

# CONNECTED to Public Policy



Integrating State Policy with Local Solutions

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## House and Senate Begin Work on Budget; Committee Leaders Named

The Georgia General Assembly was in recess last week, while the House and Senate appropriations committees held joint budget hearings on Jan. 17 and 18 on the Amended FY17 and FY18 budgets. State department heads presented information to the committees about Gov. Nathan Deal's budget recommendations for their respective state agencies.

House and Senate Appropriations members also heard presentations from Deal and State Economist Kenneth Heaghney, who stated that Georgia's economic growth rate for 2016 is 2.3 to 2.4 percent—which exceeds the national growth rate of 1.7 percent. Heaghney also stated that he believes Georgia will meet the projected revenue estimate of \$25 billion for the FY18 state budget.

### Committee Leadership

Some House and Senate committees were assigned new leadership for the 2017 session.

- Rep. Robert Dickey (Dist. 140) is the new chair of the House Appropriations Education Subcommittee.
- Rep. Mandi Ballinger (Dist. 23) is the new chair of the House Juvenile Justice Committee.
- Sen. Jesse Stone (Dist. 23) is the new chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

### Schedule

Legislators previously passed an [adjournment resolution](#) setting the calendar for the first 12 legislative days through Thursday, Feb. 2.

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After last week's recess, legislators returned to the Capitol on Jan. 23 for the fifth legislative day, and they will be in session Monday through Thursday this week.

## Legislation

The following bills related to children and families were introduced during the first week of the session.



**HB 28** (Rep. Billy Mitchell, 88th) requires all public and private schools to test drinking water for lead contamination.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee.

**HB 65** (Rep. Allen Peake, 141st) expands the number of diagnoses that legally can be treated with cannabis oil. The additional eligible diagnoses are specifically identified in the bill: Tourette's syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, Alzheimer's disease, HIV, and intractable pain that has not responded to medical or surgical measures for more than three months.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.

**HR 36** (Rep. Allen Peake, 141st) proposes a state constitutional amendment to allow the production and sale of medical cannabis in Georgia. Fees and taxes will be dedicated to a fund to support drug treatment programs. The bill would require statewide passage by voters.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.

**SB 16** (Sen. Ben Watson, 1st) adds autism spectrum disorder as a diagnosis eligible for treatment with cannabis oil.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

**SB 29** (Sen. Vincent Fort, 39th) requires all child-care centers and schools to test drinking water for lead contamination.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.



**SB 24** (Sen. Josh McKoon, 29th) exempts from licensure requirements nursery schools, kindergarten programs, or other educational programs for children under age 7 that operate no more than four hours per day, five days per week.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee.



## CHILDREN SUCCEEDING IN SCHOOL

**HB 23** (Rep. Billy Mitchell, 88th) discourages charter schools from including an exemption of required statewide assessments in their charter petition.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee.

**HB 24** (Rep. Billy Mitchell, 88th) directs the State Board of Education to establish an incentive pay program to retain and employ quality teachers in schools with high percentages of children from low-income families.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee.



## STABLE, SELF-SUFFICIENT, PRODUCTIVE FAMILIES

**HB 52** (Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver, 82nd) provides Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for children living with a legal custodian. TANF benefits are currently available only if the child is living with a parent, relative, or legal guardian.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Juvenile Justice Committee.

**SB 28** (Sen. Vincent Fort, 39th) increases the state minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$15 per hour.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee.



## THRIVING COMMUNITIES

**HB 32** (Rep. Joyce Chandler, 105th) amends the definition of sexual assault to include sexual contact between an employee or agent of a school with a student enrolled in the same school. Current law only applies to teachers, principals, assistant principals, or other administrators in a school. The bill also expands the definition to include sexual contact between employees or agents of a correctional facility, juvenile detention facility, facility providing services to a person with a disability, or facility providing child welfare and youth services and a person in custody of any such facility. The law currently only applies to employees and agents of the specific facility in which the person is in custody.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.

**HB 37** (Rep. Earl Ehrhart, 36th) prohibits private postsecondary institutions in Georgia from adopting sanctuary policies for undocumented immigrant students and requires that state funding and state-administered federal funding be withheld from institutions in violation of the prohibition.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Higher Education Committee.

**HB 53** (Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver, 82nd) expands the jurisdiction of juvenile court to include children who are under age 18 when they are alleged to have committed a delinquent act. Juvenile court jurisdiction currently extends to children under 17.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Juvenile Justice Committee.

**SB 4** (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th) establishes the Georgia Mental Health Treatment Task Force to examine the current mental health landscape and the effectiveness of mental health services and programs.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.