



Good afternoon, below is the most recent update regarding Georgia's fight against COVID-19 and Georgia's General Assembly Legislative Session (Week 4). Weekly updates from our team will include news from Georgia's Capitol Hill and new legislation. We hope you find this information useful and as always let us know how we can help.

Georgia Administers 1 Millionth Vaccine



On February 3, Governor Brian Kemp and Commissioner Kathleen Toomey M.D, M.P.H, announced that Georgia has administered and reported 1,030,872 doses of the coronavirus vaccine, including providing the first shot to over 502,393 seniors. As of this afternoon, Georgia has administered 66% of the total shipment of vaccines from the federal government.

"Thanks to the hard work of our healthcare heroes, we have administered 1 million vaccines and taken the first step in protecting over 500,000 seniors from COVID-19," said Governor Kemp. "We are so grateful for our medical professionals, public and private partners, and community leaders who have been on the frontlines of saving lives throughout the pandemic, in addition to working hand in hand with the state to get vaccines distributed and administered safely and quickly.

"Dr. Toomey and I continue to encourage every Georgian to be patient as we await more supply from the federal government and to protect themselves by wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, and following public health guidance. While this is certainly an important and welcome milestone in our fight against COVID-19, Georgians should know that demand will continue to far outpace vaccine supply for the foreseeable future. As soon as supply allows the state to expand current vaccination criteria, we will absolutely do so."

Currently, COVID-19 vaccination in Georgia is eligible to the 1A+ population, including seniors over the age of 65, first responders, law enforcement personnel, and healthcare workers.

Kemp Administration Announces Georgia Made Medical Manufacturing Act

Governor Brian P. Kemp today announced the roll out of [HB304](#), the Georgia Made Medical Manufacturing Act, carried by Representative Jodi Lott (R - Evans). One of the Kemp Administration's key initiatives for the 2021 Legislative Session, this bill seeks to incentivize the production of medicines and medical devices in Georgia, limiting the state's need to compete with other states or foreign nations for critical supplies.

"One of the lessons we learned early on in the pandemic is that we cannot waste time in bidding wars with others for life-saving supplies," said Governor Kemp.

During the 2019-2020 Legislative Session, the State of Georgia enacted a PPE Tax Credit to incentivize manufacturers of personal protective equipment, including those existing Georgia manufacturers which did not traditionally manufacture PPE but began doing so in response to COVID-19. The Georgia Made Medical Manufacturing Act is modeled off that legislation, increasing the amount of credit available under the Jobs Tax Credit to incentivize job creation and investment in the medical equipment and pharmaceutical manufacturing industries.

This measure seeks to ensure collaboration between the public and private sector in Georgia to cultivate long-term growth and development of the state's health care ecosystem. Currently, the Georgia Department of Economic Development's [COVID-19 Suppliers Map](#) features more than 350 suppliers of PPE throughout the state.

House Economic Development Committee

This week, Chairman Ron Stephens presented his bill, [HB86](#) to the committee. He explained the bill was brought by the professional sports teams of Georgia which he characterized as “economic engines.” He also explained the financial hardships incurred by the sports teams as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are some of his key points:

- About 2.2 million Georgians currently place offshore illegal sports bets totalling \$4.8 billion per year.
- Passage of this bill could bring \$43 million for the HOPE Scholarship per year.
- Currently 23 states have legalized sports betting or have pending legislation.
- Experts believe that close to 40 states will have legalized sports betting in the next three years.
- Sports teams believe legalized betting would result in higher fan engagement for their teams.

Chairman Stephens continued by discussing Tennessee's sports betting legalization and how it has generated over \$130 million in the first month. The bill contains language to prevent bettors from placing bets with credit cards. The legislation directs the lottery corporation to issue a minimum of six licenses for mobile betting sports platforms. The bill, as presented to the committee, does not permit wagering on collegiate sports. After much debate on the issue, the bill PASSED the committee by a vote of 19-6.

