



Thursday, March 1, marked the Day 27 of the 40-day legislative session. The General Assembly can choose to sine die anytime before Day 40. The Senate and House have agreed to recess for two weeks in the hope that the U.S. Congress will appropriate funds to assist a number of states, including Georgia, to meet the needs of the children's health insurance programs. In Georgia the program is known as PeachCare. Legislative committees will continue to meet to work on bills.

The Grandparents Bill Overwhelmingly Passes Senate

On February 28 grandparents rallied outside the Capitol encouraging the passage of **SB 88**. Grandparents were pleasantly surprised when the bill appeared on the Senate calendar March 1. A number of grandparent advocates rushed to the Capitol to witness the debate.

SB 88, the Care of a Grandchild Act and Grandchildren's Caregiver Subsidy Act sponsored by Senator Renee Unterman, passed the Senate on Thursday, March 1 with only one dissenting vote. The bill creates a power of attorney (POA) from parent to grandparent for the care of a grandchild when a hardship exists and establishes a caregiver subsidy to eligible, low-income grandparents raising grandchildren. Sen. Unterman presented the bill stating that it is pro-families, helping children who are already in crisis situations stay with family rather than adding to the trauma by placement in foster care.

After describing the bill, Sen. Unterman fielded questions including explaining that if parents are married or if not married but share legal custody, both parents must sign the POA. Further, she addressed the concern that grandparents ended up with their grandchildren because the grandparents had not raised their children to make good choices and so may not be suitable for raising their grandchildren. Sen. Unterman related that as grandparents grow older they learn how to raise children differently. For those requesting the subsidy, the grandparents and grandchildren must participate in a kinship care program, providing support and monitoring of the families to assure adequate care for the grandchildren. Sen. Unterman remarked that as a lawmaker she feels a responsibility to help take care of children and this bill is a step in the right direction. She said grandparents have become the safety net for keeping families together.

Sen. Emanuel Jones took the well to support the bill stating that his grandparents raised him. He also noted that he is on the board of the Project Healthy Grandparents program at Georgia State University and that over 400 families participate in that program. Sen. Valencia Seay then took the well to urge support for SB 88. She commended the grandparents who have advocated on behalf of the bill especially the Kinship Care Program at the Clayton County Resource Center in her district, which is a state demonstration site. Sen. Seay remarked that parents often raise more than one child and sometimes those children as adults make poor choices. The grandparent should not be presumed to be unsuitable for raising their grandchildren because parents make bad decisions. The bill passed 55 to 1 and now heads to the House.

CO-AGE Priority to Increase Membership of Composite State Board of Medical Examiners Passes House Health and Human Services Committee

On March 1, **HB 492** (Rep. Mike Keown, 173rd) passed the House Health and Human Services Committee. The bill increases the Composite State Board of Medical Examiners (CSBME) membership by one doctor and one consumer. Rep. Keown presented the bill and said that he had worked with the CSBME to add another doctor to help with the workload as well as to add another consumer. The bill heads to House Rules and hopefully to the House floor for debate and passage.

Adult Day Center Fee Bill Passes Committee

HB 505 (Rep. Mark Butler, 18th) passed the House Human Relations and Aging Committee February 27. The bill authorizes the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to charge fees relating to the licensure of adult day centers. Advocates have been requesting an appropriation of \$400,000 to support adult day center licensure and are hopeful that funding would be included in the state budget if this bill passed. Rep. Butler presented the bill to the committee that passed it overwhelmingly. The bill now heads to the Rules Committee to be added to the House calendar.

Supplemental SFY '07 & SFY '08 Budgets Moving Slowly

Although there were no DHR budget hearings during the week of February 28, the House Appropriations Human Resources Subcommittee has been working diligently to ensure the DHR portions of the SFY '07 and SFY '08 budgets are complete. A hearing is scheduled for Tuesday March 6 to vote on the final recommendations for SFY '07 supplemental budget. Over the next two weeks while the General Assembly is in recess, the subcommittee will continue to work on the SFY '08 budget. Please continue to speak with the members of the House Appropriations Human Resources Subcommittee and ask that they fund CO-AGE's priorities of \$3 million for CCSP, \$4 million for HCBS, \$400,000 for the licensure of Adult Day Centers, and \$7,789,000 to provide 1,500 children in grandparent care with financial assistance equal to 80% of that received by foster children.

The following list of 2008 budgetary items affects Georgia's elderly: Department of Human Resources

Program	Governor's FY'08 Budget
CCSP funding for eligible elderly clients that will provide services to enable them to continue to live at home	\$2,079,800
1,000 new slots in the Non-Medicaid Home and Community Based Services Program (HCBS)	\$2,700,000
Redirect \$1,300,000 in federal funds to provide for increased services in the Grandfamilies sub-program	Yes

House Appropriations Human Resources Subcommittee Members

Mark Butler, Chairman	404-656-0305	Jeff May, Secretary	404-656-5105
Judy Manning	404-656-7857	Earl "Buddy" Carter	404-656-0213
Keith Heard	404-656-0220	Lyn Walker	404-656-5139
Jerry Keen	404-656-5052	Bobby Reece	404-656-0254
Stan Watson	404-656-0220	Larry O'Neal-Ex Officio	404-656-5103
Chuck Sims- Ex Officio	404-656-0287	Richard Royal- Ex Officio	404-656-0265
Penny Houston- Ex Officio	404-656-0202		

Senior Week at the Capitol

HR 457 (Rep. Len Walker) and **SR 352** (Sen. Renee Unterman) acknowledged the contributions of senior Georgians and established the week of February 26 -March 4, 2007 as "Senior Week" at the Capitol. The theme for this year was 'Working Together for a Better Life.' Seniors from across the state took part in the legislative updates on the CO-AGE priorities and advocated for the priorities, as they met and took pictures with their legislators and Governor Perdue. The event, sponsored by the Georgia Council on Aging, included various aging organizations providing displays in the south end of the capitol. Senior Week is held every year at the Capitol to encourage seniors to advocate with their state elected officials at the Capitol.

