



2025 Week 10 Legislative Update

This week members of the General Assembly were in session Tuesday, Thursday and Friday for Legislative Days 32 through 34, and Wednesday served as a committee workday. This week was one of the busiest for committee work, with House and Senate committees convening as early as 6 AM and working late into the evening. This week legislators considered everything from a measure to make Brunswick stew the official stew of Georgia to Governor Kemp's tort reform legislation.

Lawmakers are quickly running out of time to get their bills across the finish line. Next week the legislature is back in session Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday for Legislative Days 35 through 37, and Wednesday will once again serve as a committee workday. The following week is the final week of session—*Sine Die* is set for Friday, April 4. Any measure that successfully makes it through both chambers by the time the legislature gavels out for the year will be sent to Governor Kemp's desk for consideration. The governor and his team then have a 40-day bill review period to determine which bills he will sign into law, and which bills he will veto.

Tort Reform

The biggest news under the Gold Dome this week was the passage of Governor Kemp's top legislative priority, tort reform. On Wednesday the House Rules Subcommittee on Lawsuit Reform held another meeting on [Senate Bill 68](#), the more comprehensive of two tort reform bills that are part of Governor Kemp's legislative package. The subcommittee, chaired by Representative Rob Leverett (R-Elberton), has met several times to hear testimony on each section of the bill. On Wednesday, the bill's sponsor, President Pro Tempore John Kennedy (R-Macon) reviewed major provisions of the bill and pushed back on claims made by opponents of the bill, including the claim that Senate Bill 68 would prevent sex trafficking victims from being able to recover damages.

During Wednesday's subcommittee meeting, Representative Stacey Evans (D-Atlanta) introduced a series of amendments that would have substantially changed major provisions of the bill. The Evans amendment failed in subcommittee. Subcommittee Chairman Rob Leverett also introduced a series of minor amendments in Wednesday's meeting that were the product of negotiations by interested parties on both sides of the issue, including, but not limited to,

allowing the court to determine if whether someone was wearing his or her seatbelt in a car accident is relevant to a case; clarifying an exception for sex trafficking victims under the premises liability section; ensuring bifurcated trials are held back to back and with the same judge; and creating an exception for trial bifurcation if the case involves a minor suing for a sexual offense, or if the amount in controversy is less than \$150,000.

Senate Bill 68 passed out of subcommittee with Representative Leverett's amendment, and the full Rules Committee convened later Wednesday afternoon to consider the measure. The Rules Committee passed the measure, and on Thursday, the House considered it on the floor, where it was carried by Majority Caucus Whip James Burchett (R-Waycross). Supporters and opponents of the bill were each allotted 30 minutes of floor debate, and Minority Caucus Chairman Tanya Miller (D-Atlanta) and Representative Stacey Evans (D-Atlanta) gave the minority report.

The House passed the measure by a razor-thin margin of 91 to 82. The vote was mostly along party lines, but three Democrats voted for the measure, eight Republicans voted against it, and several members were excused for the vote. The House then voted to immediately transmit the measure to the Senate so that members from the upper chamber could consider the changes made to the bill by the House.

On the Senate floor on Friday, Senator Elena Parent (D-Atlanta) introduced a floor amendment that would have made major changes to the bill, but the amendment failed 22 to 32. The Senate voted 34 to 21 to agree to the House's version of Senate Bill 68, which President Pro Tempore Kennedy noted in his floor speech was "largely similar" to version already passed by the Senate. Like the Senate's original vote on the bill, the vote was largely along party lines, with one Democrat voting for the bill and one Republican voting against it. The bill is now on its way to Governor Kemp's desk.

[Senate Bill 69](#), the 'Georgia Courts Access and Consumer Protection Act,' which would regulate third-party litigation financing practices in the state, will receive its first hearing in the Rules Subcommittee on Lawsuit Reform on Tuesday. The measure was unanimously approved by the Senate last month.

Social Issues

On Wednesday the House Judiciary Committee took up [Senate Bill 36](#), the 'Georgia Religious Freedom Restoration Act,' or 'RFRA,' by Senator Ed Setzler (R-Acworth). The legislation, which includes 33 Republican cosigners, would restrict state and local governments from burdening a person's exercise of religion, even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability. The bill includes language from the federal RFRA law that does not currently apply at the state or local levels. A similar bill by Senator Setzler was passed by the Senate last session, but it did not make it out of the House for final passage.

Several amendments offered by committee members during the hearing were voted down. An amendment that was recommended by the Georgia Municipal Association that was approved

was the addition of an *ante litem* notice, which would provide local governments with notice that a person intends to file a lawsuit, which would provide the governmental entity the opportunity to investigate and potentially resolve the claim before the lawsuit is filed.

