



Augusta University CAPITOL CONNECTION

Augusta University's Office of Government Relations & Community Affairs February 10, 2017



LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

Day 16 of 40

Tuesday was Trauma Awareness Day at the Capitol. Several from AUHealth Trauma participated in the activities of the day, which included a press conference, "Stop the Bleed" training, and installation of trauma kits in the Capitol. This ongoing campaign is being taught around the state in schools to ensure the safety of all Georgia's citizens.

SB 79, authored by Senator Brandon Beach (R-Alpharetta), was heard during the Senate Regulated Industries Committee Thursday. The legislation would allow two destination resort casinos' in the state of Georgia. In committee, Senator Beach offered a substitute that would allocate 20% of all the unappropriated funds in excess of \$5 million in the Destination Resort Trust Fund to the Rural Hospital Assistance Grant.

NEXT WEEK

The House is planning to vote on the FY18 budget on Friday. The General Assembly will be back in action Tuesday- Friday for legislative days, 17-20.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 1

Rural Health Day

LEGISLATION RECAP

This week, the Senate voted on SB 4 authored by Chairman Renee Unterman (R-Buford). The bill would establish the Georgia Mental Health Treatment Task Force. They also voted on SB 40, also authored by Unterman, which would grant emergency personnel the ability to transport suspected mentally ill patients directly to an emergency receiving facility when there is probable cause for believing the person needs involuntary treatment and the emergency personnel have consulted with the emergency receiving facility physician. The emergency physician can then dictate an immediate transport to a behavioral health facility with a written report detailing the circumstances to be included in the patient's clinical record. Both passed by a vote of (44-0) & (41-5), respectively.

Similar measures relating to the authority given to dental hygienists passed the House and Senate today. SB 12, authored by Chairman Renee Unterman and HB 154, authored by Representative Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) move to the other chamber for review.

Tuesday, the Senate Health and Human Services Committees met and heard SB 8, authored by Chairman Renee Unterman, the surprise billing legislation. The bill was not voted on and is awaiting a substitute bill to address the concerns raised by those who testified. SB 16, proposed by Senator Ben Watson (R-Savannah) would change the current legal THC oil percentages from 5% to 3%, as well as add autism to the list of eligible conditions.

Also, on Tuesday, the House Health and Human Services Committee met to discuss HB 36, authored by Representative Earl Ehrhart (R-Powder Springs), which would allow optometrists to administer pharmaceutical agents via injection. This legislation did not pass the committee.

Wednesday, the House Higher Education Committee held a hearing on HB 229. Rep. Matt Dollar's (R-Marietta) bill would place a cap on tuition for public institutions. Chancellor Wrigley testified on behalf of the USG. His remarks to the Committee highlighted efforts to keep tuition increases down and remain sensitive to college affordability. The specifics included controlling cost of textbooks, removing student fees and improving student advisement on degree tracks. The Chancellor answered several questions from the committee members regarding presidential salaries and the effect of the cap on research universities. No vote was taken on the bill.

Thursday, the House Ways and Means met and passed HB 54, authored by Representative Geoff Duncan (R - Cumming), which would alter the 2016 Rural Hospital Tax Credit by increasing the tax credit percentage from 70 percent for individuals and corporations to 90 percent. The legislation also standardizes the aggregate amount of tax credits allowed from 2017 through 2019 to \$60 million per year.

Also, on Thursday, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee met. They passed SB 81 and SB 102 to Senate Rules. SB 81 authored by Chairman Unterman would allow the state health officer to issue a standing order to allow a licensed pharmacist to distribute Naloxone over the counter. The legislation would also mandate every pharmacy in Georgia keep a record of every opioid antagonist dispensed, and the name and address of the purchaser, which shall be

WEBSITES TO TRACK

www.augusta.edu/gov

www.house.ga.gov

www.senate.ga.gov

www.gov.georgia.gov

www.opb.georgia.gov/

maintained for up to two years. Amendments were made to the bill to address certain prescriptions to minors who have ADHD. In its original form, this bill required reporting to the PDMP but an amendment was added to only require registration by July 2018. SB 102 authored by Senator Butch Miller (R-Gainesville) would designate emergency cardiac centers in Georgia. The legislation would also establish an Office of Cardiac Care within the Department of Public Health. The Office will designate Georgia hospitals that meet the criteria established in the legislation and designate Level I - Level III cardiac care centers. The legislation would also establish a data collection mechanism through the Office of Cardiac Care which would track and analyze cardiac events throughout the State.

Bills Introduced:

Senator Hunter Hill (R-Atlanta) introduced SB 123, legislation that would eliminate the current restriction on a bed capacity of a destination cancer hospital, like Cancer Treatment Centers of America. The legislation would also remove the current requirement that 65% of patients live outside the state of Georgia. It would also allow the Department of Community Health to accept Certificate of Need applications from new destination cancer hospitals.

Representative Mandi Ballinger (R-Canton) filed HB 280 that would allow anyone with a permit to carry concealed weapons to take a firearm to the state's public colleges and universities. The new bill exempts child care facilities but otherwise is the same as the 2016 measure. The bill is very similar to the measure Governor Deal vetoed last year.

Preceptor Tax Incentive Program (PTIP), HB 301, authored by Representative Jodi Lott (R-Evans) will convert the current deductions to tax credits, adds APRN and PA preceptors as recipients (meeting the same eligibility requirements as physicians), has an effective date retroactive to January 1, 2017, and implements an incentive structure to provide higher amounts of credits for rotations 4-10.

HR 170 authored by Representative Sharon Cooper urges medical schools and others to work toward increasing research, clinical care, and medical education for myalgic encephalomyelitis (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome).

Representative Wendell Willard (R-Sandy Springs) introduced HB 299 this week. Legislation that would eliminate the CON requirement for medical equipment and capital expenditures. The legislation also exempts freestanding emergency departments from CON as well as exempts facilities that provide alcohol, drug abuse, and mental health services from CON requirements.

BUDGET

The Senate passed the Amended FY17 Appropriations Bill (HB 43) on Thursday, vote 53-1. There were few differences from the House Version of HB 43. However, those differences will be worked out over the next few days. It is expected the amended version will pass Wednesday, which will then head to the Governor for his signature.



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