HR 463 (Rep. Roberts, 154th) and **SR 366** (Sen. Carter, 13th) recognized Ms. Louise Hancock from Ocilla as a 2007 Distinguished Older Georgian. **HR 453** (Rep. Jones, 44th) and **SR 351** (Sen. Tate, 38th) recognized Mr. Hiram A. Little as the other 2007 Distinguished Older Georgian. The General Assembly website includes the resolutions for each honoree detailing the outstanding contributions made to their respective communities by Ms. Hancock, a well-loved citizen of Ocilla and Mr. Little, one of the original Tuskegee Airmen.

CO-AGE Legislation Sponsors

HB 108 (Keown, 173rd) Patient Right to Participate Act. Permits a patient who files a complaint against a physician concerning the patient's care to participate in the complaint resolution process. H H&HS

HB 492 (Keown, 173rd) Increase the doctor and consumer membership of the Composite State Board of Medical Examiners. Passed H-H&HS 3/1/07.

HB 505 (Butler, 18th) Authorizes the Department of Human Resources to charge fees for licensing adult day centers. Passed H-HR & A 2/27/07.

SB 88 (Unterman, 45th) Care of a Grandchild Act; provides power of attorney and subsidy to certain grandparents raising grandchildren. Passed Senate 3/1/07.

Bills of Interest

The following bills may have an impact on seniors:

Budget

HB 94 (Richardson, 19th) Appropriations amending budget for SFY '07, known as the "General Appropriations Act". H Apps.

HB 95 (Richardson, 19th) Appropriations for SFY '08. H Apps.

Health

SB 153 (Hill, 32nd) Provides for consumer driven health insurance plans to include wellness and health promotion programs. Passed S I & L. Recommitted 2/28/07

SB 204 (Thomas, 54th) Relates to the board for distribution and delivery of dead bodies. S. H&HS.

SB 205 (Thomas, 54th) Enacts the "Prescription Medication Integrity Act"; providing for pedigrees for prescription drugs and contingent effectiveness. Assigned to S. H&HS.

HB 461 (Sheldon, 105th) Requires the privatization of one or more state facilities for the treatment of mental illness. H. H&HS.

HB 514 (Butler, 18th) Creates a State Commission on Government Health Services Reform; including composition, powers and duties. Passed H. H&HS 3/1/07.

HB 535 (Butler, 18th) Creates a patient advocacy board and a Patient Advocate General to investigate fatalities and allegations of abuse, neglect, or improper treatment in facilities operated by, subject to certification by, or under contact with the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Addictive Diseases. Passed H.H&HS 3/1/07.

HB 551 (Lindsey, 54th) Creates the "State False Medicaid Claims Act". H. Judy.

HB 556 (Benton, 31st) Relates to dispensing prescription drugs requiring a practitioner to have the practitioner's name printed below his or her signature. H. Judy Non-civil.

HB 557 (Heckstall, 62nd) Provides that applicants for medical assistance born prior to December 31, 1919, shall not be required to have a birth certificate as proof of identification for purposes of eligibility for medical assistance. H. H&HS.

HB 568 (Golick, 34th) Enacts the "Health Care Competition, Transparency and Improvement Act" extensively revising the certificate of need program. H. SCOCON.

HB 581 (Channell, 116th) Extensively revises the certificate of need process. H. SCCON.

HB 589 (Butler, 18th) Provides requirements relating to circulating nurses for surgical services performed in a hospital or ambulatory surgical center. H. H&HS.

HB 626 (Graves, 12th) Provides for a maximum number of continuing education hours retired doctors providing uncompensated health care services must complete. H. H&HS.

HB 628 (Sheldon, 105th) Provides for health care data regarding acquired infections and adverse incidents to be made available to consumers on a website provided by the Department of Community Health. H. H&HS.

HR 350 (Harbin, 118th) Creates the Joint Study Committee on the State Health System. Passed H-H&HS 3/1/07.

Finances

HB 562 (Dollar, 45th) Contains definitions relative to fair lending, so as to add a definition for temporary loan. H. B&B.

HB 564 (Dollar, 45th) Relates to deposit account fraud. H. Judy NC.

HB 567 (Dollar, 45th) Relates to unfair or deceptive practices in consumer transactions related to rebates. H. A&CA.

Other

HB 532 (Everson 106th) Provides that a court may award a share of the estate of a decedent who was mentally disabled at the time of his or her death to a legal guardian or a de facto guardian. H Judy.

General Assembly's Schedule

HR 473 which sets the calendar up to the 37th legislative day.

Beginning March 2 in recess to work with Congress on Peachcare and other bills in committees

March 19 (Monday)	in session for day 28
March 20 (Tuesday)	in session for day 29
March 27 (Tuesday)	in session for day 30 (Crossover day)
March 28 (Wednesday)	in session for day 31
March 29 (Thursday)	in session for day 32
March 30 (Friday)	in session for day 33
April 1-April 6	take week off for spring break
April 10 (Tuesday)	in session for day 34
April 11 (Wednesday)	in session for day 35
April 12 (Thursday)	in session for day 36
April 17 (Tuesday)	in session for day 37

Information about specific legislation: Georgia Council on Aging (404)657-5343. Bills and information about the General Assembly: www.state.ga.us/services/leg. Copies of bills: House Clerk's office (404)656-5015.