

Subject: Legislative Report #9 - Crossover Day Approaching

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From: GFB Public Policy Department

To: Whitney Mooney



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LEGISLATIVE REPORT #9

March 11, 2022

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CROSSOVER DAY APPROACHING

This week, the Georgia General Assembly met for three legislative days and two committee days, adjourning on Friday, March 11th. When legislators return on Tuesday for Legislative Day 28, Crossover Day, they will be on the clock to have all legislation through the chamber in which it originated to remain eligible for final passage. Some of Georgia Farm Bureau's priority issues have already made their way from the House to the Senate, meaning they are ready to be taken up in their respective committees. HB 1150 (The Freedom to Farm Act) is currently set to be heard in the Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee, chaired by Sen. Larry Walker (R-Perry), on Monday.

Outside of legislation, candidates from all over the state traveled to the Gold Dome to file to run for office as qualifying week started on Monday. See below for more information on what the landscape of the upcoming elections will look like based on this week's events.

Lawmakers will return on Monday of next week for a full slate of committee meetings and gavel in for Legislative Day 28 on the following day. They are set to meet for four legislative days and adjourn on Friday, March 18th.



Speaker David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) presides over the House earlier this week. (Photo credit: Georgia House Photo)

AFY22 AND FY23 BUDGET UPDATE

On Friday, AFY22 budget work was wrapped up when the Senate agreed to the House amendment to the Senate's version of HB 910. With this, the little budget (AFY22) will now head to the Governor's desk for signature. Also on Friday, the House passed the FY23 budget which will now head to the Senate where they will begin to put their own mark on the legislation. See below for some highlights of the [FY23 budget](#) and click [here](#) for a tracking sheet of the AFY22 budget as passed.

FY23 Budget As Passed by the House

Department of Agriculture

- \$324,301 restorative funds to Athens & Tifton Veterinary Labs from austerity reductions previously made.
- \$800,000 for the Georgia Grown Farm to Food Bank program.
- \$1,884,774 for the Georgia Agricultural Trust Fund reflecting GATE card fee collections.
- \$202,652 for Poultry Diagnostic Lab maintenance

State Soil & Water Conservation Commission

- \$80,000 to support local district discretionary conservation programs.
- \$692,300 for plan review and technical support positions.

Department of Community Affairs

- \$250,000 for Georgia Rural Water Association to meet additional demands of state emergency response and resource fulfillment needs.

Department of Education

- \$144,000 for an urban/suburban agriculture specialist
- \$100,000 for a Young Farmer program in Floyd County, and additional funds to the Young Farmer programs in Banks County, Barrow County, and Pelham City.
- \$140,000 for an additional Georgia FFA Association staff member and two agricultural education support staff.

University System of Georgia Board of Regents Agricultural Experiment Station

- \$2,180,000 for 11 new faculty positions for agricultural initiatives at UGA College of Ag
- \$1,901,440 to replenish austerity reductions previously made.

UGA Cooperative Extension

- \$1,768,217 to replenish austerity reductions previously made.

Georgia Tech Research Institute

- \$600,000 for professional development and student support for a computer science pilot program in rural Georgia.

Veterinary Medicine Experiment Station

- \$500,000 to support research on cattle and poultry diseases and upgrade laboratories to improve biosafety standards.
- \$108,000 to replenish austerity reductions previously made.

Technical College System of Georgia

- \$33,369,568 to expand instruction of Allied Health, Commercial Truck Driving, and Manufacturing programs in strategic location to support critical workforce needs

SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSIDERS METAL THEFT UPDATE

Wednesday, the Senate Natural Resources & Environment Committee met to hear SB 591, sponsored by Senator Bo Hatchett (R-Cornelia), which amends the state's metal theft laws. The proposal addresses concerns raised by secondary metal recyclers whose business practices are restricted in their methods of payment for deposits. Under current law, recyclers may only pay using a check, electronic funds transfer, or a voucher. Georgia Farm Bureau (GFB), along with other interested organizations, worked closely with Hatchett to alleviate their business expenses by allowing for limited cash payment (up to \$100) for deposits excluding utility wire, communications copper, copper wire, batteries, or catalytic converters.

