



A CONSUMER HEALTH ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO THE 2012 GEORGIA LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Information for Action

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ABOUT GEORGIANS FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE

Georgians for a Healthy Future (GHF) is a nonprofit health policy and advocacy organization that provides a voice for Georgia consumers on vital and timely health care issues. *Our mission is to build and mobilize a unified voice, vision and leadership to achieve a healthy future for all Georgians.* Georgians for a Healthy Future approaches our vision of ensuring access to quality, affordable health care for all Georgians in three major ways:

- 1) outreach and public education,
- 2) building, managing, and mobilizing coalitions, and
- 3) public policy advocacy.



Georgians for a Healthy Future’s 2012 policy priorities include:

- » Maximize opportunities and benefits presented by the Affordable Care Act for Georgia health care consumers
- » Preserve consumer protections for Georgians in private health insurance plans
- » Modernize Medicaid and PeachCare by utilizing best practices to improve coverage rates, access to care, and health outcomes
- » Establish a consumer-friendly health insurance exchange
- » Restore child-only health insurance plans to the private health insurance market
- » Strengthen Georgia’s public health system
- » Increase the tobacco tax

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Legislative Process Overview

I. HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

The Georgia General Assembly has operated continuously since 1777, when Georgia became one of the thirteen original states. In 1868 the state capital (and with it, the general assembly) settled permanently in Atlanta. The General Assembly consists of two chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate, each elected by Georgia voters every two years. Elections occur in even-numbered years (e.g., 2008, 2010, 2012). The Georgia Constitution sets the Senate membership at “not more” than 56 senators, and the House membership at “not fewer” than 180 representatives. With a total membership of 236, Georgia’s General Assembly ranks as the third largest in the United States. The Georgia Constitution also provides that the General Assembly shall commence session on the second Monday in January of each year, for a period of no longer than 40 days in the aggregate. Typically session runs into late March or early April because of formal adjournments that make 40 “session days” non-consecutive.

II. HOW DOES THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS WORK?

The legislative process begins with an idea — conceived by a legislator, legislative committee, citizen or group of citizens, advocacy organization, etc. — that addresses a particular need or interest. A legislator decides to sponsor a bill addressing this need, either with a new law or a bill that will change an existing law. A non-partisan attorney in the Office of Legislative Counsel advises the legislator on legal issues and drafts the bill.

A) INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING:

Once the bill has been drafted, the legislator files the bill with the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate, who then assigns it a number. On the next legislative day after filing, the bill is formally introduced. In chamber, the bill’s title is read during the period of 1st readings. Immediately after 1st reading the chamber’s presiding officer assigns the bill to a standing committee. Bills are routinely assigned to committees based on subject matter, but the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House retain discretion over a bill’s assignment.

B) SECOND READINGS (HOUSE):

In the House only, on the next legislative day, the House Clerk reads the bill's title in chamber, although the actual bill is now assigned to a committee. In the Senate, the 2nd reading before the entire chamber comes after a bill receives a favorable report from the committee to which it has been assigned.

C) COMMITTEE:

A committee is tasked with considering and studying the bill, and typically solicits expert testimony, relevant information concerning the bill, and comment from all interested parties. During the Committee meeting, the bill's author and other legislators may also testify. After considering a bill, committees may:

- (1) Recommend Bill or Resolution Do Pass; or
- (2) Recommend Do Not Pass; or
- (3) Recommend Do Pass with changes (amendments or substitutes);
- (4) Report without recommendation (in House); or
- (5) Hold Bill.

Often, a bill will be referred to a subcommittee — again, based on subject matter — then the full committee can hold hearings and make revisions. If the full committee approves the bill, it is “reported” to the full house. If the committee takes no action on the bill, it “dies.” Final Committee action is reported to the chamber in a written report.

D) SECOND READING (SENATE):

Bill read second time on legislative day following Committee report.

