



Final Legislative Update

April 5, 2023

GRA Legislative Agenda Items

Oppose Truck Size and Weight Increases: 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.

The original version of [House Bill 189](#) introduced by Representative Steven Meeks (R-Screven) this session would have allowed trucks to go up to 90,000 pounds (80,000 pounds with a 12.5 percent variance) and removed any reference to specific commodities that could use the variance, so that the heavier weight limits would apply to all large trucks.

The legislation went through a number of iterations, with the House and Senate passing different versions of the bill. With both chambers insisting on their positions on the legislation on the final day of the session, Speaker Jon Burns and Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones appointed a conference committee to resolve the chambers' differences on the bill.

A compromise was agreed upon in the Conference Committee report that was adopted by the House and Senate in the final moments of the session. This report increases the allowable weight limit from 84,000 to 88,000 pounds by increasing the variance from 5 to 10 percent for vehicles hauling agricultural and forest products. The bill also allows local law enforcement the ability to enforce weight limits on local roads; increases the monetary penalties for overweight vehicles on roads and posted bridges; and restricts vehicles receiving the higher variance from traveling outside of a 150-mile radius of the farm or point of origin, and from traveling in metro Atlanta counties designated as non-attainment areas. The bill is set to sunset July 1, 2025.

Defend the Short Line Tax Credit: Defend the 50 percent short line tax credit of \$3500 per mile that is currently in place until the end of 2026.

- There were no credible threats to the short line tax credit this session, though there exists a vocal faction of legislators, particularly among Senate Republicans, that opposes tax credits, generally.

Oppose Anti-Industry Legislation:

Two Senate Resolutions were introduced this session, which GRA opposed:

- [Senate Resolution 376](#), sponsored by Senator Randy Robertson (R-Columbus), would urge the United States Congress to pass S-576, the Railway Safety Act of 2023. The bill was assigned to the Transportation Committee for consideration but was not passed out of committee this session.
- [Senate Resolution 383](#), sponsored by Senator Rick Williams (R-Milledgeville), would create the Senate Study Committee on Railway Safety. The resolution was assigned to the Rules Committee, but it was not voted out of the committee.

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. Legislation mandating a two-man crew was introduced in the 2019 session.

- There was not any legislation introduced this session that addresses the two-man crew.

Blocked Crossings: 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. There were several bills and resolutions introduced during the 2022 session which would address train length and blocked crossings, including [House Resolution 1023](#), [House Resolution 1027](#), [House Bill 1473](#), and [House Resolution 919](#).

- There was not any legislation introduced this session that addresses blocked crossings.

Broadband Legislation: This session the House and Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 193](#), which would provide for the Department of Community Affairs to determine locations that are eligible for state or federal funding programs administered by the state for improved broadband services. The measure has been sent to Governor Kemp's desk for final approval.

Overview of General Assembly

At approximately 15 minutes after midnight on the morning of Thursday, March 30, House Speaker Jon Burns and Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones adjourned the Georgia General Assembly *Sine Die*, ending the 2023 Legislative Session. Measures that received final approval from both the House and the Senate before the General Assembly wrapped up its business on Legislative Day 40 have been sent to Governor Kemp's desk for his consideration.

The governor and his team now begin a 40-day bill review process, during which they will assess the legislation passed by the General Assembly to determine which measures Governor Kemp will sign and which measures he will veto. The deadline for the governor to sign or veto legislation this year is May 8. If the governor takes no action on a bill, the bill becomes law. Governor Kemp vetoed 14 bills after the 2019 session, four bills after the 2020 session, one bill in 2021, and three bills from the last legislative session. Governor Kemp has already vetoed one bill since the 2023 session ended, [House Bill 319](#), which would have required the Board of

Regents to get approval from the legislature before raising state university tuition and fees by more than 3 percent.

Despite the new faces in legislative leadership and the large swath of freshmen members this year, legislators hit the ground running when session convened in January. The Office of Legislative Counsel, which drafts bills for all members of the General Assembly, reported authoring north of 5,700 bills and resolutions this session. In the final legislative days of the session, House and Senate members voted on dozens of pieces of legislation, as well as a significant number of agree/disagree motions as the House and Senate worked to come to final agreements on pressing legislation. Because this is the first year of a two-year session, bills that were introduced this session but did not make it all the way across the finish line can be considered again next year without being reintroduced.