Sen. Hatchett also incorporated numerous aspects in the bill to avoid a resurgence of metal theft and to strengthen the law, such as: maintaining extensive deposit records and documentation of personal identification of customers; a two-year repeal of this bill, unless extended by the legislature because no increased instances of theft are seen; and enhanced penalties by making it a felony if metal theft results in property damage above \$1,500. We greatly appreciate Sen. Hatchett for working to find a balance between deterrence of widespread metal theft while still allowing for a business-friendly

environment.

SB 591 was reported out of committee and currently sits in the Senate Rules Committee.

CANDIDATE QUALIFYING COMPLETE

Individuals hoping to make their mark on state and federal politics flocked to the Georgia State Capitol this week to officially declare their intent to run for office in a rite of passage known as "qualifying." Qualifying began at 9:00 am on Monday morning and concluded Friday at noon.

Qualifying signals the first step in the 2022 election cycle which includes a contentious race for Georgia's highest office, Governor, as well as other constitutional offices. Additionally, U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock faces his first general, full-term election after winning his seat in 2020's special election to replace the late Sen. Johnny Isakson. The state's fourteen Congressional seats will also be on the ballot this fall, in addition to each of the 180 State House and 56 State Senate seats.

The 2022 election cycle will be the first to utilize the new redistricting maps that were drawn as a result of 2020 Census data. You may view the new maps below:

- [Georgia U.S. Congressional Districts](#)
- [Georgia House of Representatives](#)
- [Georgia State Senate](#)

To view a full list of offices and candidates that qualified, click [here](#). Georgia's primary election will take place on Tuesday, May 24. To ensure that you are registered to vote, please click [here](#).



ANOTHER CHANCE TO DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT!

On December 7, 2021, after nearly two years of diligent evaluation and consideration, voting delegates at the 2021 Georgia Farm Bureau (GFB) Annual Meeting unanimously endorsed the creation of the GFB Impact Fund, a political action committee (PAC), to advocate on behalf of agriculture, farmers, and our rural communities. The following week, the GFB Board of Directors unanimously voted to put it into action and simultaneously authorized the GFB Mutual Insurance Company to match every dollar contributed to the GFB State Impact Fund by February 28, 2022 - up

to \$500,000. However, given the momentum the Fund is receiving, **the challenge has been extended to March 15!**

With election season on the horizon, it is vital that we work to get our PAC up and running as quickly as possible. Support for the GFB State Impact Fund can come from county Farm Bureaus, GFB members, local farm businesses, and others who share our mission. This additional tool will allow us to support the candidacies and elections of qualified individuals to public office who have demonstrated a commitment to furthering and strengthening the agricultural industry, regardless of political affiliation. With your support, we can ensure your voice has a seat at the table to protect agriculture for the next generation.

Each contribution to the GFB State Impact Fund is voluntary and will support candidates who support agriculture and Georgia Farm Bureau values. To learn more about the GFB Impact Fund, please contact [Katie Duvall](#).

To contribute to the GFB State Impact Fund online, please click [here](#). If you'd rather contribute to the fund by check, please return your check and [this form](#) to:

GFB State Impact Fund
Attn: Katie Duvall
1620 Bass Road
Macon, GA 31210

**All contributions are solely voluntary and not tax deductible. Each contribution must be accompanied by the contribution form to be accepted.*

ACTION THIS WEEK

[HB 997:](#)

Reps. Watson, England, Burns, Buckner, Hatchett, and others

This proposal would provide for a statewide constitutional referendum and question on the 2022 ballot to allow for an ad-valorem tax exemption on timber equipment and products. Equipment that would be exempt under this bill includes logging equipment such as wood cutters, loaders, bulldozers, skid steers, etc. Also included in the exemption would be timber products such as trees and other wood fiber products.

House Ways and Means Committee Favorably Reported by Substitute on 3/8/2022.

[HB 1371:](#)

Reps. Jasperse, Watson, Corbett, England, and Campbell

This bill would establish the Rural Health Advancement Commission to address healthcare workforce shortages in rural areas of Georgia. The commission would be made up of 13 members from all across the medical field that will explore the issue and deliver an annual report.

House Passed/Adopted by Substitute on 3/9/2022.

