



**Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
2015 General Assembly - Legislative Report  
April 6, 2015**

- **The General Assembly adjourned sine die at midnight on April 2, 2015.** Because this is the first year of a two-year session, any bill that did not pass will carry over to next session, which will begin on January 11, 2016. Any bills that did pass both chambers in the same form now move on to the Governor, who has 40 days to approve or veto each bill. At that time, GCADV will issue its official end-of-session report indicating which bills have become law, as well as providing details on other bills impacting victims of domestic violence.
- **Budget – Funding for state-certified domestic violence centers FY 2016:** The House and the Senate passed the FY 2016 budget agreed to by the Appropriations conference committee. It now moves to the Governor to be signed into law. The budget includes no change in funding for domestic violence centers but does transfer all funding from the Dept. of Human Services (DHS) to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). It includes a \$230,000 increase in state funds to sexual assault centers, which amounts to \$10,000 per center. The budget also includes a \$193,126 increase for grants for civil legal services to victims of domestic violence. The final FY 2016 budget can be reviewed [here](#).
- **Harassing communications:** [HB 578](#) passed both chambers via [SB 72](#) and now moves to the Governor to be signed into law. This bill expands the harassing phone calls statute to include electronic and online harassment.
- **Adding criminal family violence orders to the protective order registry:** [HB 452](#) passed both chambers and now moves to the Governor to be signed into law. This bill amends the statute authorizing Georgia’s Protective Order Registry so that criminal family violence orders, including stay-away orders in bond or probation conditions, can be entered into that registry.
- **Unemployment benefits for domestic violence victims:** [HB 117](#) passed both chambers and now moves to the Governor to be signed into law. This bill extends eligibility for the receipt of unemployment benefits to victims of domestic violence who voluntarily leave their employment as a result of that violence, among other provisions to modernize the state’s unemployment insurance program.
- **Statutory transfer of administrative duties for state-certified domestic violence centers:** [HB 263](#) passed both chambers and now moves to the Governor to be signed into law. This bill removes the administrative duties for state-certified domestic violence centers from DHS and transfers them to CJCC.
- **Statutory transfer of the Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV):** The Governor’s criminal justice reform proposal, [HB 310](#), passed both chambers and now moves to the Governor to be signed into law. This bill includes a merger of the Board of Pardons and Paroles, the Dept. of Juvenile Justice, and the Dept. of Corrections to form a new Dept. of Community Supervision. Since it is statutorily attached to the Dept. of Corrections, GCFV would also move into this new department.
- **Long arm statute:** [HB 531](#) did not pass both chambers this session. The bill passed the House but did not pass out of the Senate Rules Committee, so it is still “alive” for the 2016 session. HB 531 amends Georgia’s long arm statute, adopting the broadest possible standard by which courts establish personal jurisdiction over out-of-state respondents in civil cases. If passed, this bill may make it easier for courts to issue TPOs against perpetrators living out of state.
- **Flexible sick leave – the Family Care Act:** [HB 92](#) did not pass either chamber this session. The bill was tabled in the House Industry and Labor Committee but was reintroduced in the Senate as [SB 242](#), where it will be heard in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. SB 242 requires employers that offer sick leave to allow employees to use that leave time flexibly in order to care for sick children, spouses, and other family members.
- **Denial of drivers’ licenses for immigrants in deferred action status:** [SB 6](#) did not pass either chamber this session, nor did it receive a committee hearing. However, the bill is still “alive” for the 2016 session. SB 6 denies drivers licenses to immigrants in deferred action status. This includes immigrant victims of domestic violence and human trafficking who have been granted this status while awaiting the finalization of their T-Visa, U-Visa, or VAWA petition. GCADV is opposed to this bill, as it would limit safety and economic security options for these victims.