While the past several sessions have been marked by the passage of significant bipartisan measures; namely the hate crimes law in 2020, the repeal of the citizen's arrest statute in 2021, and a bipartisan effort to overhaul the state's mental healthcare system in 2022; this year's session may be better remembered for the legislation that did not ultimately pass.

Notable bills that failed to make it across the finish line this session include:

- A religious freedom, or 'RFRA' bill;
- Several bills that sought to legalize sports betting in Georgia;
- An education savings plan bill that would have given students in low-performing public schools \$6,500 for educational expenses to attend private schools or to homeschool;
- A number of tort reform measures;
- A bill that would have created the City of Buckhead City;
- A measure that would have loosened certificate of need requirements in rural areas;
- A mental healthcare reform bill, which would have followed up on the sweeping mental healthcare legislation passed last year under the leadership of the late Speaker David Ralston;
- A bill that would have defined antisemitism in Georgia Code; and
- Legislation aimed at correcting the licensing process for medical cannabis production.

This was unarguably a year of significant change under the Gold Dome, from leadership down. Though both Speaker Jon Burns and Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones have served in the legislature previously, this was the first year both men led their respective chambers.

After the passing of longtime Speaker David Ralston in the fall, House Majority Leader Jon Burns (R-Newington) was elected by his peers in the House to serve as the 75th Speaker of the Georgia State House. Former House Judiciary Chairman Chuck Efstrotation (R-Dacula) succeeded Burns as Majority Leader.

In the Senate, former state senator Burt Jones (R-Jackson) was elected by the voters to serve as Georgia's 13th Lieutenant Governor. The new leadership team in the Senate included Senator John Kennedy (R-Macon) as President Pro Tempore, Senator Jason Anavitarte (R-Dallas) as

Majority Caucus Chairman, and former Whip, Senator Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega) as Majority Leader.

Additionally, 53 new representatives and senators were sworn in in January; nearly a fifth of the legislators were freshmen this year. Several more were sworn in during the session:

- In Senate District 11, formerly represented by Dr. Dean Burke (R-Bainbridge), former House member Sam Watson (R-Moultrie) defeated two challengers with 76 percent of the vote at the end of January.
- Representative Chas Cannon (R-Moultrie), who won the House seat vacated by Sam Watson, was sworn in as a member of the House on February 6.
- Representative Holt Persinger (R-Winder) was sworn into office on March 6, which was also Crossover Day. Persinger won the runoff to fill the seat of former House Appropriations Chairman Terry England, which was vacated by Representative-Elect Danny Rampey before session.
- Representative Johnny Chastain (R-Blue Ridge) was sworn into office on February 6 after defeating the Speaker's widow Sheree Ralston in a special election runoff to fill the seat of the late Speaker David Ralston.

Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

Just minutes before midnight on Legislative Day 40, the House took up [House Bill 19](#), the Fiscal Year 2024 budget, agreeing to the conference committee report by a vote of 170 to 3. The Senate almost unanimously approved the final version of the budget earlier in the day. The passage of a balanced state budget is the only constitutionally mandated action item for legislators each session. The final agreed upon \$32.4 billion budget includes pay increases for law enforcement between \$4,000 and \$6,000; \$2,000 pay raises for K-12 teachers and university employees; and fully funds the HOPE Scholarship, granting 100% tuition to eligible students. The University System of Georgia ended up with a \$66 million cut, and Georgia Public Broadcasting lost approximately 10 percent of its funding in the final version of the budget. Unlike other pieces of legislation, Governor Kemp has line-item veto power on the budget.

Governor Kemp's Legislative Priorities

- Refund to taxpayers
 - [House Bill 162](#), carried by Representative Lauren McDonald (R-Cumming), provides for a special state income tax refund for Georgians who filed returns in 2021 and 2022. Governor Kemp signed the measure into law on March 15 after signing the Amended Fiscal Year 2023 budget on March 10, which accounted for the special refund, with over \$1 billion in surplus funds earmarked to go back to taxpayers. The Senate passed the measure 46 to 7 with several weeks left in the session. After the Amended Fiscal Year 2023 budget (House Bill 18), this became the second bill signed by Governor Kemp this year.
- Fighting gang violence
 - [Senate Bill 44](#) by Governor's Floor Leader Bo Hatchett (R-Cornelia) imposes mandatory minimum sentences for violations of the Street Gang Terrorism and

Prevention Act—those convicted of recruiting individuals into a gang would be required to serve five to twenty years in prison on top of sentences for other gang-related crimes, and at least ten years in prison for those convicted of recruiting minors into a gang. The House passed a substitute version of the measure, and on Legislative Day 40, the Senate agreed to changes made to the bill by the House, sending the measure to the governor’s desk for final approval.