[HB 1384:](#)

Reps. Jenkins, Camp, Greene, Jasperse, and Knight

This proposal would allow for the use of ungraded lumber in the construction or repair of any uninhabited structure on property zoned for residential or agricultural use.

House Passed/Adopted on 3/11/2022.

[HB 1443:](#)

Reps. Gaines, Wiedower, Gambill, Hagan, Cameron, and others

This bill would require that a mobile food service establishment permit be recognized in all counties while still being subject to local ordinances and the county's board of health.

House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee Favorably Reported by Substitute on 3/9/2022.

[HB 1521:](#)

Reps. Momtahan, Clark, Corbett, Nix, Smith, and others

This bill would change the wildlife control permit to include the hunting of feral hogs on wildlife management areas during any season. It would also allow for feral hogs to be hunted in general year-round.

Assigned to House Game, Fish & Parks Committee on 3/8/2022.

[HB 1528:](#)

Reps. Momtahan, Barton, Corbett, Pirkle, Cheokas, and others

This bill would prohibit anyone other than a licensed secondary metal recycler from purchasing or soliciting for purchase a used or detached catalytic converter. It would also prohibit anyone from possessing, transporting, or selling a detached catalytic converter unless they have the proper licenses and documentation required. Any detached catalytic converter found in possession of someone without the proper documentation will be considered contraband and be subject to forfeiture.

Assigned to House Motor Vehicles Committee on 3/8/2022.

[HB 1532:](#)

Reps. Ridley, Gravley, Rhodes, and Corbett

This bill would make changes to Georgia's hemp farming law to allow for the production and sale of hemp products such as food, cosmetics, clothes and more. Under current law, hemp oil is the only hemp product that can be produced and sold in Georgia. It would create both a retail and wholesale hemp food establishment license to be issued by the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Division at a price of \$650 each. The bill would also lower the hemp processor permit from \$25,000 to \$650. To acquire a processor permit, one must also have acquired a surety bond. This bill would lower the minimum bond amount from \$300,000 to \$100,000.

Assigned to House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 3/8/2022.

[HB 1548:](#)

Rep. Leverett

This proposal would prohibit the application of soil amendments for any purpose other than to foster the growth of crops unless the soil amendment is unadulterated, free of material that may create a significant odor, or are applied within a specific set of parameters surround the rate and frequency of application. The proposal would allow local government to have concurrent jurisdiction with the Department of Agriculture to enforce and investigate issues related to soil amendments. It would also establish a civil penalty of \$5,000 for anyone in violation of regulations and laws surrounding the application of soil amendments.

Assigned to House Natural Resources & Environment Committee on 3/9/2022.

[HR 916:](#)

Reps. Dukes, Williams, Thomas, Wilkerson, Jackson, and others

This resolution would establish the Joint Study Committee for the Expansion and National Competitiveness of Georgia Agriculture made up of members from the Georgia State Senate and House of Representatives. The study committee would look at ways to become a national leader and increase Georgia's market share in a variety of agricultural crops and sectors.

Assigned to House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 3/8/2022.

[HR 933:](#)

Rep. Werkheiser

This resolution would recognize February of 2022 as Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education Month.

House Read and Adopted on 3/4/2022.

[HR 943:](#)

Reps. Bennett, Beverly, Wilkerson, Schofield, Hawkins, and others

This resolution would create the House Healthy Food Retail Study Committee to investigate the availability of and access to fresh, healthy food in certain rural and urban areas in Georgia.

Assigned to House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 3/9/2022.

[SB 474:](#)

Sens. Summers, Walker III, Harper, Goodman, Anderson

This legislation seeks to amend the state constitution and allow for an ad-valorem tax exemption on aircraft used for the aerial application of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, seeds, or any other agricultural product that would normally be used in an agricultural operation and can be applied by aerial application.

Senate Reconsidered and Placed on General Calendar on 3/8/2022.

[SB 481:](#)

Sens. Jackson, Harper, Mullis, Jones II, Summers

This bipartisan piece of legislation would amend the "Georgia Hemp Farming Act" to allow for someone convicted of a misdemeanor that involved the sale or trafficking of a controlled substance to still be permitted to grow hemp in Georgia. Under this proposal anyone convicted of a felony involving the sale or trafficking of a controlled substance would still be prohibited from obtaining a

permit to grow hemp.

