

AAUW Atlanta Branch Public Policy Update – January 17, 2022

Georgia Legislative Update –

The Georgia legislative session opened this past Monday, January 10 with a brief session to set the schedule for the first seven legislative days before adjourning early to allow legislators to head to Indianapolis to attend the Georgia – Alabama football matchup. With the legislature in adjournment on Tuesday, a recovery day, week one of the 2022 Legislative Session included four of the forty legislative days allowed for each annual regular session. The Legislature will also be in adjournment the week of January 17 for budget hearings. So, Legislative Day 5 will be Monday, January 24.

Wednesday the 12th, Day 2, opened with the Georgia Chamber of Commerce’s annual Eggs and issues breakfast. Newly-elected Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens opened the event with remarks promising to “redeem the soul of Atlanta”. The Mayor stressed his commitment to fighting the Buckhead City movement and announced the opening of a new Atlanta Police precinct in Buckhead. US Senator Raphael Warnock spoke, outlining his commitments to broadband expansion, tax relief for working families and increased support for research and development at Georgia’s colleges and universities. His priority focus though currently is securing voting rights. Gov. Kemp unveiled parts of his agenda for this legislative session, including his proposal that the State refund \$1.6 billion in tax dollars to Georgia citizens when they file their income taxes this year: \$250 to individual filers and \$500 to taxpayers filing jointly. Also speaking were Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan (issues for focus included crime fighting and foster care support, especially for children aging out of the system) and Speaker David Ralston (priorities include public safety, mental health and the State budget).

On Thursday Gov. Kemp gave his State of the State address including information regarding his policy platform and budget proposals. His three areas of focus are education, healthcare and public safety. In addition to those items presented the day before, his proposals included making the final \$2000 payments of the \$5000 teacher pay raises, a 10% increase in rates paid to foster parents, relative caregivers, child care institutions and child placing agencies, and additional funding for healthcare and law enforcement training and recruiting programs (such as funds to expand nursing programs, funds to address rural physician shortages, and funds for tuition for those seeking to enter law enforcement). Governor Kemp also discussed his education policy priorities for 2022, which will include a parental bill of rights and legislation to “ensure fairness in school sports and address obscene materials online and in our school libraries.” According to the Governor, these policy proposals are aimed at “protect[ing] our students from divisive ideologies.” He also committed support to legislation adding human trafficking to the list of serious violent and sexual offenses requiring a superior court judge to grant bail.

Friday’s session was fairly quiet and adjourned less than an hour after commencing. Legislators received copies of the budgets, which will be discussed this coming week.

AAUW Public Policy Resources –

On a non-Georgia note, your entire Public Policy committee (yes, that's just me) attended an informative AAUW webinar in December titled "Exploring Tough Policy Issues Through an AAUW Lens: Political and Non-Partisan". The session reminded attendees that, when representing AAUW, we need to remain non-partisan and undertake no advocacy counter to AAUW positions. For anyone interested in the webinar, it can be found on the AAUW website here: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/programs/webinars/>

The session also provided excellent information regarding the many advocacy support tools available on the AAUW website. AAUW's complete Advocacy Toolkit page can be found here: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/>

Become Involved! –

For anyone interested in becoming more involved in public policy issues, please let me know if you would like to join the Public Policy Committee. As mentioned above, it's a pretty small group at the moment and definitely open to new joiners!

Thank you,

Julianna Burke