- Expanding eligibility for TANF benefits to pregnant women
 - [House Bill 129](#), sponsored by freshman Governor’s Floor Leader Soo Hong (R-Lawrenceville) this session, expands Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits to pregnant women. The measure was approved by both the House and Senate this session.
- Fighting human trafficking
 - [Senate Bill 42](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Hodges (R-Brunswick), increases the fines for businesses that fail to comply with model notice requirements for the human trafficking hotline. The measure was approved by both chambers of the legislature this session.
- Addressing challenges facing minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses
 - [House Bill 128](#), sponsored by Representative Soo Hong (R-Lawrenceville), seeks to increase the representation of businesses owned by minorities, women, and veterans in the procurement of state contracts for construction, services, equipment, and goods. The bill, which was sponsored by Senator Mike Hodges (R-Brunswick), passed both chambers with overwhelming support.
- Keeping classrooms safe
 - [House Bill 147](#), or the ‘Safe Schools Act,’ carried by Representative Will Wade (R-Dawsonville), requires school safety plans to be submitted to the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA); requires intruder alert drills for all public schools; provides for a school safety and anti-gang endorsement for eligible certificated professional personnel issued by the Professional Standards Commission. The measure was approved by both the House and Senate this session.
- State Healthcare Exchange
 - [Senate Bill 65](#), sponsored by House Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Ben Watson (R-Savannah), grants the Office of Commissioner of Insurance and Safety Fire authority to establish and operate a State-based Exchange (SBE). Upon enactment of the bill, the State intends to transition its healthcare marketplace off the federal platform to the Georgia Access Exchange for Open Enrollment 2024. The measure was approved by the House and Senate this session and awaits Governor Kemp’s signature.
- Peace Officers Service Loan Repayment Program
 - [House Bill 130](#), by Representative Matthew Gambill (R-Cartersville), would provide student loan repayment of up to \$20,000 for peace officers, subject to appropriations by the General Assembly. The bill passed the House unanimously earlier this session. It was slated for a floor vote on Legislative Day 39, but it was

tabled and not brought back up before the legislature adjourned for the session. The measure is still eligible for passage when the General Assembly reconvenes in January 2024.

- The measure was also dropped in the Senate this session. [Senate Bill 237](#), sponsored by Senator Bo Hatchett (R-Cornelia), would also provide student loan repayment of up to \$20,000 for peace officers. The measure passed the Senate ahead of the Crossover Day deadline earlier this session but was not passed by the House Public Safety Committee. Like the House bill, this measure is still eligible for passage next session.

Certificate of Need Legislation

Two notable Senate bills this session sought to amend Georgia's certificate of need (CON) laws.

[Senate Bill 99](#), sponsored by Senator Greg Dolezal (R-Cumming), would amend Georgia's certificate of need law by providing an exemption from CON requirements for acute care hospitals established in rural counties with populations less than 50,000 that meet certain criteria. The bill, which was a legislative priority for Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones, passed the Senate 42 to 13, but was not passed by the House.

[Senate Bill 162](#), sponsored by Health and Human Services Chairman Ben Watson (R-Savannah), was described in committee as a "total revamp of CON." The original version of Senator Watson's bill did away with certificate of need entirely. The version of the bill passed by the Regulated Industries Committee would replace the certificate of need with a special healthcare services license. The bill was never considered on the Senate floor this session.

The CON debate is far from over and is expected to continue in the interim. The House and Senate passed separate resolutions to create off-session study committees to more closely examine certificate of need reform. [House Resolution 603](#) by House Public Health Committee Chairman Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) creates the House Study Committee on Certificate of Need Modernization. [Senate Resolution 279](#), sponsored by Senator Greg Dolezal, creates the Senate Study Committee on Certificate of Need Reform.