Senate Recommitted on 3/9/2022.

[SB 486:](#)

Sens. Harper, Walker III, Anderson, Sims, Goodman

Last year GFB worked with Sen. Lee Anderson (R-Grovetown) to pass SB 247, which modernized the procedures for Commodity Commissions to serve notices, hold public hearings, and vote to better utilize commission funds and more effectively reach producers. This bill would provide for the same modernization and updates to the propane commodity commission.

Senate Passed/Adopted on 3/4/2022. Assigned to House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 3/8/2022.

[SB 537:](#)

Sens. Jones II, Goodman, Jackson, Sims, Rhettt and others

This bipartisan bill would establish the "Georgia Food Security Advisory Council" made up of 23 members ranging from the Commissioner of Agriculture to representatives from the public health community. One member would be a Georgia farmer appointed by the Majority Leader of the senate in consultation with the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association. This council would make recommendations that seek to end food insecurity in Georgia.

Senate Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee Favorably Reported by Substitute on 3/8/2022.

[SB 591:](#)

Sens. Hatchett and Ginn

This proposal would amend current metal theft law to generally allow for cash payments (up to \$100) at secondary metal recyclers for deposits excluding utility wire, communications copper, copper wire, batteries, or catalytic converters. Under current law, recyclers may only pay using a check, electronic funds transfer, or a voucher as a proven method of curbing metal theft in our state. We greatly appreciate the bill sponsor, Sen. Bo Hatchett, for working to find a balance between deterrence of widespread metal theft while still allowing for a business-friendly environment. Hatchett incorporated numerous aspects in the bill to avoid a resurgence of metal theft including: maintaining extensive deposit records and documentation of personal identification of customers; a two-year repeal of this bill, unless extended by the legislature because no increased instances of theft are seen; and enhanced penalties by making it a felony if metal theft results in property damage above \$1,500.

Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee Favorably Reported by Substitute on 3/9/2022.

[SB 604:](#)

Sens. Mullis and Harper

This bill would remove the State Board of Veterinary Medicine from underneath the Secretary of State and put it under the Georgia Department of Agriculture for administrative purposes. It would also create an executive director position for the board who will serve as a full-time employee. This proposal is aimed at streamlining the licensing process for new veterinarians.

Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee on 3/8/2022.

BILLS OF INTEREST

[HB 44:](#)

Reps. Cantrell, Greene, Barr, Werkheiser, Gambill, and Williams

This bill would require Georgia to observe Daylight Savings Time year-round. This will only become effective if Congress authorizes states to observe daylight savings time year-round.

House Passed/Adopted on 3/5/2021. Assigned to Senate Rules Committee on 1/10/2022.

[HB 139:](#)

Reps. Mainor, Dukes, McClain, Mallow, and Thomas

This bill would prohibit trains from blocking any traffic crossing for longer than 15 minutes (with exceptions for safety reasons), and also require signage at crossings providing a telephone number to report such instances.

Assigned to House Transportation Committee on 1/28/2021.

[HB 482:](#)

Reps. Lim and Holcomb

This bill would provide a preferential tax rate program that seeks to promote urban agriculture as well as provide for urban agricultural incentive zones that would be located in areas with a 15% or greater poverty rate. The program includes restrictions for properties that enter a contract such as being at least .10 acres but not more than 5 acres and for an initial term of at least 5 years. This bill is the enabling legislation for HR 164 that would put this change on the ballot in 2022 as a constitutional amendment.

Assigned to House Ways and Means Committee on 2/17/2021.

[HB 496:](#)

Reps. Burchett, Burns, Rhodes, Ridley, and Williams

This bill seeks to create a \$1,000 Annual Forest Product Permit, issuable by the Department of Transportation, allowing vehicles hauling timber up to a gross weight of 95,000, up to 10 feet wide, and no more than 100 feet long.

Assigned to House Transportation Committee on 2/18/2021.

[HB 500:](#)

Reps. Burchett, Blackmon, Dickey, Rhodes, and Watson

The Georgia Agribusiness and Rural Jobs Act, established in 2017, provides a system of non-traditional loans for rural businesses to encourage economic growth and jobs. This legislation would provide the second round of funding, in the amount of \$100 million, to replenish the program.

