

Georgia Utility Contractors Association (GUCA)

January 20, 2025

Legislators from all corners of the state were back under the Gold Dome this past week to be sworn in for the first session of the 158th Georgia General Assembly, including almost two dozen new House and Senate members. Lawmakers were in session Monday through Friday this week for Legislative Days 1 through 5. As they have done in recent years, House and Senate leaders came to an agreement on an adjournment resolution and released a calendar for the entire 2025 session—Crossover Day, which is Legislative Day 28, has been set for Thursday, March 6, and the legislature will Sine Die on Friday, April 4. Legislators will not be in session this week while conducting budget hearings Tuesday through Thursday. The general assembly will reconvene for Legislative Day 6 Monday, January 24.

All 236 legislators were officially sworn in on Monday morning, and Representative Jon Burns (R-Newington) was reelected by his House peers to serve as Speaker, and in the Senate, Senator John Kennedy (R-Macon) was reelected by his colleagues to serve as President Pro Tempore. House and Senate members also received their committee assignments this week, and committee chairmanships were announced.

Much of the first week of the legislative session is ceremonial, with events like press conferences announcing major policy initiatives and the governor's State of the State address.

In his remarks this week, Governor Kemp was unequivocal about his top priority for the session: tort reform. He announced he would be releasing a package of tort reform legislation to bring parity with Georgia's neighboring states. Although specific provisions of the legislative package have not yet been released, the governor went as far in his State of the State remarks as to introduce the possibility of calling a special session if tort reform is not sufficiently addressed by the end of the session.

Another legislative priority Governor Kemp announced Tuesday morning was the Top State for Talent Act, which would incorporate the Georgia MATCH program into individual graduation plans for students beginning in 9th grade; align existing career-tech and academic credentials with the high demand career list; and include a return on investment analysis measuring the effectiveness of the state's secondary and postsecondary programs.

Governor Kemp also announced a legislative package focused on enhancing K-12 education and securing Georgia's classrooms. The AFY25 and FY26 budgets and the proposed package of legislation include fully funding K-12 education; funding for additional school safety grants; enhanced mental health support and crisis counseling in schools; and increased technical education and transportation funding. The package also seeks to improve benefits for teachers and other school faculty and provides funding for capital improvement projects.

In a press conference this week, Governor Kemp announced a proposed change to the Georgia Pathways healthcare program that would provide Medicaid coverage to parents and legal guardians in households with incomes at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level who have children ages 0 to 6. This proposal would extend Medicaid coverage for new mothers after their one-year postpartum period expires and would provide previously unavailable coverage to eligible new fathers.

On top of the proposed additional \$1 billion tax rebate to Georgia's taxpayers that Governor Kemp announced in October, this week he announced he seek to accelerate the cut in the state income tax reducing it down from 5.39 percent to 5.19 percent.

House Speaker Jon Burns outlined several of his legislative priorities for the session including tax cuts, child literacy initiatives, protections for IVF, and ensuring the protection of gender-specific sports participation. He also highlighted the need for investments in medical workforce residency programs to retain talent trained in Georgia, especially in rural areas.

He also discussed addressing safety and conditions in Georgia's prisons, requiring revenue generated from school zone cameras to be dedicated to school safety, and streamlining the professional licensing process. Speaker Burns also announced plans to develop a statewide energy management plan, which will be

accomplished through the newly created House Special Committee on Resource Management, chaired by Representative Brad Thomas (R-Holly Springs).

This week Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones, who oversees the Senate, announced one of his top legislative priorities for the session, the 'Fair and Safe Athletic Opportunities Act,' which is Senate Bill 1. The legislation would require middle schools, high schools, and colleges to designate interscholastic sports teams as male, female, or co-ed, based on the participant's sex at birth. Under the law, males would not be allowed to participate in any competition or on any team that is designated for females. The bill, which is sponsored by Senator Greg Dolezal (R-Cumming), would also require separate restrooms and changing areas at athletic events.

Lieutenant Governor Jones also highlighted lessening costs and regulations for small businesses; increasing access to childcare, which he noted is also important for workforce development; and promoting technical colleges and career academies to help grow the state's workforce.

Thrash-Haliburton has been in constant communication with our leadership about issues and legislation coming up for our industry in the 2025 session.

Here's to another great year for our industry in 2025 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:

2025 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