



House Budget and Research Office

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2023 SESSION: GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET AND LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Every Georgian regularly interacts with general government agencies for services, whether to renew a driver's license, pay taxes, or register a business. The following are just a few examples of how general government agencies serve Georgians:

- The Department of Driver Services (DDS) provides driver and identity credentials to nearly 9 million Georgians, with assistance provided to 3.1 million customers (in-person and online) in 2022. The agency serves Georgians with more than 1,000 employees, conducting 12,600 in-person transactions on peak days and regulating 862 programs. DDS is currently developing technology to introduce mobile drivers' licenses.
- In FY 2022, the Department of Revenue (DOR) received and processed approximately 5.5 million individual income tax returns, which led to the issuance of 3.5 million tax refunds with over \$2.5 billion refunded. The DOR is responsible for collecting the revenue the state uses to provide services for Georgians, which amounted to \$33.1 billion in FY 2022. DOR also manages the 10.5 million vehicle registrations in the state, with \$1.2 billion collected in tags, titles, and fees.
- The responsibilities of the Office of Secretary of State (SOS) range from overseeing and organizing all election activity in the state to handling the registration of corporations. The SOS provides support to 42 professional licensing boards, which collect more than \$20 million in board fees and fines annually. The agency also manages the registration, reporting, and enforcement of all charitable organizations operating in Georgia.

Department of Administrative Services

- The Amended FY 2023 budget (HB 18) includes nearly \$4.7 million in the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) to account for projected increases in property insurance claim expenses.
- [HB 193](#) (Rep. Victor Anderson, 10th) increases the contract value amount from \$100,000 or less to \$250,000 or less for a public works construction contract that is exempt from specified contracting and bidding requirements. The bill allows rapid transit authorities to purchase \$250,000 or less per year in goods, supplies, and services without competitive bidding.
- [SB 3](#) (Sen. John Albers, 56th) creates the 'Reducing Barriers to State Employment Act of 2023'. The act requires the Department of Administrative Services to regularly assess and reduce, when possible, the requirements for jobs within state government.

Department of Banking and Finance

- The Department of Banking and Finance receives more than \$500,000 in the Amended FY 2023 budget and \$53,684 in the FY 2024 budget (HB 19) to purchase and implement software that automates the agency's licensing processes. This software will improve efficiency, alleviate employee workloads, and improve customer experience.

Department of Driver Services

- The FY 2024 budget provides the Department of Driver Services with over \$2.3 million to target high turnover at certain customer service centers; \$1.76 million in bonds for upgrades and improvements to customer service centers statewide; and \$2.45 million in bonds to construct and equip a new customer service center in Rome. In addition, the Amended FY 2023 budget includes \$1.1 million to supplement previously appropriated funds to complete construction of a customer service center in Douglasville.
- [HB 120](#) (Rep. John Corbett, 174th) amends the list of individuals with a suspended, revoked, or cancelled license eligible to apply for a limited driving permit by adding persons convicted of driving under the influence of a controlled substance or marijuana, and those in non-compliance with a child support order.
- [HB 242](#) (Rep. Bill Hitchens, 161st) reinstates the additional penalty for a traffic violation under 'Joshua's Law', setting it at 3% of the original fine.

Office of the Commissioner of Insurance

- The Amended FY 2023 budget includes \$92 million for the reinsurance program to account for the projected increase in claim reimbursements; \$46 million is provided in FY 2024.
- HB 19 includes \$403,496 for two arson investigators and one each of building inspectors, elevator inspectors, and manufactured housing inspectors for the Fire Safety program under the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance.
- [HB 85](#) (Rep. Sharon Cooper, 45th) requires health benefit policies to include coverage for biomarker testing for diagnosis, treatment, management, or ongoing monitoring of a disease or condition.
- [HB 315](#) (Rep. Darlene Taylor, 173rd) involves cost-sharing requirements for diagnostic and supplemental breast screenings. The bill allows the commissioner of insurance to apply rules and regulations regarding cost-sharing provisions based on guidelines established by professional medical association.
- [HB 529](#) (Rep. Noel Williams, 148th) reduces the required minimum uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage for transportation network companies from \$1 million to \$300,000 for bodily injury and death per accident, \$100,000 for bodily injury per person, and \$250,000 for property damage.
- [SB 20](#) (Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick, 32nd) requires insurers to contract with and maintain a sufficient and appropriate number of participating network providers. Additionally, insurers are prohibited from denying preauthorization of services that were rendered by an in-network provider because the referring provider is out-of-network. The bill gives the insurance commissioner authority to review network adequacy.
- [SB 65](#) (Sen. Ben Watson, 1st) allows the state to establish a state-based healthcare exchange.