House Passed/Adopted by Substitute on 2/22/2022. Assigned to Senate Finance Committee on 2/24/2022.

[HB 504:](#)

Reps. Williamson, Reeves, Burns, Knight, Blackmon, and Lott

Similar to HB 500, this legislation provides a second round of funding for the Georgia Agribusiness

and Rural Jobs Act in the amount of \$100 million. However, the bill goes on to create a new NAICS code and tax program for medical equipment and supplies manufacturers. Additionally, this bill goes on to address other tax credit programs dealing with high-impact aerospace defense projects, Georgia ports, and railroads.

Assigned to House Ways and Means Committee on 2/18/2021.

[HB 608:](#)

Reps. Wiedower, Burns, Smyre, Parsons, and Kelley

In an effort to enhance the expansion of broadband to unserved areas, this legislation authorizes the use of OneGeorgia funds to award contracts to qualified providers under the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative.

Assigned to House Governmental Affairs Committee on 2/24/2021.

[HB 976:](#)

Reps. Schofield, Jackson, Scott, Buckner, Bentley, and others

This bill seeks to establish a “Black Farmer Restoration Office” to support current Black farmers and to encourage the growth of Black farmers into the field of agriculture. It also would establish a “Farm Conservation Corps” to provide on-farm apprenticeships to those between the ages of 18 and 29 from socially disadvantaged groups. According to the proposal, farms offering the apprenticeship must have a gross annual income of less than \$250,000 and be owned by a social disadvantaged farmer, a beginning farmer, or a certified organic farmer.

Assigned to House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee on 1/25/2022.

[HB 978:](#)

Reps. Smith, Stephens, England, Greene, and Dempsey

This bill would require the board of tax assessors for a county that is declared a disaster area to conduct a full appraisal of all the properties located within the disaster area to determine if the current appraised value still reflects the value of the properties following the declared disaster. If it does not, the tax assessor must adjust the appraised value and notify the property owner.

Assigned to House Ways and Means Committee on 1/25/2022.

[HB 1002:](#)

Reps. Smith, Gambill, Williams, Scoggins, McDonald, and others

This bill would designate the opossum as the official state marsupial.

Assigned to House State Planning and Community Affairs Committee on 1/26/2022.

[HB 1038:](#)

Reps. Cooper, Jasperse, Corbett, Watson, and England

In recent years, the General Assembly has focused on bolstering availability of rural healthcare. This bill would expand the eligibility of an existing state income tax credit currently limited to physicians practicing in rural areas (<50,000) to also include dentists, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants.

Assigned to House Ways and Means Committee on 1/27/2022.

[HB 1041:](#)

Reps. Pirkle, Jasperse, Watson, England, Corbett, and others

This legislation increases the available tax credits for contributions to rural hospitals from \$65 to \$75 million per year.

Assigned to House Ways and Means Committee on 1/27/2022.

[HB 1055:](#)

Reps. Ridley, Corbett, Barton, and Anderson

This bill would amend the definition of “all-terrain vehicle” by increasing the maximum weight to from 2500 lbs to 3500 lbs.

House Passed/Adopted on 2/07/2022. Referred to Senate Transportation Committee on 2/08/2022.

[HB 1147:](#)

Reps. Rhodes, Corbett, LaHood, Ridley, and Smith

This bill would authorize the hunting and trapping of raccoons and opossum year round.

House Passed/Adopted on 2/15/2022. Assigned to Senate Natural Resources & Environment Committee on 2/17/2022.

[HB 1150:](#)

Reps. Dickey, Watson, England, Jasperse, and Pirkle

Also known as the Freedom to Farm Act, HB 1150, addresses ambiguity in Georgia’s current Right to Farm statute and seeks to protect farmers from frivolous nuisance claims brought by those who do not like the inherent aspects of agriculture. With Georgia’s number one economic driver being agriculture, there is a vested interest in protecting the families and businesses that provide all of our food and fiber. There has been an increase in the number of nuisance claims brought against Georgia farms due to recent federal court precedent that turns current Right to Farm law on its head. This bill would allow for a farm to have certainty after a period of time, as long as they are operating within the law and according to all rules and regulations, that they will be protected from unnecessary nuisance lawsuits.

