

Welcome to the Georgia Bio Legislative Watch, a weekly update on the 2013 legislative session of the Georgia General Assembly provided by Brock Clay Attorneys exclusively for Georgia Bio members.

The second week of the legislative session was, as is the tradition, set aside for budget hearings. The Appropriations Committees of both the Senate and the House convene for a series of joint budget hearings. All major department heads appear before the joint committees to present their amended budget for the current fiscal year and upcoming fiscal year.

As has been the case for the last five years, state revenues are currently in a decline and Governor Nathan Deal asked each agency to submit a budget with a 3% cut for FY 2014. As House Speaker Jan Jones mentioned this week in a meeting with Georgia Bio lobbyist Brock Clay, this budget process almost seems easier because the answer to every request is “no.”

House Bill 57 - Synthetic Marijuana

The House is considering [House Bill 57](#), legislation [to amend Chase's law](#) and expand the definition of what falls under the definition of synthetic drugs.

Rep. Ed Setzler (R - Acworth) Named House Science and Technology Chair

The Atlanta Journal Constitution covered the story [here](#). Chairman Setzler has expressed an eagerness to get the know the leadership of, and work with, Georgia Bio.

DCH Appropriations Meeting

Department of Community Health Commissioner David Cook presented to the joint session of the House and Senate Appropriation Committees on Thursday. His comments focused primarily around Medicaid and the State Health Benefit Plan. He spoke primarily of ways that the Department is working to make both funding streams sustainable over the next several years.

Rapid population growth poses a myriad of problems for the department, as population growth has increased over 5% since 1990. The availability of primary care physicians also affects the state's ability to deliver services in a timely and cost efficient manner.

Other items of note include:

- Of the 15 states in the Southern Region, Georgia had the lowest Average Cost Per Recipient (~\$5,300) and remains the second lowest in the country.
- ABD population reflects 29 percent of the Medicaid population, but 58 percent of Medicaid's cost
- As a cost saving measure, the state intends to extract supplementals for Medicaid Managed Care drug utilization
- As another cost saving measure, the state also intends to establish a script limit on narcotic medications
- Recently, the state's FMAP increased from 65.71% to 65.84% - an increase of about \$10.3MM

[Commissioner Cook also spoke strongly about the hospital bed tax](#). According to Commissioner Cook, failure to pass the measure could result in a 20% cut across the board for Georgia healthcare providers.

Legislative Schedule

The Georgia General Assembly will reconvene on Monday, January 28th for Legislative Day 5. Some rumors indicate the legislature may, next week, establish a legislative calendar until legislative day 22. However, their certainty on scheduling is related largely to the speed at which the House can pass the hospital bed tax. Those who oppose the bed tax, groups based primarily in the tea party, are ramping up their opposition and may delay successful passage of the measure in the House by a short time.

Senator Saxby Chambliss Will Not Run for Re-election

Senator Saxby Chambliss has announced that he will not seek election to a third term in the United States Senate. Georgia's senior senator has served two terms and is currently the ranking Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee. Georgia Congressmen Tom Price (R – Roswell) and Paul Broun (R – Athens) are rumored to be sure entrants into the race.

Legislation Georgia Bio is Tracking

HB57	A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 16-13-25 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to Schedule I controlled substances, so as to expand the definition of Schedule I controlled substances; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.	(1) Ramsey, Matt 72nd (2) Golick, Rich 40th (3) Cooke, Kevin 18th	HC: Judiciary Non-Civil SC:	Summary Jan/17/2013 - House Second Readers	(Monitor) Sponsored by Rep. Matt Ramsey, this legislation expands the definition of Schedule I controlled substances.
HB81	A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 48-7-40.30 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to an income tax credit for certain qualified investments for a limited period of time, so as to extend such income tax credit; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.	(1) Dudgeon, Mike 25th (2) Williamson, Bruce 115th (3) Peake, Allen 141st (4) Lindsey, Edward 54th (5) Abrams, Stacey 89th (6) Stephens, Ron 164th	HC: Ways & Means SC:	Summary Jan/17/2013 - House First Readers	(Monitor) Sponsored by Rep. Mike Dudgeon (R - Johns Creek), this legislation authorizes an extension of the popular angel tax credit passed several years ago.
SB37	A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 5 of Chapter 12 of Title 16 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to abortion, so as to change certain provisions	(1) Orrock, Nan 36th (2) Tate, Horacena 38th (3) Davenport, Gail 44th (4) Sims, Freddie Powell 12th	HC: SC: Health and Human Services	Summary Jan/15/2013 - Senate Read and Referred	(Monitor) This legislation repeals the mandates of 2012's fetal pain legislation.

	<p>relating to criminal abortion; to change certain provisions relating to when abortion is legal; to amend Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to health, so as to repeal provisions relating to a physician's obligation in the performance of abortions; to change certain provisions relating to civil and professional penalties for violations of the "Woman's Right to Know Act"; to change certain provisions relating to definitions relative to the "Woman's Right to Know Act"; to provide for other related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.</p>	<p>(5) Butler, Gloria 55th (6) Thompson, Curt 5th</p>			
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