Tort Reform

There were a number of tort reform bills in play this session that were widely supported by the business community, most of them on the Senate side. Most of the bills were either voted down or tabled and not brought back up for a floor vote, presumably because they did not have the votes to pass. However, language from one of the bills relating to the Apex Doctrine was added on to Senate Bill 74 late in the legislative process.

- [Senate Bill 200](#), sponsored by Senator Bill Cowsert (R-Athens), would codify the Apex Doctrine, which provides for a trial court to prevent or limit a deposition if the high-ranking officer has no unique, personal knowledge of relevant facts of the case. This is an issue that has garnered the attention and support of many CEOs and C-suite members. The bill was tabled in the Senate on Crossover Day and was not brought back up for a floor vote.

- A similar measure, [House Bill 530](#), was the sole piece of tort reform legislation to pass out of one chamber this session. The bill, which was sponsored by Representative James Burchett (R-Waycross), passed the House 156 to 8, but it stalled in the Senate in the final days of the session. However, provisions from the bill were added onto [Senate Bill 74](#) late in the legislative process. The final version of Senate Bill 74 passed by the House and Senate seeks to create a process by which high-level corporate officers can petition a court to show that a requested deposition is unnecessary or overly burdensome. It is incumbent upon the officer to show that he or she lacks relevant personal knowledge of the subject matter involved in the pending litigation, at which point a judge may protect the officer from deposition or may limit the deposition.
- [Senate Bill 196](#) by Senator Ben Watson (R-Savannah) would allow for evidence of seat belt nonuse or use to be considered by the jury in a car accident case. The measure failed on the Senate floor by a vote of 24 to 30.
- [Senate Bill 191](#), sponsored by Senator Shawn Still (R-Norcross), would take away the ability for plaintiffs to join motor carrier and insurance companies in the same action. The bill was tabled in the Senate ahead of Crossover Day and not brought back up for a vote.
- [Senate Bill 203](#), sponsored by Senator Jason Anavitarte (R-Dallas) is entitled the “Trucking Opportunity Act of 2023.” The original version of the bill would have repealed a provision that allows for lawsuits to be brought against motor carriers and their insurance companies as co-defendants. However, the measure was amended on the Senate floor on Crossover Day, stripping the tort reform provisions from the bill. The version of the bill that the Senate passed would provide tuition-free commercial truck training to veterans. The measure was never passed out of its assigned House committee this session.
- [Senate Bill 186](#), sponsored by Senator Greg Dolezal (R-Cumming) would revise current standards for landowners found liable for certain incidents taking place involving third party criminals. The measure was tabled in the Senate ahead of Crossover Day and was not brought back up for a floor vote.

Sports Betting

There were a number of bills introduced this session that sought to legalize sports betting in Georgia. A great deal of the discussion around sports betting this year was related to whether legalizing sports betting would require a constitutional amendment. Early in the session, former Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Harold Melton authored a legal opinion stating that “sports betting can be legalized as a state-run lottery for educational purposes solely through legislative action,” meaning that a constitutional amendment would not be required. Currently, under Georgia’s constitution, gambling is not authorized, with the exception of the Georgia Lottery. Proponents of sports betting sought to place it under the purview of the Georgia Lottery to legalize it without having to amend Georgia’s constitution. Amending the state constitution requires two-third approval of both chambers of legislature, and then a majority of voters to approve as well.

While prospects looked good for sports betting heading into the session, the bills which would have legalized it were either voted down or not called up for a vote this session.

- [House Bill 380](#), by Representative Marcus Wiedower (R-Watkinsville), would legalize sports betting and place it under the purview of the Georgia Lottery. The measure was never called up on the House floor for a vote ahead of the Crossover Day deadline. In a last ditch effort to get the bill across the finish line, Senate Economic Development Committee Chairman Brandon Beach stripped the language from [House Bill 237](#) and replaced it with language that would legalize sports betting. Provisions of the original bill, sponsored by Representative Leesa Hagan (R-Lyons), would designate the Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby as the official soap box derby of the State of Georgia. Ultimately, the bill was never called up for a vote on the Senate floor in the final days of the session.
- [Senate Bill 57](#) by Senator Billy Hickman (R-Statesboro) would allow sports betting as well as fixed-odds betting on horseracing in Georgia under the Georgia Lottery. The measure failed on the Senate floor 19 to 37.
- Senator Bill Cowser's (R-Athens) [Senate Bill 172](#) and [Senate Resolution 140](#) proposed amending Georgia's constitution to allow sports betting. Although the vote on the Senate resolution was 30 to 26, it required two-thirds approval of the chamber to move forward because it sought to amend Georgia's constitution. After Senate Resolution 140 failed on the floor, the corresponding Senate bill was tabled.
- [House Resolution 210](#) by Minority Leader James Beverley (D-Macon) proposed a constitutional amendment to authorize sports betting, pari-mutuel betting, and casino gambling in Georgia. The measure was never considered by the Regulated Industries Committee.

