



**Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
2016 General Assembly - Legislative Report
March 4, 2016**

- **Budget – Funding for state-certified domestic violence centers FY 2016 Amended & FY 2017:** The House and Senate have each passed their versions of the FY 2016 Amended budget bill, and on February 19, the House passed its version of the FY 2017 budget bill. Both the FY 2016 Amended budget bill and the House version of the FY 2017 budget bill include the level domestic violence and sexual assault funding proposed by the Governor, and the House version of the FY 2017 budget includes the \$193,125 increase for grants for civil legal services to victims of domestic violence, as also proposed by the Governor.

Once the Senate passes its version of the FY 2017 budget, the Appropriations Committees of both chambers will form a conference committee to negotiate and draw up a final set of recommendations for both the FY 2016 Amended budget and the FY 2017 budget.

Budget documents can be viewed [here](#).

- **Recidivist domestic violence offenders:** [SB 193](#) would ensure that a previous family violence battery conviction against the same victim or any family violence felony conviction against any household member would result in a subsequent family violence battery and would be punished as a felony. On February 2, the Senate passed SB 193 unanimously. The bill received a “do pass” recommendation in a subcommittee of the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee on March 2 and now awaits a vote in the full committee.
- **Rape kit processing – the Pursuing Justice for Rape Victims Act:** [HB 827](#) would establish a protocol for local law enforcement for the handling and submission of rape kits to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation for testing. On February 23, the House passed HB 827. The bill now moves to the Senate, where it has been

assigned to the Health and Human Services Committee.

- **Long arm statute:** [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. HB 531 passed the House during the 2015 session and received a “do pass” recommendation by the Senate Judiciary Committee on February 24. The bill now sits in the Senate Rules Committee which will decide whether it will go before the full Senate for a vote.
- **Sentencing and post-conviction relief for battered persons convicted of violent crimes against their batterers:** [HB 702](#) would give judges adjudicating cases of murder, manslaughter, aggravated assault, or aggravated battery the discretion to depart from mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines if the judge concludes that the defendant was the victim of family violence or child abuse committed by the person against whom the crime was committed. The bill did not receive a vote by the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee prior to Crossover Day on February 29, which means that it has little to no chance of passing.
- **Flexible sick leave – the Family Care Act:** [HB 746/SB 242](#) require 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. HB 746 did not receive a vote in the House Industry and Labor Committee prior to Crossover Day. SB 242 received a “do pass” recommendation from the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, but it did not make it to the full Senate for a vote prior to Crossover Day. As a result, HB 746 and SB 242 have little to no chance of passing.

- **Drivers' licenses for immigrants in deferred action**

status: [SB 6](#) would replace the drivers' licenses currently issued to immigrants in deferred action status with licenses that conspicuously identify their lack of full legal 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 opposes this bill, as it would further stigmatize these victims. SB 6 passed the Senate on Crossover Day and now moves to the House, where it has been assigned to the House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee.

ACTION ALERT!

If your Representative serves on the House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee, urge them to vote NO on **SB 6**. House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee members are listed [HERE](#).

- **English-only Constitutional amendment:** [SR 675](#)

would put a statewide referendum on the ballot in November to declare English the official language of Georgia. The bill would prohibit any requirement that any language other than English be used in any documents, regulations, orders, transactions, proceedings, meetings, programs, or publications of any state agency. GCADV opposes this resolution, as it will create unnecessary barriers to non-English-speaking domestic violence survivors trying to access vital services and obtain drivers' licenses. SR 675 passed the Senate on Crossover Day and now moves to the House, where it has been assigned to the House Judiciary Committee.

ACTION ALERT!

If your Representative serves on the House Judiciary Committee, urge them to vote NO on **SR 675**. House Judiciary Committee members are listed [HERE](#).

- **First Amendment Defense Act:** [SB 284](#) was merged by the Senate Rules Committee into the House-approved [HB 757](#). GCADV opposes [HB 757](#) in its amended form, as it would prohibit the government from taking any adverse action against nonprofit organizations that discriminate against LGBT people, single mothers, and sexually active straight couples by denying them services based on religious beliefs. Victims of domestic violence who fall into these categories could legally be denied the services that many nonprofits are contracted with the state of Georgia and given taxpayer dollars to provide, services such as shelter and other housing, food

assistance, medical assistance, and other services essential for safety and well-being. Such discrimination could jeopardize the federal funds many nonprofits receive which strictly prohibit them from denying services to specific populations, particularly LGBT individuals.

On February 19, the Senate passed the amended HB 757. The House must now vote to Agree or Disagree with the bill as amended. Governor Deal has signaled that he disapproves of the bill in its current form.

- **Schedule:** The legislature has adopted a schedule that takes us through Day 40 on March 24. The schedule is available [here](#).
- **Unsure who your Senator and Representative are?** Click [HERE](#) to look them up and find their contact information.