Department of Labor

- The General Assembly adds \$2.95 million in the Amended FY 2023 budget for the Department of Labor to address necessary repairs and renovations at offices statewide, as well as over \$250,000 for employee recruitment and retention.
- [SB 61](#) (Sen. Brian Strickland, 17th) repeals the sunset clause of the provision that requires employers who offer sick leave to employees to allow an employee to use that sick leave for the care of an immediate family member.
- [SB 160](#) (Sen. Shawn Still, 48th) revises the sunset clause of the statute authorizing the Department of Labor to collect required contributions from employers from 2022 to 2026, which lowers the required rate of contributions for new or newly covered employers to make into the unemployment insurance trust fund from 2.7 percent of wages to 2.64 percent of wages. The bill reinstates the statute authorizing the Department of Labor to collect an administrative assessment of .06 percent of wages paid by an employer until January 1, 2027.

Department of Revenue

- The Amended FY 2023 budget includes \$950 million to provide Georgians with Homeowner Tax Relief Grants (HTRG) and aligns the exemption benefit amount with the maximum allowed in the Georgia Constitution.
- [HB 162](#) (Rep. Lauren McDonald, 26th) provides a one-time income tax refund equal to the lesser of either the taxpayer's 2021 income tax liability or \$250 for a taxpayer filing as single; \$375 for a taxpayer filing as head of household; or \$500 for a married couple jointly filing a return. The refund will not be made available to nonresident alien individuals, individuals claimed as a dependent during the 2021 and 2022 tax years, or an estate or trust.
- [HR 66](#) (Rep. Matthew Gambill, 15th) ratifies executive orders issued by the governor between May 26, 2022 and January 10, 2023 related to suspension of the collection of motor fuel and diesel fuel taxes.

Secretary of State

- HB 19 includes \$550,000 for a data plan contract for poll pads and \$2 million for election equipment replacement. In the Amended FY 2023 budget, \$900,000 is provided to implement a secure ballot image capture library and to improve the Georgia Registered Voter Information System.
- Pursuant to SB 222 (2023 Session), \$513,018 is provided in the FY 2024 budget to establish the State Election Board as a separate entity administratively attached to the Secretary of State's Office.
- To address licensure and complaint volume, the FY 2024 budget includes \$129,196 for one analyst and one full-time educator for the Georgia Board of Nursing, as well as \$123,584 to provide two additional analysts to help with other licensing boards.
- HB 19 supports over \$1 million for the Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors Board, which was established as an independent licensing board pursuant to HB 476 (2022 Session). The budget funds five positions, including a director, two analysts, an investigator, and an administrative assistant, and covers operation expenses, contracts, and rent.
- As the Georgia Access to Medical Cannabis Commission adds enforcement and regulation duties to its current licensing responsibilities, the General Assembly provides the commission with \$401,793 in the FY 2024 budget for four positions, including a safety and compliance specialist, an investigator, an

inspector, and a laboratory specialist. Additionally, the General Assembly includes \$242,017 for seed-to-sale tracking technology, laboratory testing, and to account for an expected rise in operating expenses associated with the commission's expanding role.