Legislation introduced this week

[SB 80](#), authored by Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick, seeks to create the "Ensuring Transparency in Prior Authorization Act." The bill begins by requiring all utilization review entities to make any prior authorization requirements and restrictions readily available on its website to enrollees, healthcare providers, and the general public. This publicly available information must include, but not be limited to, all written clinical criteria. Additionally, any planned change to prior authorization requirements or restrictions must be communicated to healthcare providers of enrollees no less than 60 days before the change takes place. All adverse determinations must be made by a physician that is 1) licensed to practice medicine in the state; 2) of the same specialty for which the authorization determination is made; and 3) have experience treating patients with the medical condition for which the service is being requested. This bill was referred to the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee.

[HB 234](#), authored by Rep. Lee Hawkins, seeks to provide an option for self-funded healthcare plans, exempt from state regulation under federal law, to opt in to Georgia's Surprise Billing Consumer Protection Act. The bill was assigned to the House Special Committee on Access to Quality Healthcare.

[HB 239](#), authored by Rep. Shelly Hutchinson, seeks to require that the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities conduct or “directly coordinate all audits of behavioral health providers to prevent duplication with other agencies.” The bill was assigned to the House Health & Human Services Committee.

[HB 199](#), authored by Rep. Mike Wilensky, seeks to require the local governing body of the county or municipality whose law enforcement agency plans to enforce speed control devices in school zones to submit an application to the Department of Transportation. This bill was referred to the House Motor Vehicles Committee.

[HB 164](#), authored by Rep. Demetrius Douglas, seeks to require that all health insurers pass along at least 80% of all rebate savings from prescription drugs to enrollees. This bill was referred to the House Special Committee on Access to Quality Health Care.

Legislation Regarding Elections in Georgia



[HB267](#) authored by Rep. Brad Thomas, seeks to provide that persons who register to vote by mail shall vote for the first time in person. This bill was referred to the Special Committee on Election Integrity Committee.

[HB270](#) authored by Rep. Barry Fleming seeks to provide for the time periods for the mailing and issuance of absentee ballots. This bill was referred to the Special Committee on Election Integrity Committee.

[HB284](#) authored by Rep. Wes Cantrell seeks to provide that counties and municipalities may choose to utilize instant run-off voting under certain circumstances. This bill was referred to the Special Committee on Election Integrity Committee.

[HB285](#) authored by Rep. Wes Cantrell, seeks to provide for instant run-off voting in the election of presidential electors. This bill was referred to the Special Committee on Election Integrity Committee.

[HB289](#) authored by Rep. Dave Belton seeks to provide for requirements for the issuance of Class C drivers' licenses for voting purposes. This bill was referred to the Motor Vehicles Committee.

[SB62](#) authored by Sen. Lindsey Tippins, seeks to provide that the name and designation of the precinct appears on every ballot for the use of holographic security devices on ballots. It will also provide for the storage and retention of absentee ballots by precinct with chain of custody and the manner of handling and processing ballots requiring duplication for processing. This bill was referred to the Ethics Committee.

[SB67](#) authored by Sen. Larry Walker, seeks to provide for the submission of identification in connection with absentee ballot applications and for the submission of photocopies of voter identification documents for absentee ballot applications. This bill was referred to the Ethics Committee.

[SB73](#) authored by Sen. Jeff Mullis, seeks to limit the distribution of absentee ballot applications to certain election officials and candidates. This bill was referred to the Ethics Committee.

[SB74](#) authored by Sen. Jeff Mullis, seeks to revise the ability of poll watchers at tabulating centers to observe the vote counting process. This bill was referred to the Ethics Committee.

[SB89](#) authored by Sen. Butch Miller seeks to provide for a chief elections assistance officer. This person will provide comprehensive on-site evaluation of election management practices and procedures of such low-performing counties to determine root causes of such low performance and lack of adherence to election laws and procedures. This bill was referred to the Ethics Committee.