Transgender Legislation

One of the most contentious bills this session has already been signed into law by Governor Kemp. [Senate Bill 140](#), sponsored by Senator Carden Summers (R-Cordele), prohibits doctors from performing sex change operations or providing certain hormones like estrogen and testosterone to minors with gender dysphoria.

On the House side, the Public Health Committee added language to the bill that would hold physicians and health care practitioners civilly liable or criminally responsible for damages, injury, death, or loss related to gender reassignment surgeries or therapies. After passing the House 96 to 75, the measure had to go back to the Senate for final approval due to the changes made. After a lengthy floor debate in the final full week of the session, the Senate voted 31 to 21 to agree to the House version of the measure, sending it to Governor Kemp's desk. Governor Kemp signed the bill into law; it goes into effect July 1.

Georgia Promise Scholarship Act

[Senate Bill 233](#), sponsored this session by Senator Greg Dolezal (R-Cumming), would establish a state-funded \$6,500 promise scholarship to be used towards qualified education expenses for each participating Georgia student. Students attending public schools in the lower quartile of

academic performance statewide would be eligible for the scholarship. Further, the legislation would prohibit the parents or legal guardians from having direct access to their child's funds to prevent the misallocation of these funds for non-educational expenses. Governor Kemp weighed in on the issue in the final days of the session, expressing his support for the measure. After passing the Senate along party lines earlier this session, the House took the measure up on Legislative Day 40. The bill fell a few votes short of passing, with 85 representatives voting for the measure and 89, including 16 Republicans, voting against it.

Mental Health Reform

After the passage of sweeping mental healthcare legislation last session under the leadership of the late Speaker David Ralston, this session the House announced another comprehensive mental healthcare reform bill, [House Bill 520](#). The bill was sponsored by Representatives Todd Jones (R-South Forsyth) and Mary Margaret Oliver (D-Decatur), who carried last year's mental health reform bill, along with Majority Leader Chuck Efstoration (R-Dacula), Minority Leader James Beverly (D-Macon), Public Health Committee Chairman Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta), and Special Committee on Healthcare Chairman Butch Parrish (R-Swainsboro).

The nearly 50-page bill would expand Georgia's loan forgiveness program for mental health care providers; create new authorities for sharing and collecting data; define "serious mental illness;" and include a funding mechanism to allow the legislature to appropriate funds in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget for crisis services in Fulton, Laurens, and Muscogee counties.

The measure was approved by the House 163 to 3 but got caught up in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill will still be eligible for consideration next year.

Election Legislation

On Legislative Day 40, [Senate Bill 222](#) by Senator Max Burns (R-Sylvania) received final passage and was sent to Governor Kemp's desk. The measure ensures that all costs and expenses relating to election administration are paid for with lawfully appropriate public funds and prohibits certain local governments and individuals from soliciting or accepting donations or other things of value to support election administration. The bill requires that any grants or donations to county boards to be directed to and allocated through the State Board of Elections, which will decide how best to allocate the funds.

Prosecutor Oversight

[Senate Bill 92](#), sponsored by Senator Randy Robertson (R-Columbus), creates the Prosecuting Attorneys Oversight Commission. The legislation, which is similar to language considered by the General Assembly in past sessions, creates an oversight commission to hold prosecutors accountable. Prosecutors who display willful misconduct in office, persistently fail to perform the duties of their office, are personally convicted of a crime of moral turpitude, or who display conduct that brings the office in disrepute would be subject to review by the commission, including possible removal from office. The commission would be appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House, and Senate Committee on Assignments. The legislation also codifies that one of the duties of a district attorney is to review every individual

case for which there is probable cause for prosecution and to make a prosecutorial decision under the law based on the circumstances of the case. Representatives Houston Gaines (R-Athens) and Joseph Gullett (R-Dallas) had related bills on the House side. The Senate agreed to changes made to the bill by the House.

