

Legislative Update

January 31, 2020

Legislative Lowdown prepared by GACVB &



Legislation potentially affecting Georgia's Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Following a busy week of budget hearings, the legislature was back in session this week for legislative days 5 through 9. As is usually the case following a budget recess, the legislature saw a great number of bills introduced in both the House and Senate. Additionally, some House and Senate committees began to hold hearings for bills to begin to move them through the committee process.

Elections and Politics

The bill garnering the most attention under the Gold Dome this week is [HB 757](#), which, ironically, was the same bill number of the highly contentious religious liberty bill during the 2015-2016 session. The bill seeks to amend the election process for Georgia's US Senators; the effect of which would be to force US Senator Kelly Loeffler, who Governor Brian Kemp selected to replace Senator Johnny Isakson, into a Republican primary election against Congressman Doug Collins, who this week officially announced his intention to run for US Senate. The House pushed the legislation through the committee process this week despite Governor Kemp's threat to veto the

legislation. Congressman Collins also appeared before the House as the Chaplain of the Day on Tuesday, where he was introduced by the Speaker of the House.

Lodging Taxes

Also known as hotel-motel taxes, lodging taxes are imposed by nearly 300 local governments across the state. These lodging taxes are remitted directly to the local government unlike the sales and use taxes and \$5 fee which are remitted to the Georgia Department of Revenue.

If enacted, [House Bill 448](#) by Matt Dollar (R - Marietta) in its current form would require lodging taxes be collected from online platforms (Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway) and remitted to each local governing authority that has adopted a lodging tax code, by defining lodging facilitator. This bill would put the liability on the platform and not the host. This model creates a centralized collection agent. HB 448 would require companies that facilitate (or broker) online lodging sales (lodging facilitators) to collect and remit the lodging tax and the \$5 fee on behalf of the sellers (Short Term Rental hosts). HB 448 expands the definition of "Innkeeper" to include anyone who facilitates a lodging rental.

In a surprising move by the sponsor, HB 448 also was modified to change the \$5 to a 10% fee when that 10% would be equal to less than \$5. We anticipate the bill will go through the full committee for a vote as early as next week.

Alcohol Licenses

This week Representative Kasey Carpenter (R-Dalton) dropped [HB 836](#), which would authorize the state revenue commissioner to issue alcohol licenses throughout the year instead of on a specific date. The bill would also require the revenue commissioner to electronically send an applicant his or her alcohol license unless the applicant specifically requests the license to be sent in the mail.

Budget Deliberations

Speaker David Ralston, in his remarks to an audience of the Georgia Municipal Association, encouraged the audience to "speak now or forever hold your peace" with regards to budget cuts proposed by the Governor. Subcommittees of the House Appropriations Committee continued to meet this week to hear testimony from various state agencies about how they followed the Governor's mandate to implement 4% and 6% cuts to the 19-20 and 20-21 budgets respectively.

Human Trafficking

Following a press conference held by the GRACE (Georgians for Refuge, Action, Compassion, and Education) Commission last week, Representative Houston Gaines introduced [HB 823](#), which would disqualify an individual convicted of human trafficking from operating a commercial motor vehicle. Governor Kemp and First Lady Marty Kemp have made fighting human trafficking in Georgia an administration priority, and there will likely be more legislation on the issue this session.

GACVB Legislative Representation

During the legislative session GACVB public affairs staff, [Hughes Public Affairs](#) (HPA), and members of the [GACVB Public Policy Committee](#) are at the Capitol representing GACVB on all matters related to tourism. HPA is monitoring legislation and apprising legislators of the GACVB priorities and position.

GACVB works with coalition partners in tourism, hospitality, and development [Georgia Hotel & Lodging Association](#) (GHLA), [Georgia Restaurant Association](#) (GRA), Georgia [Economic Developers Association](#) (GEDA), and [Tourism Leadership Council](#) (TLC) - all ally "Advocate" level members of GACVB. GACVB also supports the advocacy efforts of the [Georgia Agribusiness Council](#) (GAC) advancing the business of Agriculture (including AgriTourism) through economic development.

GACVB participates with ally partner Southeast Tourism Society (STS) in federal advocacy efforts and joins the [STS Congressional Summit on Travel & Tourism](#) (June 23-25, 2020). See Facts & Figures impacting Georgia, your National Travel & Tourism Caucus, and much more at the [STS Advocacy Resource Center](#).

GACVB with Ally Advocate member Karen Bremer, CEO Georgia Restaurant Association (GRA) and Tom Clark, Executive Director, CSRA Alliance for Fort Gordon



GACVB Ally Advocate member Will Bentley, President - Georgia Agribusiness Council (GAC)

GACVB Legislative Agenda

Georgia General Assembly Website

GACVB Winter Conference - Feb. 24-26, 2020 in Valdosta, GA

(Annual Business Meeting & Legislative Update - Feb. 26, 10:00 am)

See the partner organizations attending!



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