

Legislative Report

The Georgia General Assembly finished Day 22 of the legislative session on Thursday, February 15th. They are in recess on Friday and Monday and will reconvene on Tuesday, February 20th.

The legislature worked hard this week, and bills continue to be introduced, pass out of committees and across the Chambers. Following is a list of some of the most high-profile issues:

- **The Georgia Council on Criminal Justice Reform** delivered its 2018 Report to Gov. Deal and [recommended a legislative package](#). Based on the Council's recommendations, SB 406 would require comprehensive criminal background checks for elder care providers in personal care homes or other assisted living facilities. SB 407 would codify the Governor's Criminal Justice E-filing Project, reform the misdemeanor bail process, provide judges with additional opportunities to convert monetary fees or fines into community service, and impose tougher penalties on firearm-related offenses.
- **Governor Nathan Deal** yesterday introduced [House Bill 918](#) by State Rep. Chuck Efration (R-Dacula) and the other Administration Floor Leaders to [overhaul the state tax code](#). The bill addresses the state revenue projections resulting from the Federal Tax Act while mirroring its 10-year timeframe.

The legislation would allow Georgia taxpayers to take the increased standard deduction at the federal level while providing flexibility to take either standard or itemized deductions at the state level. Another component would enhance personal exemptions by 25 percent.

- **House Rural Development Council's** recommendations included [House Bill 769](#), which passed out of the House Health and Human Services Committee. House Bill 769 eases the creation of "micro-hospitals," with 24/7 care and a small number of beds, to replace full-scale hospitals that close. It also would allow grants to help rural physicians afford medical malpractice insurance, as an incentive to practice in rural areas; permit remote pharmacy prescription orders from outside of Georgia; and require training of rural hospital board and authority members. It would also raise the rural tax credit for donations to rural hospitals from 90 percent to 100 percent.
- **State Rep. Kevin Tanner** (R-Dawsonville), who Chairs the House Transportation Committee, introduced [House Bill 930](#), which would coordinate transit development and funding across the Metro Atlanta region. The bill would create a new regional board to oversee transit planning in 13 metro Atlanta counties: Cherokee, Clayton, Coweta, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Paulding and Rockdale. The bill would also allow the counties to impose sales taxes for transit projects, if their voters approve them. The regional board would have to approve the project lists for any county transit referendum. The taxes raised in any county would be spent only in that county.
- **The State Senate** passed [Senate Bill 366](#) by Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega), which would require cities and counties to study pay rate for law enforcement employees. Lawmakers are trying to help local law enforcement departments retain their officers after passing a drastic pay hike for state police two years ago.