GEORGIA LIFE SCIENCES

**Legislative Updates as of 01/16/2026**

**Week One Weekly Report**

Happy Friday from your government relations team! The Georgia General Assembly kicked off the 2026 Legislative Session Monday, and it was a busy week at the Gold Dome. On the first legislative day, lawmakers set the 40-day session calendar and welcomed new members. Early floor action in the Senate passed the first bill of session which addressed firearm storage and local government authority. Both chambers of the legislature debated immigration enforcement transparency and entertained several community acknowledgments.

Throughout the week, we saw key policy priorities emerge during the annual Eggs & Issues breakfast and Governor Kemp's State of the State address. In this statewide election year that has many legislators running for higher office or reelection, we anticipate a politically charged session and look forward to keeping you updated.

**Eggs & Issues**

This year's Eggs & Issues covered the top priorities for Governor Brian Kemp, Lt. Governor Burt Jones, and Speaker John Burns.

Governor Kemp outlined several transportation and infrastructure solutions, including a $1.8 billion budget increase for road capacity improvements and the expansion of express lane construction. The plan also includes a $200 million investment along GA-316 (University Parkway), $250 million for local road projects with no local match required, and $100 million to strengthen bridges in rural areas. In addition, the state will make energy infrastructure investments, including $35 million for the Natural Gas Improvement Fund through the Georgia Finance Authority. Kemp also announced the creation of a new homelessness response program, which includes a $50 million Homelessness Response Grant Program, with funding awarded to local governments and nonprofit organizations.

Lt. Governor Burt Jones' priorities focus on strengthening Georgia's workforce and easing financial pressure on residents while improving public safety and family services. His goals include expanding workforce developing partnerships with Georgia colleges, lowering the state income tax, and capping property tax increases at 3%. He also emphasizes combating drugs and fentanyl trafficking and maintaining a continued focus on foster care through the Children and Families Committee.

The Speaker's priorities center on improving affordability, access, and long-term workforce readiness across the state. Key goals include supporting lawsuit reform to help stabilize the legal and business environment, improving insurance affordability and accessibility, and advancing tax relief initiatives for residents. The Speaker also emphasizes addressing the healthcare workforce shortage and strengthening education outcomes by working toward placing a literacy coach in every school.

## 2026 State of the State Address by Governor Kemp

In his 2026 State of the State, Governor Brian Kemp framed Georgia as fiscally strong and prosperous, touting record reserves, job growth, fully funded schools, and conservative budgeting that has kept taxes low and returned billions to taxpayers. He acknowledged ongoing challenges with everyday costs for families and proposed both short-term relief — including a one-time $1 billion tax rebate for residents — and long-term tax cuts, such as accelerating a reduction in the state income tax rate below 5 percent. Kemp also emphasized investments in workforce development, public safety, and education, including pay supplements for state employees and funding for school safety. Infrastructure and quality-of-life issues like congestion and homelessness were highlighted as priorities, while he urged continued fiscal discipline ahead of future uncertainties. His address intertwined policy achievements with broader themes of economic opportunity, conservative governance, and community strength as he looks to conclude his tenure.

## Likely Legislative Priorities for the 2026 Session

Likely legislative priorities for the 2026 session include renewed debate over eliminating Georgia's state income tax, which currently generates roughly $16 billion of the state's $36 billion general fund, with lawmakers focusing on the timing and structure of any phaseout. Lawmakers are also expected to push for expansion of the foster care support system, particularly for youth aging out of care, with an emphasis on improving housing stability, educational continuity, and workforce readiness. Access to medical marijuana will remain a topic of discussion, as Georgia currently permits use for 17 chronic conditions such as late-stage cancer, Alzheimer's, and PTSD, and legislators anticipate debate over whether to expand eligibility. Property tax relief is another key issue, with House Speaker Jon Burns signaling interest in cutting or eliminating property taxes and expanding certain homestead exemptions. Budget deliberations for Amended FY2026 and FY2027 are also expected to be competitive, as a budget surplus gives legislators additional flexibility to direct funding to district priorities. Finally, technology and artificial intelligence policy is likely to emerge as a major focus, including discussions on protecting minors from harmful effects of AI and determining whether guardrails should be placed on its use. Study and Special Committees (Post-2025 Session)