Early Literacy Legislation

[Senate Bill 211](#), which was sponsored this session by Senator Billy Hickman (R-Statesboro), creates the Georgia Council on Literacy, which will be responsible for conducting comprehensive reviews of educational programs and other issues related to improving the literacy outcomes in Georgia and to make recommendations for legislation and appropriations. The council's 30 members will be appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker.

[House Bill 538](#), sponsored this session by freshman Representative Bethany Ballard (R-Warner Robbins), would require the Department of Early Care and Learning to provide for evidence-based literacy instructing training requirements for certain teachers. The "Georgia Early Literacy Act" would also require the State Board of Education to establish a uniform standard for measuring literacy, approve high-quality instructional materials for students, and establish universal reading screeners for children in public schools from kindergarten to third grade.

Both bipartisan pieces of legislation were passed by the House and Senate and are currently being reviewed by Governor Kemp and his policy team.

TikTok Ban

On Legislative Day 39, the Georgia General Assembly gave final approval to legislation that identifies and prohibits social media applications from foreign adversaries on state owned devices. [Senate Bill 93](#), sponsored by Senate Majority Caucus Chairman Jason Anavitarte (R-Dallas), prohibits TikTok, Telegram, WeChat, and other national security software threats on state owned computers and devices, including those belonging to the legislative and judicial branches and K-12 schools in Georgia.

Study Committees and Working Groups

This session Speaker Jon Burns and Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones joined Governor Kemp to announce that the General Assembly would be undertaking a thorough review of all Georgia tax credits, including Georgia's film tax credit, later this year. According to a joint press release from the Speaker and Lieutenant Governor, the "review is meant to support Georgia businesses while ensuring a significant return on investment for Georgia's taxpayers."

The review process will take place in the interim between the 2023 and 2024 sessions of the Georgia General Assembly so that any legislative changes which may be proposed could be considered during the 2024 session. The House and Senate will work with the Governor's Office

of Planning and Budget, the Georgia Department of Economic Development, and the Georgia Department of Revenue, as well as industry stakeholders throughout the process.

In addition to the tax credit review panel and the certificate of need review study committees created by the House and Senate, Speaker Jon Burns and Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones have announced the creation of additional study committees and working groups to examine specific policy areas more closely before the General Assembly reconvenes in 2024.

[House Resolution 488](#), which was approved by the House in the final days of the legislative session, reestablishes the House Rural Development Council beginning May 1, 2023. The 15-member council will be selected by the Speaker and will be tasked with identifying policies and ideas to enhance economic opportunities across the entire state, particularly in rural areas. The two-year council will be abolished at the end of 2024.

Speaker Burns also announced he has established two bipartisan working groups in the House of Representatives, the House Working Group on Early Childhood Education and the House Working Group on Public Safety. These working groups will work over the interim between the 2023 and 2024 legislative sessions to advance specific policy priorities. The House Working Group on Early Childhood Education, which will be chaired by Speaker Pro Tempore Jan Jones (R-Milton), will focus on policies to expand access to pre-Kindergarten education in Georgia as well as improve its effectiveness. The House Working Group on Public Safety, which will be chaired by Representative Bill Hitchens (R-Rincon), will focus on policies to recruit, retain, and reward state law enforcement officers with a particular focus on increasing the number of Georgia State Patrol Troopers.

On the Senate side, Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones announced the creation of several priority Senate Study Committees in addition to the CON Study Committee, which will expand the critical work on his 2023 legislative priorities:

- The Senate Occupational Licensing Study Committee, created by [Senate Resolution 85](#) sponsored by Senator Larry Walker (R-Perry), which will address Georgia's current occupational licensing laws and requirements;
- The Senate Study Committee on Expanding Georgia's Workforce, created by [Senate Resolution 275](#) sponsored by Senator John Albers (R-Roswell), which will examine current practices, pilot programs, private-public partnerships, and initiatives by industries across Georgia to increase workforce opportunities; and
- The Senate Study Committee on Foster Care and Adoption, created by [Senate Resolution 282](#) by Senator Kay Kirkpatrick (R-Marietta), which will review current guidelines and processes related to foster care and adoption.