

## **Georgia Utility Contractors Association (GUCA)**

February 9, 2024

**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.**

These past two weeks saw legislation introduced on utility contractors and business licensing, continuing education, and on utility workers' safety.

HB 904 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 last week.

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.

HB 1044, a bill that is an answer to bidding legislation vetoed by the Governor last year, passed Committee and is now in the House Rules Committee. 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.

In 2023:

GORCC was done away with in HB 76. The Georgia Occupational Regulation Review Council (GORRC) was statutorily established in 1986 to "ensure that no programs of licensure and certification are imposed on any profession or business unless required for the safety and well-being of the citizens of this state". It has turned into a headache for many industries attempting to change, create, or delete licensing requirements in Georgia.

HB 193 was vetoed by the Governor. This bill's topic was of great interest to GUCA last year. Our lobbying team understands all of the contractor industry groups were good with the bill after the changes that were made. It relates to public works contracting and bidding requirements, so as to increase the dollar values of certain public works construction contracts exempt from bidding requirements.

There was legislation regarding licenses for transitioning members of the armed forces and expediting licenses by endorsement for spouses of active or transitioning members of the armed forces and enacting 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. It is SB 195 from Senator Larry Walker.

There is also a licensing bill from Senator Brian Strickland dealing with those who have had criminal convictions in the past, SB 157, that is mentioned below also. It passed the Senate and is in the House.

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

The 2024 Georgia General Assembly had its 15th - 18th official days of legislative session this past week on Tuesday - Friday. Monday was off due to the funeral for the House Rules Committee Chairman Richard Smith. It is getting extremely busy now every day and all day with “Crossover Day” right around the corner on February 29.

The House passed the “small budget”, and that goes to the Senate. The House is now holding its Appropriations meetings in Appropriations SubCommittees to “mark up”, edit, adjust, and eventually pass the “Big State Budget”, which is technically the legislature’s only legal requirement to do every session under state law.

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

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	<b>Vetoed by the Governor</b>	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
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	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	Rules		Leverett	
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;	REGULATED INDUSTRIES		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	Rules		Anderson	