## Active Legislation

We are tracking the following bills, some held over from the 2025 legislative session and some introduced this week:

- HB923 Pharmacies; furnish patients with written informational material when dispensing certain prescription drugs; require (House Second Readers, 01/12/2026)
- HB931 Health; control high costs of prescription drugs; establish framework (House Second Readers, 01/12/2026)
- SB91 State Employees' Health Insurance Plan; Board of Community Health from entering into, executing, or renewing a contract with any pharmacy benefits manager that owns or has an ownership interest in any retail pharmacy; prohibit (House Withdrawn, Recommitted, 04/04/2025)
- SB111 (House Withdrawn, Recommitted, 03/27/2025)HB810 Insurance; require that final reimbursements to pharmacies for prescription drugs are based on certain formulas (House Second Readers, 03/25/2025)
- HB101 State employees; annual public report on the amount of prescription drug rebates and other price concessions applied to premium reductions; provide (House Withdrawn, Recommitted, 04/04/2025)SB60 Pharmacy Benefits Managers; managers have a duty of care to insureds, health plans, and providers; provide (Senate Read and Referred, 01/30/2025)
- SB50 (Senate Read and Referred, 01/29/2025)HB139 Pharmacies; prohibit drug manufacturer and wholesalers from preventing a licensed pharmacy from acquiring drugs from entities that participate in a particular federal drug discount program (House Second Readers, 01/29/2025)
- HB100 Prescription Drug Consumer Financial Protection Act; enact (House Second Readers, 01/28/2025)

**Political Roundup**
**Statewide Race Candidates**

Governor:

**-Democrat Candidates**

- Keisha Bottoms
- Olu Brown
- Geoff Duncan
- Jason Esteves
- Derek Jackson
- Ruwa Romman
- Michael Thurmond

**-Republican Candidates**

- Chris Carr
- Clark Dean
- Burt Jones
- Gregg Kirkpatrick
- Leland Olinger II
- Brad Raffensperger

Lieutenant Governor:

**-Democrat Candidates**

- Josh McLaurin
- Richard N. Wright

**-Republican Candidates**

- David Clark
- Greg Dolezal
- Steve Gooch
- John Kennedy
- Brenda Nelson-Porter
- Blake Tillery
- Jerry Timbs

Attorney General:

**-Democrat Candidates**

- Bob Trammell
- Tanya Miller

**-Republican Candidates**

- Brian Strickland
- Bill Cowsert

Secretary of State:

**-Democrat Candidates**

- Adrian Consonery Jr.
- Penny Brown Reynolds

**-Republican Candidates**

- Tim Fleming
- Kelvin King
- Gabriel Sterling

**Non-Returning Legislators in the House of Representatives**

- Rep. Mandi Ballinger, R-Canton (Passed away on October 12th, 2025)
- Rep. Karen Bennett, D-Stone Mountain (Resigned January 1st, 2026)
- Rep. Lynn Heffner, D-Augusta (Resigned January 5th, 2026 due to residency complication)
- Rep. Shelly Hutchinson, D-Snellville (Resigned September 5th, 2025 to care for an ailing family member)
- Rep. Marcus Wiedower, R-Watkinsville (Resigned October 28th, 2025 to pursue a business opportunity)

**Non-Returning Legislators in the Senate**

- Sen. Brandon Beach, R-Alpharetta (Resigned May 5th, 2025 to become the 46th (Treasurer of the United States)
- Sen. Jason Esteves, D-Atlanta (Resigned September 10th, 2025 to focus on his gubernatorial campaign)

Sen. John F. Kennedy, R-Macon (Resigned December 9th, 2025 to focus on his lieutenant gubernatorial campaign)