E) THIRD READING AND PASSAGE:

If a bill is reported favorably by committee, it is returned to the Clerk or Secretary who prepares a General Calendar of bills that have been favorably reported from committee. For the first ten days of session, the chamber's presiding officer will call up bills from this calendar for floor action. Beginning the 10th day of session, the Rules Committee meets and, choosing from bills placed on the General Calendar, prepares a Rules Calendar for the next day's floor consideration. During the last 30 days of session, the chamber's presiding officer calls up bills from the Rules Calendar for consideration by the entire membership. Once the presiding officer calls up a bill from the Rules Calendar, the Clerk reads bill's title (3rd reading). At this point, the bill is now ready for floor debates, amendments, and for voting.

F) TRANSMISSION:

If the bill is approved by a majority of the voting membership of that house, it is signed by the Clerk or the Secretary and transmitted to the other house for its consideration. The process described above then begins anew. If the second house passes the bill, it is returned to the house where it originated. With rare exception, any important bill passed in one house will be amended by the other. If those changes are accepted by a majority of the voting membership in the originating house, this bill is approved and ready to be submitted to the Governor.

G) CONFERENCE COMMITTEE:

However, if the originating house rejects the changes, a conference committee may be formed. A conference committee is comprised of three members from each House, appointed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate. Both versions of the bill will go before the conference committee to be reconciled. In this situation, a bill's passage requires both Houses to agree to the Conference Committee's final report. If both houses accept the Conference Committee report, the bill is approved and may be sent to the Governor.

H) GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE/VETO:

If requested, a bill may be sent to the Governor immediately after passage, or otherwise following adjournment sine die, the final day of the legislative session. The Governor may approve or veto a Bill within six days after receipt while the General Assembly is in session. After adjournment sine die, the final day of the legislative session, he has 40 days to approve or veto a bill. If the Governor takes no action within the prescribed time, the Bill becomes a Law — also called a 'pocket veto'. If the Governor vetoes the Bill, the General Assembly may override the veto with a two-thirds vote by each House during the next Session. An Act becomes effective the following July 1, unless a different effective date is provided in the language of the Act.

After a bill has become law, it is assigned to the appropriate state or federal agency for implementation. At this point, additional opportunities to shape an Act's effect are available to advocacy organizations, interest groups, and the public, during the agency rule promulgation and/or policy development process.

III. PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Georgia Constitution requires that both the House of Representatives and Senate maintain a journal of their proceedings; the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate are tasked with keeping legislative records.

The *Clerk of the House of Representatives* is an officer of the House, elected by a majority of the members of the House for a term concurrent with the members of the body. The *Secretary of the Senate* is elected by a vote of the Senators for a two-year term concurrent with the members of the body. Each Office serves as the custodian for all bills, resolutions, substitutions, amendments, records, papers and official documents filed with their respective chamber. Other responsibilities include keeping record of the daily proceedings of the chamber, tallying votes, and certifying all engrossed and enrolled copies of bills.

The Office of the Clerk of the House makes copies of bills available to the public. For official records of the House or the Clerk of the House, please call (404) 656-5015 or write to: Clerk of the House, 309 State Capitol Building, Atlanta, GA 30334. The Office of the Secretary of the Senate provides legislation, applicable votes, and other documents online at <http://www.legis.ga.gov>, or in Room 353 of the State Capitol. These documents include: *Senate First Readers* (a brief summary of all bills and resolutions read the first time and referred to committee)(<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/FirstRead.aspx>); *Senate Daily Status* (details actions taken by the Senate on all bills and resolutions during the legislative day) (<http://www.senate.ga.gov/sos/en-US/SenateStatusReports.aspx>); *Senate Rules Calendar* (set by the Committee on Rules, lists bills and resolutions to be read the third time and acted upon by the Senate) (http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011_12/calendars/sr/index.htm); *Composite Status* shows the bill number, title, committee referral and actions on Senate and House legislation in both chambers. (<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/Composite.aspx?CompType=S>)

How a Bill is Passed in the Georgia Legislature



Legislator sees need for a new law or changes in existing law and decides to introduce a bill.

1



Legislator goes to Office of Legislative Counsel. There, attorney advises legislator on legal issues and drafts bill.

2



Legislator files bill with the Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate.

3



On legislative day after filing, bill is formally introduced. In chamber, bill's title is read during period of 1st readings.

4



Immediately after 1st reading, presiding officer assigns bill to a standing committee.

5



In the House only, on next legislative day, Clerk reads bill's title (2nd reading) in chamber, although actual bill is now in committee. In Senate, 2nd reading comes after bill is reported favorably from committee.



