



Legislative Update

January 14, 2022

GRA Legislative Agenda Items

Truck Size and Weight: Oppose any legislation that increases the allowable size and weight of truck carrying freight. Typically, advocates seek to revise O.C.G.A. 32-6-26 (g) (1), which allows for a weight increase and various radius distance increases for forest products, live poultry, cotton, feed, granite, raw ore or minerals, solid waste concrete or poultry. We are closely monitoring this issue, but no legislation has been introduced at this point.

Two Man Crew: Oppose any legislation which would seek to require a train that is in use for the movement of freight to operate with at least two crew members. Similar legislation was introduced in the 2019 session. We are closely monitoring this issue, but no legislation has been introduced at this point.

Blocked Crossing: Oppose any bills that would prevent a railroad common carrier from authorizing the operation of a train that causes a road to be blocked for longer than 15 minutes. Similar legislation has been introduced in recent years. We are closely monitoring this issue, but no legislation has been introduced at this point.

Georgia 811: Oppose any legislation which would remove the Georgia 811 exemption for railroads, thereby requiring them to join Georgia 811, “call before you dig.” Georgia code currently exempts railroads from mandatory Georgia 811 membership. Any attempts to change the law to make Georgia 811 membership compulsory for railroads would be harmful to the industry, as it would slow railroads down. We are closely monitoring this issue.

Overview of General Assembly

Monday was a familiar scene as legislators, staffers, and lobbyists made their way to the Capitol to convene the 2022 Legislative Session. The first week of the forty-day legislative session is largely ceremonial and usually sees little legislative action. The typical hustle and bustle of a new legislative session was overshadowed by anticipation for the College Football National Championship, where the University of Georgia Bulldogs secured their first win in over 40 years.

After being in recess on Tuesday, the legislature used four legislative days this week. The legislature will not be in session next week so that the House and Senate can hold their annual AFY22 and FY23 budget hearings. Like last session, many Covid protocols are still in place around the Capitol to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Members and staffers are required to wear their masks while inside the chambers and committee rooms and are encouraged to regularly test.

One of the most talked about events that signals the beginning of a new session is the “Eggs and Issues” breakfast hosted by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. This year, Governor Kemp, Lieutenant Governor Duncan, Speaker Ralston, Mayor Dickens, and Senator Warnock headlined the event. Governor Kemp

previewed many of the priorities he would later share in his annual State of the State address on Thursday.

On Thursday morning, Governor Kemp gave his annual State of the State address. His budgetary remarks heavily focused on the strength of Georgia's economy despite the challenges presented by COVID-19. In addition to announcing the \$2,000 final installment of the teacher pay raise and plans to restore austerity cuts to K-12 education, Governor Kemp also announced a permanent \$5,000 cost of living adjustment for full time state employees.

Following through on two of his 2018 campaign promises, the Governor endorsed legislation to create a new anti-gang unit within the Office of the Attorney General as well as legislation that would eliminate the need for a permit to conceal carry a handgun; commonly referred to as "Constitutional Carry".

The legislative session will kick into gear when they return from budget hearings for Legislative Day 5 on Monday, January 24th. This is when we expect to see more legislation filed and committee meetings to pick up a regular cadence. Note that this is the second year in the biennium, meaning legislation still alive from last legislative session can carryover and be taken back up.