- In addition to supporting the governor's recommendation of \$120,963 for protest hearings services rendered by the Office of State Administrative Hearings, the General Assembly provides the Georgia Access to Medical Cannabis Commission with \$64,000 for vehicles and equipment as well as \$250,000 for the purchase of seed-to-sale software in the Amended FY 2023 budget.
- [SB 129](#) (Sen. Rick Williams, 25th) allows the State Election Board to appoint members of county boards of elections, or county boards of elections and registration, to performance review boards. The bill clarifies the language that must be included on any absentee ballot application that is mailed to an elector by a nongovernmental entity. The bill requires employers, upon reasonable notice, to provide time off for employees to vote during the period of advance voting. The bill extends the time limit from 10:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. for specified reporting requirements for election superintendents following the close of the polls on the day of an election. The bill clarifies the auditing requirements for local election superintendents following specified elections.
- [SB 222](#) (Sen Max Burns, 23rd) requires all expenses related to conducting elections to be paid from lawfully-appropriated public funds. The bill prohibits local governments or election officials from accepting any contributions or donations for the purpose of conducting elections, subject to specified exceptions. The bill prohibits election superintendents, local governments, and boards of registrars from accepting grants or gifts related to conducting elections from any entity other than the State of Georgia or the federal government. The bill establishes the State Election Board as a separate and distinct budget unit in the state budget, attached to the Office of the Secretary of State for administrative purposes only. The bill removes the State Election Board from the jurisdiction of the secretary of state and provides for appointment of an executive director of the State Election Board.

State Properties Commission and Georgia Building Authority

- HB 18 includes \$20 million appropriated to the Georgia Building Authority (GBA) for the demolition of unoccupied state properties, which will allow the state to save taxpayer dollars on maintenance and insurance expenses. GBA will also utilize more than \$8.2 million for a statewide assessment of facilities under the responsibility of the Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice as well as \$500,000 for a space utilization assessment for the General Assembly.
- [HR 157](#) (Rep. Gerald Greene, 154th) is the annual bill conveying certain state-owned properties. Please refer to page 37 of the "[2023 End of Session Report](#)" on the House Budget and Research Office's Legislative Reports page for a summary of this year's conveyances.
- [HR 158](#) (Rep. Gerald Greene, 154th) is the annual bill granting non-exclusive easements for certain state-owned properties. Please refer to pages 37-39 of the "[2023 End of Session Report](#)" on the House Budget and Research Office's Legislative Reports page for a summary of this year's easements.

Additional Highlights

- [HB 480](#) (Rep. Lehman Franklin, 160th) revises O.C.G.A. 34-9-261 to raise the maximum weekly amount of temporary total disability of workers' compensation to \$800. The maximum weekly amount of temporary partial disability of workers' compensation is increased to \$533 in O.C.G.A. 34-9-262. The maximum total workers' compensation that can be paid to a surviving spouse after their spouse dies is

increased to \$320,000 in O.C.G.A. 34-9-265. The bill states that in claims for workers' compensation in which there is not a surviving spouse, including situations in which a deceased employee and a person claiming they were dependent on that deceased employee and that they lived together continuously and in a relationship similar to a marriage, the person making the claim must prove that they received economic support from the deceased employee, including monetary support, food, or housing. Workers' compensation can now be terminated upon cohabitation in a relationship similar to marriage if that relationship involves economic support. No consideration is made for payments of financial support that are less than a period of three months. The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2023 and applies to injuries that occur on or after that date.

- [SB 62](#) (Sen. Carden Summers, 13th) prohibits local governments from adopting or enforcing any policies that would prohibit the enforcement of any ordinance that prohibits unauthorized public camping, sleeping, or obstruction of sidewalks. The bill prohibits hospitals and local government entities from dropping off homeless individuals outside of their area of operation or jurisdiction, subject to specified exceptions. The bill requires the state auditor to conduct a performance audit of homeless program spending in this state, including local government spending and the expenditure of federal funds. The audit must be provided to the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the House of Representatives by December 31, 2023.
- [SB 213](#) (Sen. Max Burns, 23rd) prohibits local governments from adopting or enforcing any zoning decisions or other regulations on a new manufactured or mobile home that were not imposed on the preexisting home, in specified circumstances and subject to specified exceptions.
- [SB 215](#) (Sen. Matt Brass, 28th) requires local governments, upon employee request, to remove personally identifiable information of such employee from all property records that are publicly available on the local government's website.