11

Once presiding officer calls bill up from Rules Calendar, Clerk reads bill's title (3d reading). Bill is now ready for floor debate, amendments, and voting.



10

For the last 30 days of session, presiding officer calls up bills from the Rules Calendar for floor consideration.



9

Starting with 10th day of session, the Rules Committee meets and from bills on General Calendar prepares a Rules Calendar for the next day's floor consideration.



8

Clerk or Secretary prepares a General Calendar of bills favorably reported from committee. For first 10 days of session, presiding officer calls up bills from this calendar for floor action.



7

Bill is reported favorably by committee and returned to Clerk or Secretary.

6

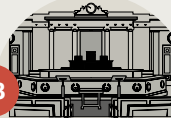
Bill considered by committee. Author and other legislators may testify. If controversial, public hearings may be held.

12



After debate, main question is called and members vote. If bill is approved by majority of total membership of that house, it is sent to the other house.

13



If second house passes bill, it is returned to house where bill was introduced. If changes are accepted...

If first house rejects changes and second house insists, a conference committee may be appointed. If committee report is accepted by both houses...

14



Bill is enrolled and sent to the Governor (if requested). Otherwise, all enrolled bills sent to Governor following adjournment sine die.

15



Governor may sign bill or do nothing, and bill becomes law. Governor may veto bill, which requires two-thirds of members of each house to override.

16



Act and other laws enacted at the session are printed in the *Georgia Laws* series. Also, act is incorporated into the Official Code of Georgia Annotated. Act becomes effective the following July 1, unless a different effective date is provided in act.

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with Jurisdiction over Health Care Issues

House Appropriations

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Representative Terry England,
Chairman
Representative Tom Dickson,
Vice Chairman
Representative Earl Ehrhart,
Vice Chairman
Representative Calvin Hill,
Vice Chairman
Representative Penny Houston,
Vice Chairman
Representative Butch Parrish,
Vice Chairman
Representative Jay Powell,
Vice Chairman
Representative Carl Rogers,
Vice Chairman
Representative Ed Rynders,
Vice Chairman
Representative Doug Collins,
Secretary
Representative Mickey Channell,
Ex-Officio
Representative David Knight,
Ex-Officio
Representative Larry O'Neal,
Ex-Officio
Representative Chuck Sims,
Ex-Officio

Health Subcommittee Members:

Representative Butch Parrish,
Vice Chairman
Representative Mickey Channell,
Ex-Officio
Representative Matt Dollar
Representative Pat Gardner
Representative Ben Harbin
Representative Carolyn Hugley
Representative Donna Sheldon
Representative Barbara Sims
Representative Ron Stephens

House Health & Human Services Committee

Committee Members:

Representative Sharon Cooper,
Chairman
Representative Ed Rynders,
Vice Chairman
Representative Doug Holt,
Secretary
Representative Charlice Byrd
Representative Mickey Channell
Representative Mike Cheokas
Representative Josh Clark
Representative Doug Collins
Representative Katie M. Dempsey
Representative Elly Dobbs
Representative Karla Drenner
Representative Carol Fullerton
Representative J. Craig Gordon
Representative Buddy Harden
Representative Matt Hatchett
Representative Bill Hembree
Representative Michele Henson
Representative Henry "Wayne" Howard
Representative Sistie Hudson
Representative Sean Jerguson
Representative Sheila Jones
Representative Margaret D. Kaiser
Representative E. Culver "Rusty" Kidd
Representative Gene Maddox
Representative Billy Mitchell
Representative Alisha Thomas Morgan
Representative Howard Mosby
Representative B.J. Pak
Representative Don Parsons
Representative Ann R. Purcell
Representative Nikki T. Randall
Representative Carl Rogers
Representative Barbara Sims
Representative Mickey Stephens
Representative Pam Stephenson
Representative Ben Watson
Representative Joe Wilkinson

House Insurance Committee

Committee Members:

Representative Richard H. Smith,
Chairman
Representative Howard Maxwell, *Vice Chairman*
Representative Doug Holt, *Secretary*
Representative Alex Atwood
Representative Buzz Brockway
Representative Mike Cheokas
Representative Steve Davis
Representative Matt Dollar
Representative Carl Von Epps
Representative Bubber Epps
Representative Rich Golick
Representative Ben Harbin
Representative Keith G. Heard
Representative Bill Hembree
Representative Carolyn Hugley
Representative Mike Jacobs
Representative Rahn Mayo
Representative John Meadows
Representative Quincy Murphy
Representative Jay Neal
Representative Carl Rogers
Representative Jason Shaw
Representative Mickey Stephens
Representative Darlene Taylor
Representative Joe Wilkinson

House Rules Committee

Committee Members:

Representative John Meadows,
Chairman
Representative Rich Golick,
Vice Chairman
Representative Tommy Benton
Representative David Casas
Representative Mickey Channell
Representative Sharon Cooper
Representative Katie M. Dempsey
Representative Bob Drenner
Representative Earl Ehrhart
Representative Gerald E. Greene
Representative Bob Hanner
Representative Bill Hembree
Representative Judy Manning
Representative Billy Mitchell
Representative Greg Morris
Representative Howard Mosby
Representative Butch Parrish
Representative Tom Rice
Representative Jay Roberts
Representative Ed Setzler
Representative Donna Sheldon
Representative Lynn Ratigan Smith
Representative Richard H. Smith
Representative Calvin Smyre
Representative Ron Stephens
Representative Tom Weldon
Representative Wendell Willard
Representative Stacey Abrams,
Ex-Officio
Representative Carolyn Hugley,
Ex-Officio
Representative Jan Jones,
Ex-Officio
Representative Edward Lindsey,
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Representative Larry O'Neal,
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Senate Committees

with Jurisdiction over Health Care Issues

Senate Appropriations

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The Appropriations Committee is responsible for proposing legislation that allocates funds to the numerous government agencies, departments, and organizations on an annual basis. With its fourteen sub-committees, Appropriations is responsible for holding hearings as well as approving said legislation for a \$22 billion balanced budget.

Committee Members:

Senator Jack Hill <i>Chairman</i>	Senator John Crosby	Senator Chip Rogers
Senator Greg Goggans <i>Vice Chairman</i>	Senator Vincent Fort	Senator Valencia Seay
Senator Tim Golden <i>Secretary</i>	Senator Johnny Grant	Senator Freddie Powell Sims
Senator Don Balfour	Senator Bill Hamrick	Senator Cecil Staton
Senator John Bulloch	Senator Bill Heath	Senator Horacena Tate
Senator Buddy Carter	Senator Judson Hill	Senator Curt Thompson
Senator Bill Cowsert	Senator George Hooks	Senator Steve Thompson
	Senator Bill Jackson	Senator Ross Tolleson
	Senator Jeff Mullis	Senator Renee Unterman
	Senator Jack Murphy	Senator Tommie Williams

Senate Health and Human Services

121-E CAP
404-463-1368

The Health and Human Services Committee considers legislation that affects the conditions of safety regulations and social services for the citizens of Georgia. This Committee also addresses the legal areas surrounding medical professionals as well as medicinal provisions.

Committee Members:

Senator Buddy Carter, <i>Chairman</i>	Senator Fran Millar, <i>Chairman</i>	Senator Steve Henson
Senator Judson Hill, <i>Chairman</i>	Senator Renee Unterman, <i>Chairman</i>	Senator Lester G. Jackson
Senator William T. Ligon, Jr., <i>Chairman</i>	Senator Don Balfour	Senator Nan Orrock
	Senator Greg Goggans	Senator Miriam Paris
	Senator Johnny Grant	Senator Horacena Tate
		Senator Tommie Williams
		Senator David Shafer, <i>Ex-Officio</i>

Senate Insurance and Labor

421-C CAP
404-463-5263

Primary jurisdictions are insurance, workers' compensation, and unemployment compensation. Committee jurisdiction also includes child labor, convict labor, labor standards and disputes.