House Passed/Adopted by Substitute on 3/3/2022. Assigned to Senate Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 3/4/2022.

[HB 1175:](#)

Reps. Pirkle, Camp, Campbell, and Jenkins

This proposal comes out of a summer study committee consisting of members from the House Agriculture Committee. Chaired by Rep. Clay Pirkle, the committee looked into the issue of legalizing the sale of raw milk for human consumption. With the technological advancements in the dairy industry that provide for a very consistently safe product, many believed there was a way to produce raw (unpasteurized) milk that would be safe for human consumption. Many in the dairy industry, especially smaller producers, have been seeking a way to increase their already slim margins with a product like raw milk that brings a premium price due and has an increasing consumer demand. This bill would allow for the legal sale of raw milk for human consumption under a set of specific rules and regulations that seek to ensure a safe product.

House Passed/Adopted by Substitute on 3/3/2022. Assigned to Senate Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 3/4/2022.

[HB 1176:](#)

Reps. Pirkle and Clark

This bill pertains to the right of those to maintain and repair their own personal property, whether it be a cell phone or agricultural equipment. Although this would apply to many consumer items, it is increasingly important for the agricultural sector. Farm equipment is now reliant on computer systems, and technological barriers placed in the software and codes of equipment are only accessible to the manufacturer and dealers. Currently, farmers must rely on dealers for repairs to their tractors and equipment due to these stop-guards which render equipment useless unless parts and repairs are done by an authorized dealer technician.

Without third-party access to the necessary tools and software, farmers are beholden to the prices and schedules of manufacturers. Farmers already face historically high costs to purchase equipment, and with the consolidation of many dealers they must also face high prices for dealer technicians to travel long distances to the farm to make repairs—an issue that could be addressed with third-party solutions. This legislation would require that manufacturers make available to independent service providers or owners of the equipment, at a fair and reasonable cost, the tools, parts, and manuals necessary to work on their own equipment.

Assigned to House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 2/03/2022.

[HB 1292:](#)

Reps. Jasperse, Mathis, Erwin, England, and Pirkle

This bill would prohibit any student who is participating in a 4-H sponsored activity or program from being counted as absent at school.

House Passed/Adopted on 3/1/2022. Assigned to Senate Education and Youth Committee on 3/3/2022.

[HB 1301:](#)

Reps. Hogan, Watson, Gambill, Bentley, Meeks, and others

This bill would prohibit local governments from differentiating the use of, standards, or treatment of gas powered leaf blowers from any other such equipment. It would not however, restrict a county from promoting the use of alternatively powered leaf blowers.

House Governmental Affairs Committee Favorably Reported on 2/24/22.

[HB 1303:](#)

Reps. Dickey, England, Pirkle, Erwin, Bentley and others

This bill would transition a pilot program that has been in place for elementary agricultural education to an ongoing and permanent program. It would also require schools to hire an elementary agricultural education teacher to administer the program.

House Passed/Adopted on 3/1/2022. Assigned to Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee on 3/3/2022.

[HB 1309:](#)

Reps. Thomas, Schofield, Lim, and Lewis-Ward

Also known as the Georgia Urban Farming Youth Initiative Act, HB 1309 would create a pilot program through UGA's Cooperative Extension Service to promote farming and the efficient use of land in urban counties (with a population of 150,000+); educate program participants on all aspects of farming in an urban environment and encourage other members of the community to begin and to continue farming; and provide a sufficient understanding of farming operations so as to facilitate the ability of graduating participants to obtain Georgia Agriculture Tax Exemption (GATE) identification numbers and subsequently operate successful, small-scale farms within their communities.

Assigned to House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 2/11/2022.

[HB 1450:](#)

Reps. Rich, Tankersley, Camp, Hagan, Oliver, and others

This bill titled "The Georgia Safe Outdoor Dog Act" would put in place restrictions for how and where a dog may be kept when left unattended. It would make it illegal to leave a dog unattended without access to adequate food, shelter, and water and require the area where it is kept to be free of excess standing water or feces. It would also limit the types of restraints or tethers that could be used at any time. It does provide exemptions for times when a dog is directly participating in an agriculture, hunting, or other activities of recreational nature.