After four hours of debate in the House Judiciary Committee, the bill failed 5 to 7 with two Republicans voting with Democrats against the measure. The bill is still eligible for another vote in committee.

The Senate Judiciary Committee has created a special subcommittee to look at [House Bill 267](#), the 'Riley Gaines Act.' The subcommittee convened on Wednesday afternoon for Representative Josh Bonner (R-Fayetteville) to present the bill. The measure would prohibit biological males from competing on sports teams designated for girls and women at every level. Separate changing facilities, bathrooms and locker rooms would be required for athletic events, and athletic scholarships designated for women could not be awarded to biological males. References to 'gender' in the Code would be changed to 'sex' under the legislation. Private schools that compete against public schools would also be required to adhere to the standards set forth in the bill. The measure received a hearing only in subcommittee this week.

Several other social-related measures are still pending, including Senator Ben Watson's (R-Savannah) [Senate Bill 30](#), which would prohibit the prescription and administration of certain medical procedures and treatments for minors related to gender dysphoria, and [Senate Bill 39](#) by Senator Blake Tillery (R-Vidalia), which would specifically prohibit the coverage of expenses associated with gender-affirming care under the State Health Benefit Plan or with the use of any state funds.

Government Efficiency

On Wednesday the House Budget and Fiscal Affairs Oversight Committee considered [Senate Bill 28](#), the 'Red Tape Rollback Act of 2025,' by Senator Greg Dolezal (R-Cumming). The legislation, which is a priority for Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones, would require all state agencies to complete a top-to-bottom review of all agency rules and regulations every four years. Agencies would be required to account for the economic impact of all proposed rules and provide economic reports to the General Assembly when major rules are proposed that would cost individuals, businesses, and/or local governments more than \$3 million over five years. State agencies would also be directed to reduce compliance and paperwork burdens on small businesses, when feasible. Under the measure, the governor, lieutenant governor, and legislators would also have the ability to request a "Small Business Impact Analysis" for pending legislation. The measure was passed by the House Budget and Fiscal Affairs Oversight Committee with several minor amendments and must next be selected by the House Rules Committee for a vote on the floor.

The Budget and Fiscal Affairs Oversight Committee also passed [Senate Bill 46](#), the 'Government Serves the People Act.' The measure by Senator Marty Harbin (R-Tyrone) seeks to improve government service delivery by creating a new position within the Georgia Technology

Authority called the State of Georgia Government Service Delivery Lead, who would be responsible for coordinating government-wide efforts to improve service delivery. Each agency head would also be required to appoint a lead agency service delivery official who would be responsible for implementing service delivery improvements within their agency.

Tax Relief

On Thursday the Senate considered [House Bill 111](#) on the floor. The measure, which is a priority for Governor Kemp, would accelerate the reduction in the state income tax from 5.39 percent to 5.19 percent for 2025. As part of previously passed legislation, the income tax rate will decrease 0.1 percent each year until it reaches 4.99 percent. The measure passed the Senate by a vote of 30 to 23 and is now on its way to Governor Kemp's desk for his signature.

The Senate also took up [House Bill 112](#) on Thursday, which would provide for a one-time tax credit for all Georgia taxpayers who filed returns in 2023 and 2024. Under the bill, which is also a priority for Governor Kemp, single taxpayers would receive \$250, married taxpayers filing jointly would receive \$500, and taxpayers filing as heads of household would receive a \$375 tax rebate. The measure was passed by the Senate unanimously and is on its way to Governor Kemp's desk.

School Safety

On Tuesday the House Education Committee took up [Senate Bill 17](#) by Senator Jason Anavitarte (R-Dallas), 'Ricky and Alyssa's Law.' The measure would require mobile panic alert systems in all Georgia schools and would require accurate mapping of school facilities that can be shared with law enforcement for improved emergency response. After several members of the Education Committee expressed concerns about the inclusion of private schools in the law despite the fact that private schools do not receive state funding, Representative Matt Dubnik (R-Gainesville) introduced an amendment that would exempt private schools from the provisions of the bill. The measure passed the Education Committee as amended. Next it must be selected by the House Rules Committee to receive a floor vote.

Several other school safety bills are still pending, including Representative Holt Persinger's (R-Winder) comprehensive school safety legislation, [House Bill 268](#). The measure, which is a priority for Speaker Jon Burns, has been assigned to the Senate Judiciary Committee but has not yet received a hearing.

Labor Commissioner

On Tuesday Governor Kemp announced his appointment of Bárbara Rivera Holmes as the next Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Labor. Joined by her family and supporters, she will be sworn into office on April 4th and serve the remainder of the term won by Bruce Thompson in 2022, who sadly passed away from cancer last November.

Bárbara Rivera Holmes is president and CEO of the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce and the Albany Area Chamber Foundation.