A CONSUMER HEALTH ADVOCATE’S GUIDE TO THE 2015 GEORGIA LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Information for Action
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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, and 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 states that the General Assembly shall begin its session on the second Monday in January of each year, for no longer than 40 total days. Typically, the session runs into late March or early April because the 40 official session days are often not consecutive.

II. HOW DOES THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS WORK?

The legislative process begins with an idea – formed 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 usually assigned to committees based on subject matter, but the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House have the choice about where a bill is assigned.
**B) SECOND READINGS (HOUSE):**
In the House, 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. The committee often seeks advice and testimony from experts, relevant information concerning the bill, and comments from those who are interested in the bill. 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); or
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 chamber. 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 is read for the second time on the 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 (e.g. debate, amendments, or voting). Beginning the 10th day of session, the Rules Committee meets, chooses bills placed on the General Calendar, and 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 sent—or “transmitted”—to the other house for its consideration. The process described above is then repeated. If the second house passes the bill, it is returned to the house where it originated. Most of the time, any important bill passed in one house will be amended (changed) 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.
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. 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 **Clerk of the House of Representatives** is an officer of the House, elected by a majority of the members of the House for the same two-year term as the members of the body. 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, call (404) 656-5015 or write to: Clerk of the House, 309 State Capitol Building, Atlanta, GA 30334.

The **Secretary of the Senate** is elected by a vote of the Senators for the same two-year term as the members of the body. The Office of the Secretary of the Senate provides legislation, applicable votes, and other documents online at [http://www.legis.ga.gov](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](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](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](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011_12/calendars/sr/index.htm));

H) GOVERNOR’S SIGNATURE/VETO:

If requested, a bill may be sent to the Governor immediately after passage. Most of the time, bills go to the Governor 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 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. 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. A law becomes effective the following July 1, unless a different effective date is provided in the language of the law.

After a bill has become law, it is assigned to the appropriate state or federal agency for implementation. At this point, advocacy organizations, interest groups, and the public have additional opportunities to shape an law’s effect, as the agency develops rules and policies related to the new law.
How a Bill is Passed in the Georgia Legislature

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

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

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.

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

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

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.

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.

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

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

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...

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

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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* Special elections for House District 50 were held after this publication went to print.
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Representative Alex Atwood, Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Amy Carter, Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Katie M. Dempsey, Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Tom Dickson, Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Penny Houston, Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Butch Parrish, Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Ed Rynders, Secretary
Representative Allen Peake, Ex-Officio
Representative Jay Powell, Ex-Officio

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Representative Billy Mitchell
Representative Howard Mosby
Representative G.J. Pak
Representative Don Parsons
Representative Allen Peake
Representative Jesse Petrea
Representative John David Pezold
Representative Jimmy Pruett
Representative Nikki T. Randall
Representative Carl Rogers
Representative Dexter Sharp
Representative Barbara Sims
Representative Mickey Stephens
Representative Pam Stephenson
Representative Joe Wilkinson

This committee deals with legislation concerning all aspects of insurance and the insurance industry.

Committee Members:
Representative Richard H. Smith, Chairman
Representative Jason Shaw, Vice Chairman
Representative John Carson, Secretary
Representative Alex Atwood
Representative Buzz Brockway
Representative Johnna Caldwell, Jr.
Representative Mike Chekak
Representative Matt Dollar
Representative Chuck Esterson
Representative Bubber Epps
Representative Dan Gasaway
Representative Rich Golić
Representative Ben Harbin
Representative Lee Hawkins
Representative Carolyn Hugley
Representative Eddie Lumsden
Representative Howard Maxwell
Representative Rahn Mayo
Representative John Meadows
Representative Albert Reeves
Representative Carl Rogers
Representative Mickey Stephens
Representative Steve Tarvin
Representative Darlene K. Taylor
Representative Sam Teasley
Representative Joe Wilkinson
Representative Bruce Williamson

This committee oversees the flow of legislation from passage in committee and making the determination of what bills should be debated and voted on the House floor. Also included in that task is the approval of guests who are invited into the chambers of the House of Representatives to be recognized.

Committee Members:
Representative John Meadows, Chairman
Representative Rich Golić, Vice Chairman
Representative Richard H. Smith, Secretary
Representative Stacey Abrams
Representative Tommy Benton
Representative Jon G. Burns
Representative Sharon Cooper
Representative Katie M. Dempsey
Representative Tom Dickson
Representative Karla Drenner
Representative Earl Ehrhart
Representative Stacey Evans
Representative Barry Fleming
Representative Gerald E Greene
Representative Mark Hamilton
Representative Carolyn Hugley
Representative Mack Jackson
Representative Jan Jones
Representative David Knight
Representative Greg Morris
Representative Larry D. Neal
Representative Butch Parrish
Representative Allen Peake
Representative Alan Powell
Representative Jay Powell
Representative Matt Ramsey
Representative Tom Rice
Representative Jay Roberts
Representative Ed Setzer
Representative Barbara Sims
Representative Lynn Smith
Representative Calvin Smyre
Representative Ron Stephens
Representative Tom Weldon
Representative Wembly Wilard
Representative Al Williams
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Senator Jack Hill (R-4)
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Senator Judson Hill (R-32)
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judsonhill.com