Assigned to House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 2/28/2022.

[HB 1451:](#)

Reps. McLaurin and Gilligan

This proposal would eliminate the license or permit requirement to own an African Pygmy Hedgehog. This idea has been introduced in the past but presents multiple concerns regarding the spread of disease and the possible introduction of an invasive species into the wild.

Assigned to House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 2/28/2022.

[HB 1473:](#)

Reps. Burchett, LaHood, Corbett, and Gambill

This bill would prohibit a train carrier from blocking a railroad crossing for longer than 15 minutes unless it is caused by a mechanical failure or accident. It would also impose a \$500 monetary penalty per 5 minutes the train is blocking a crossing.

Assigned to House Transportation Committee on 3/1/2022.

[HB 1479:](#)

Reps. Corbett, Watson, Houston, Burns, and Dickey

This bill would make the State Board of Registration for Foresters an independent state agency and attach it to the State Forestry Commission for administrative purposes. The members of the board would be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate.

Assigned to House Natural Resources and Environment Committee on 3/3/2022.

[HB 1496:](#)

Reps. Gullett, Rich, Anderson, Dickey, Gaines, and others

This bill would provide that a local sheriff's department could donate a single livestock animal that has been impounded to an animal rescue organization after due notice has been given. This bill comes in response to an issue with pot belly pigs getting loose and there being no market for the impounded animals to be sold at, leaving only the option of euthanization. The committee substitute fixed some potential unintended consequences of trying to solve a pot belly pig problem with legislation that would be widely applied to all livestock animals.

Assigned to House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 3/4/2022.

[HR 164:](#)

Reps. Lim and Holcomb

HR 164 would allow for a constitutional amendment to be on the ballot in 2022 should HB 482 pass. See above for additional information on HB 482.

Assigned to House Ways and Means Committee on 2/17/2021.

[HR 686:](#)

Reps. Watson, Burns, Buckner, Corbett, and Hatchett

This resolution proposes an amendment to the state constitution that would reduce the rate of ad-valorem tax assessment on timber at the time of sale or harvest. The proposal would require that the state appropriate funds annually to each county or municipality to compensate for any loss in revenue.

House Ways & Means Committee Favorably Reported by Substitute on 2/24/2022.

[HR 880:](#)

Reps. Schofield, Smith, Thomas, Kirby, and Scott

This resolution encourages support of urban farming by local governments.

Assigned to House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee on 3/3/2022.

[SB 30:](#)

Sens. Beach and Harbison

Senate Bill 30 would provide for pari-mutuel horse racing in the state at a limited number of licensed equestrian centers, create the Georgia Horse Racing Commission, and provide for the comprehensive regulation of pari-mutuel horse racing and related activities.

Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee on 1/28/2021.

[SB 65:](#)

Sens. Gooch, Miller, Cowsert, Tillery, Harper, and Hatchett

In a continued effort to expand broadband access to rural and un-served communities, this legislation allows the Public Service Commission and Department of Community Affairs to utilize a portion of the Universal Access Fund for such services.

Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee on 2/2/2021.

[SB 118:](#)

Sens. Harper, Burke, Tillery, Goodman, Anderson, and Kennedy

SB 118 would increase truck weights for 6-axle timber haulers up to 100,000 lbs.

Assigned to Senate Transportation Committee on 2/10/2021.

[SB 396:](#)

Sens. Goodman, Jones II, Walker III, Harper, Sims and others

This bill seeks to create the Georgia Farm to Foodbank (F2FB) Program by changing the Georgia Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This initiative is a Governor's priority and included in his budget proposal is \$800,000 to fund the program. The funds will be used for grants to provide Georgia Grown products straight from producers to regional foodbanks that will be able to use that food to feed those who need food assistance. The program will be administered by the Georgia Department of Agriculture and they will submit an annual report that contains information on where the food came from and where it went.

Senate Passed/Adopted on 2/11/2022. House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee Favorably Reported on 2/24/2022.

[SB 578:](#)

Sens. Walker III, Burns, Anderson, Burke and Summers

This bill would establish a "home kitchen operation" license to be issued by the Department of Agriculture. It would allow a "home kitchen operation" to prepare, pack, sell, and serve ready to eat foods directly to the consumer.

