to the QBE formula
- \$25 million for school counselors
- Teacher raises proposed by the House prior to the shutdown for COVID-19 have been eliminated
- \$32 million *increase* to the equalization program
- Additional funding to programs such as agricultural education and technology/career education
- Some funding to GOSA will be cut

Bonds:

- Taking advantage of lower interest rates, the state bond package was recommended for increases to a total of \$990 million
- This will provide funding for roads, bridges, schools, colleges and universities

While these cuts are extensive, increasing state revenues are promising. Although there are only five more days left in the legislative session, the budget is still far from being complete. There was a conference committee appointed to continue negotiations on HB 793. We will continue to follow along and remain diligent to minimize the impact on your industry.

Schedule for the remainder of the 2020 Legislative Session

The House and Senate came to an agreement on Saturday, June 20th regarding the final days of the legislative session. The adjournment resolution is as follows:

Monday, June 22 - Day 36
 Tuesday, June 23 - Day 37
 Wednesday, June 24 - Day 38
 Thursday, June 25 - Day 39
 Friday, June 26 - SINE DIE

General Bills of Interest

SR 435 - (Senator Randy Robertson) In an effort to find revenue in a year when every dollar counts and budgets are being cut across the board, some legislators believe an increase in Georgia's tobacco tax could be helpful. Georgia's tobacco tax is currently set at .37 per pack. The national average is \$1.80 per pack. In the finance committee on Friday, Senator Randy Robertson amended a bill upping the cigarette tax in Georgia to \$1.35 per pack – still significantly below the national average. This could generate up to \$600 million in revenue. The bill will face an uphill battle in the House whose leadership has previously expressed opposition to raising the tax.

This resolution passed the Senate Finance Committee

HB 167 - (Representative Darlene Taylor) This bill was presented in committee as a substitute with language creating the "Georgia Pandemic Business Protection Bill." Senator John Kennedy presented the substitute language. The bill provides liability from COVID-19 to small business owners and healthcare providers across the state.

This bill passed the Senate Insurance Committee

SB 144 - (Senator Lee Anderson) This bill would grant permits to sell tobacco products off-site from a licensed location during special events.

This bill passed the Senate Floor 152- 9

HB 823 - (Representative Houston Gaines) This bill would prohibit registered sex offenders to receive a commercial driver's license.

This bill passed the Senate Floor by substitute 48-0

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.

This bill passed the Senate Floor 50-0

HB 897- (Representative James Burchett) This bill requires the state forestry commission to provide a website that provides statewide notifications for people or organizations harvesting timber.

This bill passed the Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee

SB 310 - (Senator Tyler Harper) This bill was presented in committee as a substitute with language creating the profession and licensure for structural engineers. The language in the bill was previously the language in HB 516. This is a bill interested parties led by ACEC have been trying to pass for two years - it was vetoed last year and went through the GORC process over the summer of 2019.

The bill passed the House Regulated Industries Committee

SB 315 - (Senator Lindsey Tippins) The bill makes clear when a lawsuit may be filed by a contractor performing work and provides that a waiver and release of lien and bond rights shall only be applicable to the issues of the waiver and release. It doesn't affect any other rights or remedies under the law.

The bill passed the House 147-0