Senator Chuck Hufstetler (R-52)
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Senate Committees
with Jurisdiction over Health Care Issues

Senate Appropriations
234 CAP
404-656-5038

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, Chairman
Senator Renee S. Unterman, Vice Chairman
Senator Charlie Bethel, Secretary
Senator John Albers
Senator Dean Burke
Senator Bill Cowsert
Senator Mike Crane
Senator Gail Davenport
Senator Vincent Fort
Senator Frank Gunn
Senator Steve Gooch
Senator Bill Heath
Senator Hunter Hill
Senator Judson Hill
Senator Chuck Hufstetler
Senator Bill Jackson
Senator Butch Miller
Senator Jeff Mullis
Senator Nan Orrock
Senator Valencia Seay
Senator David Shafer
Senator Freddie Powell Sims
Senator Jesse Stone
Senator Horacena Tate
Senator Curt Thompson
Senator Lindsey Tippins
Senator Ross Tolleson
Senator John Wilkinson
Senator Tommie Williams

Appropriations Subcommittee, Community Health
Senator Dean Burke, Chair
Senator Renee S Unterman, Vice Chair
Senator John Albers
Senator Valencia Seay
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 Renee S Unterman, Chairman
Senator Don Balfour, Vice Chairman
Senator Fran Millar, Secretary
Senator Judson Hill, Ex-Officio
Senator Dean Burke
Senator Gloria Butler
Senator Buddy Carter
Senator Steve Henson
Senator Chuck Hufstetler
Senator Lester Jackson
Senator William Ligon, Jr.
Senator Nan Orrock
Senator David Shafer

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 Charlie Bethel, Chairman
Senator David Shafer, Vice Chairman
Senator P.K. Martin IV, Secretary
Senator Marty Harbin
Senator Ed Harbison
Senator Burt Jones
Senator Joshua McKoon
Senator Ronald B. Ramsey, Sr.
Senator Renee S Unterman

Senate Rules
453 CAP
404-656-0995

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

Committee Members:
Senator Jeff Mullis, Chairman
Senator Ross Tolleson, Vice Chairman
Senator Bill Jackson, Secretary
Senator Bill Cowsert, Ex-Officio
Senator Steve Gooch, Ex-Officio
Senator Hunter Hill, Ex-Officio
Senator William T. Ligon, Jr., Ex-Officio
Senator David Shafer, Ex-Officio
Senator John Wilkinson
Senator Gloria S. Butler
Senator Bill Heath
Senator Steve Henson
Senator Jack Hill
Senator Judson Hill
Senator Fran Millar
Senator Butch Miller
Senator Horacena Tate
Senator Renee S Unterman
### Health Care Advocacy Organizations & Associations

**Contacts for the 2015 Georgia Legislative Session**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AARP</strong></td>
<td>&lt;br&gt; Greg Tanner  &lt;br&gt; Georgia State Director  &lt;br&gt; 999 Peachtree St NE Suite 1110  &lt;br&gt; 404-870-3780  &lt;br&gt; <a href="mailto:GTanner@aarp.org">GTanner@aarp.org</a></td>
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<tr>
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<td>&lt;br&gt; Dorothy Leone-Glasser  &lt;br&gt; Executive Director  &lt;br&gt; 404-833-5843  &lt;br&gt; <a href="mailto:dfg@arcc.org">dfg@arcc.org</a></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>American Academy of Pediatrics, Georgia Chapter</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Inc.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>American College of Physicians, Georgia Chapter</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>American Diabetes Association</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>American Heart Association, Greater Southeast Affiliate</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Atlanta</strong></td>
<td>&lt;br&gt; Helen Ho, Ed.  &lt;br&gt; Executive Director  &lt;br&gt; 404-585-8446 (Office)  &lt;br&gt; 404-232-5219 (Direct)  &lt;br&gt; <a href="mailto:helen@aaaj.org">helen@aaaj.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>Georgia Association of Community Service Boards</strong></td>
<td>&lt;br&gt; Robin Garrett-Gundue  &lt;br&gt; Associate Director  &lt;br&gt; (912) 312-3005  &lt;br&gt; <a href="mailto:rggundue@gacsb.org">rggundue@gacsb.org</a></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Georgia Breast Cancer Coalition Fund</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Georgia Dental Association</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tools and Strategies for Effective Consumer Health Advocacy

ADVOCACY DEMYSTIFIED: 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.

THE THREE TENETS OF ADVOCACY:

**HOOK**

THE HOOK IS THE START OF ANY CONVERSATION.

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.

**LINE**

THE LINE IS WHY THIS ISSUE IS IMPORTANT TO YOU.

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.

**SINKER**

THE SINKER IS WHERE YOU TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE “THE ASK.”

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?