Assigned to Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee on 3/3/2022.

[SR 460:](#)

Sens. Halpern, Harrell, Jones II, Davenport, Butler

This resolution recognizes February as Career, Technical, and Agriculture Education Month to highlight the necessity of programs that support critical sectors of Georgia's economy, including the agriculture industry.

Senate Read and Adopted on 2/10/2022.

[SR 569:](#)

Sens. Walker, Anderson, Goodman, Harper, Burke, and others

This resolution recognizes March as Georgia Peanut Month.

Senate Read and Adopted on 2/28/2022.

[SR 580:](#)

Sens. Walker, Anderson, Goodman, Harper, Burke, and others

This resolution commends the Georgia Cattlemen's Association for its 60th Anniversary.

Senate Read and Adopted on 2/28/2022.

FEDERAL UPDATES

USDA ANNOUNCES INVESTMENT TO SUPPORT AMERICAN-MADE FERTILIZER

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today that it will make \$250 million available through a grant program to support independent, innovative, and sustainable American fertilizer production.

The new program will support fertilizer production that is:

Independent – outside the dominant fertilizer suppliers, increasing competition in a concentrated market;

- Made in America – produced in the United States by domestic companies, creating good-paying jobs at home and reducing the reliance on potentially unstable or inconsistent foreign supplies;
- Innovative – improve upon fertilizer production methods to jump start the next generation of fertilizers;
- Sustainable – reduces the greenhouse gas impact of transportation, production, and use through renewable energy sources, feedstocks, formulations, and incentivizing greater precision in fertilizer use;
- Farmer-focused – like other Commodity Credit Corporation investments, a driving factor will be providing support and opportunities for U.S. agriculture commodity producers.

Details on the application process will be announced in the summer of 2022, with the first awards expected before the end of 2022.

Additionally, to address growing competition concerns in the agricultural supply chain, USDA will launch a public inquiry seeking information regarding seeds and agricultural inputs, fertilizer, and retail markets.

To learn more about the initiative, view the USDA press release [here](#).

UPCOMING USDA PROGRAM DEADLINES

Several U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) national program deadlines are approaching. Note that this list does not include every deadline, and only includes federal deadlines. Check with the [local USDA Service Center](#) to learn about all available programs, and programs that have local or state level deadlines.

Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs

Mar 15, 2022

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages producers to contact their local USDA Service Centers to make or change elections and to enroll for 2022 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, providing future protections against market fluctuations. The election and enrollment period opened on Oct. 18, 2021 and runs through March 15, 2022.

[Learn more about ARC and PLC](#)

Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP)

Apr 15, 2022

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications for the Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP) through April 15, 2022. SMHPP provides pandemic assistance to hog producers who sold hogs through a negotiated sale from April 16, 2020 through September 1, 2020, the period in which these producers faced the greatest reduction in market prices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This program is part of USDA's Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative.

[Learn more about SMHPP](#)

NOT A MEMBER OF GEORGIA FARM BUREAU? JOIN TODAY!

The Georgia Farm Bureau Federation has a membership of almost 250,000 and serves as state's the largest general farm organization. Our goal is to provide leadership and assistance to the agricultural sector, to promote farm products, to aid in ag-related procurement, to be a spokesman for the farmer in the legislative arena, to be a leader in the development and expansion of farm markets, and to strive for more agricultural research and educational funds and facilities.

With members in all 159 Georgia counties, Georgia Farm Bureau is dedicated to promoting and improving agriculture in our counties, state and nation and in continually improving and expanding our service-to-member programs which serve to enhance the quality of life for all Georgians.

[Membership](#) in Georgia Farm Bureau is open to everyone. You don't need to be a farmer or have insurance with us to join Farm Bureau!

If you would like to become a member of Georgia Farm Bureau, you can start your membership online right now! We have a simple application process, and you can be our newest member in just a couple of minutes. Click the button below or use our [County Office Locator](#) to find the office nearest you.

JOIN TODAY

DATES TO REMEMBER

- March 15: Georgia Cattlemen's Association Steak Biscuit Day at the Capitol
-

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