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Legislative Update for Week Ending 3-28-08

The General Assembly convened two days this week and passed an adjournment resolution for the last four days of this session, which is scheduled to end next week with sine die on Friday, April 4. The Senate passed its version of the FY '09, \$21.2B budget and the conference committee for House and Senate will work on the compromise budget over the weekend. The Governor has signed the conference committee version of the supplemental FY '08 budget. We have completed 36 legislative days.

Besides the conference committee for the FY '09 budget, other conference committees appointed include SB 145 (life without parole in cases of aggravated murder, amended to include judicial discretion in imposing death penalty when jury vote is 10-2 in favor), SR 845 (regional special purpose local option sales tax for transportation purposes), and SB 430 (collection and comparison of DNA).

The House passed legislation allowing licensed limousine carriers to sell alcoholic beverages to its passengers without amending it to include Sunday sales of alcohol. The House failed to pass SB 408, the telephone competition bill, but a notice of reconsideration has been filed, which could allow another vote on this bill Monday, 3/31. SB 436, corporate code amendments, is on the House calendar for Monday, 3/31. SB 508 (probate courts) and SB 181 (motor vehicle rental company fees) are on the House general calendar. SB 412, changing the terminology in the Ga. Code from "air bags" and "seatbelts" to "life bags" and "life belts," is on the agenda for House Motor Vehicles on Monday, 3/31.

The Senate passed HB 1132 (uniform environmental covenants), HR 1103 (joint study committee on teacher training and certification), HR 1246 (Speaker's tax reform, does not include elimination of ad valorem taxes on vehicles), and HB 1244 (amended to include Lt. Governor Cagle's 10 percent reduction in state income tax rates over a five-year period). The Senate failed to consider HB 881 (charter schools) and it returned to the Senate general calendar. The Senate insisted on its position on HB 1245 (indigent defense) and HB 1111 (teen drivers and school attendance requirement). The Senate agreed to the House changes in SB 350 (driving without a license) and HB 301 (dog-fighting penalties). The Senate Finance Committee amended and passed HB 1158 to include a \$10/vehicle fee for tag renewals to fund a trauma care network. They also passed HB 1159, an income tax credit for adopting a qualified foster child, and HB 272, sales tax exemption for energy used in manufacturing. The Senate Special Judiciary Committee passed HB 1018, cross-indexing fees, which is now on the Senate general calendar.