Committee Members:

Senator Greg Goggans, <i>Chairman</i>	Senator Don Balfour	Senator Ed Harbison, <i>Ex-Officio</i>
Senator David Shafer, <i>Vice Chairman</i>	Senator Charlie Bethel	Senator Judson Hill, <i>Ex-Officio</i>
Senator Tim Golden, <i>Secretary</i>	Senator Hardie Davis	Senator Joshua McKoon, <i>Ex-Officio</i>
	Senator Jack Murphy	
	Senator Ronald B. Ramsey, Sr.	
	Senator Chip Rogers	

Senate Rules

453 CAP
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The Rules Committee establishes the rules for the orderly procedure and placement of bills on the legislative calendar.

Committee Members:

Senator Don Balfour, <i>Chairman</i>	Senator John Bulloch	Senator Renee S. Unterman
Senator Bill Hamrick, Vice <i>Chairman</i>	Senator Gloria S. Butler	Senator Tommie Williams
Senator Jeff Mullis, <i>Secretary</i>	Senator Johnny Grant	Senator Bill Cowsert, <i>Ex-Officio</i>
	Senator Steve Henson	Senator Greg Goggans, <i>Ex-Officio</i>
	Senator Jack Hill	Senator Cecil Staton, <i>Ex-Officio</i>
	Senator George Hooks	
	Senator Chip Rogers	
	Senator David Shafer	
	Senator Ross Tolleson	

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ADVOCACY DEMYSTIFIED: Tools and Strategies

for Effective Consumer Health Advocacy



AD-VO-CATE (N. AD-VUH-KIT): ONE THAT DEFENDS OR MAINTAINS A CAUSE OR PROPOSAL

Advocacy may seem overwhelming, but it's a lot easier—and can have a bigger impact—than you might imagine. You already have the knowledge, passion, and commitment to be a successful and effective health care advocate.

All you need are the right tools.

THE THREE TENETS OF ADVOCACY:

HOOK	LINE	SINKER
<p>THE HOOK IS THE START OF ANY CONVERSATION.</p> <hr/> <p>Make sure to tell the legislator (or whoever your audience is) who you are, where you live and why you are contacting them. Legislators hear from lobbyists all day long but they don't always hear from their constituents, whom they have a duty to represent.</p>	<p>THE LINE IS WHY THIS ISSUE IS IMPORTANT TO YOU.</p> <hr/> <p>Is it because of a personal experience? Do you know someone who is affected by a lack of access to care? In your professional capacity, is this an issue that you deal with often? Why do you care and more importantly, why should they? The line is the opportunity to make this a personal issue and not a vague, anonymous one.</p>	<p>THE SINKER IS WHERE YOU TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE "THE ASK."</p> <hr/> <p>Do you want your legislators to support a public policy measure that will improve access to health care in Georgia? Do you want to encourage other partners in your local community to support a cause? Make sure to ask, "Can I count on your support?" He or she may not immediately have a firm answer, but this is an opportunity to spur your target audience to think about the issue more deeply and come up with a reason to support or oppose a solution. It is also a great opportunity to follow up with useful information that can help you make your case. What would you like to see done to make a change?</p>

YOU KNOW WHY YOU'RE SPEAKING OUT...NOW HERE'S HOW:

MAKE A CALL, SEND A LETTER, SEND AN EMAIL

Whenever you reach out to a legislator or key decision-maker, make sure to include your name, address, why you care about the issue and ask for a concrete deliverable.

"Hello, my name is X and I am a constituent of Legislator Y. I want to encourage my legislator to support Issue Z because it will improve my community's access to affordable, quality health care. Can I count on Y's support?"

SOCIAL MEDIA

The power of social networking is that it is a simple way to share your opinions and proposed solutions to basic health care problems with friends and family and in turn get them thinking about the issues most important to them.

Like it, Tweet it, Share it

TELEVISION / RADIO / NEWSPAPER RELATIONSHIPS

See an article about health care that you agree with or disagree with? Writing a letter-to-the-editor to share your opinion and proposed solutions is a great way to maximize exposure for some of the most pressing health care issues across the state.

Take opportunities to meet with your local Editorial Board to inform them of key health care issues facing your community.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS

Are you a part of the local PTA? Do you attend Neighborhood Planning meetings or City Council Hearings? Do you volunteer with your church or other religious institutions?

Bringing the challenges and opportunities of the future of our health and health care to these groups and partners brings the people who have the most to gain from a local perspective into the problem solving process, helping ensure its success.



**Information
for Action**

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