

Georgia Utility Contractors Association (GUCA)

February 23, 2024

This last week saw even more legislation introduced and moving dealing with tort reform. Direct Action for trucking, premises liability legislation, the Governor's bill to address and study effective tort reform, billboard advertisements for attorneys, and more saw movement this past week.

There continues to be a lot of movement on legislation dealing with business licensing under the Secretary of State's Office.

These past few weeks also saw legislation introduced on continuing education and on utility workers' safety.

HB 904 passed the House. It changes certain provisions relating to electrical contractors, plumbers, conditioned air contractors, low voltage contractors, and utility contractors as far as licensing and continuing education. Our team was able to get a GUCA requested amendment to the bill in Committee.

HB 1096 establishes on behalf of professional licensing boards under the jurisdiction of the office of the Secretary of State a continuing education tracking solution to monitor compliance of licensees with applicable continuing education requirements. We've asked GUCA to review this bill. It is now in House Rules Committee.

HB 1044 passed the House also. It is an answer to bidding legislation vetoed by the Governor last year. It increases the dollar value of certain public works contracts exempt from provisions relating to retention of contractual payments.

HB 880 relates to licenses for transitioning members of the armed forces, so as to allow military spouses to use an existing license in good standing from another state to obtain employment in this state. HB 1033 provides for protections for utility workers and for enhanced penalties for simple assault, aggravated assault, simple battery, and aggravated battery committed upon utility workers in certain circumstances.

There is also a lot of discussion about licensing boards in general in Georgia, and GUCA is on top of this.

GUCA's very important and well attended (record setting attendance?) Lobby Day was February 6 at the Capitol. Thanks so much to all of those who attended to represent your industry, hear from Georgia's political leadership about what is going on at the Capitol, and talk about issues important to them with their local legislators.

The 2024 Georgia General Assembly had its 23rd - 25th official days of legislative session this past week on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. They're out today, Feb 23. "Crossover Day" is next week on February 29.

The House and Senate are continuing to work on the state budget (the only constitutional requirement for the State legislature every session), and big topics include election changes, revising or removing tax credits and exemptions, medicaid expansion, hospital certificate of need changes, sports betting, election bills, business licensing legislation, tort reform, and more.

There have now been thousands of bills and resolutions filed in the 2023-2024 General Assembly.

As was mentioned, Crossover Day, the day that a bill has to pass out of its initial original chamber, is February 29 (the 28th legislative day), and the final day of session will be March 28. Keep in mind, just because a bill doesn't pass out of its original chamber by Crossover doesn't mean it is "dead". This is because language from the "dead" bill can be attached to another bill out there that is "alive" after Crossover Day.

As was mentioned in the initial report, legislation from 2023 is “alive” for passage in the 2024 legislative session due to it being a biennial session system. Thrash-Haliburton has been in constant communication with our leadership about issues and legislation coming up for our industry in the 2024 session.

Here’s to another great year for our industry in 2024 at the State Capitol!

Thrash-Haliburton is diligently watching and working to stop any detrimental legislation to our industry and push the legislation we support. Our governmental affairs team continues every day to work on, look out for and answer requests, needs and interests, as we act at the direction of the group's leadership. Please find legislation affecting our industry below:

2023-2024 Regular Session

We are monitoring the following legislation, and watchful for any bills that may impact our industry.

| Bill | Summary | House Comm | Sen Comm | House Sponsor | Sen Sponsor |
|-------------|--|--|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| HB 193 | Relating to public works contracting and bidding requirements, so as to increase the dollar values of certain public works construction contracts exempt from bidding requirements; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes | Vetoed by the Governor | Passed | Anderson | |
| HB 436 | Relating to surface mining, so as to revise maximum criminal penalties for violations | Passed | Natural Resources | Corbett | |
| HB 438 | To prohibit governmental entities from adopting any policy that prohibits the connection or reconnection of any utility service or sales of certain fuels based upon the appliance to be used by a customer; | Energy, Utilities & Telecommunications | | Anderson | |
| SB 195 | Relating to licenses for transitioning members of the armed forces, and Code Section 43-1-35, relating to expedited license by endorsement for spouses of active or transitioning members of the armed forces, and to enact statutes to facilitate licensure of transitioning service members, military spouses, and other qualified individuals who have certifications from or work experience in the military or licenses from or work experience in another state under certain conditions | Regulated Industries | Passed | | Walker |

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| SB 157 | To create a preclearance process in the licensing of individuals with criminal records who make an application to or are investigated by certain licensing boards and commissions | Judiciary Non-Civil | Passed | | Strickland |
| HB 810 | Change certain provisions to buildings and housing, commerce and trade, local government, professions and businesses, and public utilities and public transportation, respectively, so as change certain provisions relating to certain professions practicing in this state | Regulated Industries | | Vance | |
| HB904 | Change certain provisions relating to electrical contractors, plumbers, conditioned air contractors, low voltage contractors, and utility contractors. We got a definition change implemented upon GUCA's request. | Passed | Regulated Industries | Vance | |
| HB 880 | Relating to licenses for transitioning members of the armed forces, so as to allow military spouses to use an existing license in good standing from another state to obtain employment in this state | Regulated Industries | | Ballard | |
| HB 1033 | Provide for protections for utility workers; to provide for a definition; to provide for enhanced penalties for simple assault, aggravated assault, simple battery, and aggravated battery committed upon utility workers in certain circumstances | Passed | Judiciary | Leverett | |

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| HB 1096 | To establish on behalf of professional licensing boards under the jurisdiction of the office of the Secretary of State a continuing education tracking solution to monitor compliance of licensees with applicable continuing education requirements; to require compliance with continuing education requirements prior to the issuance of certain licenses; | Rules | | Washburn | |
| HB 1044 | Increase dollar value of certain public works contracts exempt from provisions relating to retention of contractual payments Answer to bill vetoed last year | Passed | Government Oversight | Anderson | |
| HB 1190 | To authorize the division director within the office of the Secretary of State to issue licenses in instances when the requirements for licensure have been met and the professional licensing board fails to act within a certain time period | REGULATED INDUSTRIES | | Collins | |
| HB 1228 | Relating to general provisions for public works bidding, so as to provide procedures for the acquisition of certain professional services by local governments; Relating to the exercise by counties of power to contract generally, so as to revise provisions related to the acquisition of certain professional services; relating to the exercise by municipalities of power to contract generally | Governmental Affairs | | Smith | |
| SB 471 | Makes licensing renew every 4 years instead of every two years, unless the Board under the Secretary of State passes rules and regulations that are below 4 years. | | Rules | | Williams |
| HB 1371 | The Speaker's premises liability bill - relating to general provisions regarding liability of owners and occupiers of land, to clarify liability regarding third-party criminal activity | Judiciary | | Burchett | |

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| HB 1114 | Governor's tort reform bill and study committee - to enact the "Data Analysis for Tort Reform Act"; to provide for data collection from certain insurers, insurance rating organizations, and state agencies | Passed | NA | Wade | |
| SB 426 | Direct Action Tort Reform - requirements for joining of a motor carrier and motor carrier's insurer to a cause of action | | Passed | | Tillery |