



Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence 2017 General Assembly - Legislative Report March 24, 2017

- The 2017 General Assembly convened on January 9. This is the first year of a two-year session. The Legislature adopted a schedule which ends the session at 40 days on March 30.

Crossover Day occurred on March 3. Crossover Day is the day by which a piece of legislation must pass its chamber of origin in order to have much chance of passing both chambers by the end of the session.

- **Budget – Funding for state-certified domestic violence centers FY 2017 Amended & FY 2018:** Both the House and the Senate have passed their FY 2017 Amended and FY 2018 appropriations bills and reconciled the differences between each. The FY 2018 budget proposal agreed upon by the House and Senate contains a \$287,500 increase in funds for state-certified domestic violence shelters.

Budget documents can be viewed [here](#).

- **Firearms and domestic violence:** [HB 541](#) received a hearing but no vote in the House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee on March 20. This bill would make it a felony crime for domestic violence perpetrators to possess a firearm or ammunition while they are subject to a Family Violence Protective Order or is they are convicted of a qualifying family violence-related misdemeanor. The legislation would also require that domestic violence perpetrators who are subject to this prohibition to relinquish their firearms to local law enforcement.

Based on our conversations with individual members of the committee, there is a lot of support for this bill. HB 541 will come before this same committee again in the 2018.

- **Sexual assault on college campuses:** [HB 51](#) proposes to drastically limit the ability of colleges and universities to adjudicate sexual assault on campus, among other crimes. It also requires that all felony-level cases be forwarded over to the local criminal justice system. This bill passed the full House prior to Crossover Day and received a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 23. At this hearing, the committee voted to table the bill, making its chances of passing during this legislative session very slim. The committee will likely take up the bill again during the 2018 legislative session.

- **Confidential name change for victims of domestic violence:** [HB 279](#) would allow victims of domestic violence to file for a legal name change for themselves and their children without being forced to give the customary public notice of their name change. HB 279 passed the full House prior to Crossover Day and received a favorable vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 20. The Senate is now expected to vote on the bill very soon.
- **Flexible sick leave – the Family Care Act:** [SB 201](#) requires employers that offer sick leave to allow employees to use that leave time flexibly in order to care for sick children, spouses, and other family members. The bill passed out of the full Senate prior to Crossover Day and then passed the House with an amendment which sunsets the bill in 2020 unless it is renewed by the legislature.
- **Domestic Violence Helping Hands Act:** [HB 522](#) requires that barbers and cosmetologists obtain one hour of training on domestic violence and sexual assault awareness and intervention every two years as a part of their licensure requirements. HB 522 received a hearing in a subcommittee of House Judiciary Non-Civil after Crossover Day but did not receive a vote. The committee will take up the bill again during the next legislative session.
- **Georgia Tenant Victim Protection Act:** [HB 281](#) would offer certain protections to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking who need to vacate their housing lease agreements due to the violence. HB 281 has been assigned to the House Judiciary Committee but has not received a hearing. The bill will likely not pass this year.
- **Drivers' licenses for immigrants:** HB 324 would replace the drivers' licenses currently issued to undocumented immigrants with licenses that conspicuously identify their lack of full legal status. This includes immigrant victims of domestic violence and human trafficking who have been granted this status while awaiting the finalization of their T-Visa, U-Visa, or VAWA petition. GCADV opposes this bill, as it would further stigmatize these victims. HB 324 passed out of committee with some significant language changes but did not pass out of the full House by Crossover Day, which means that it has very little chance of passing this year.