

Plumbing and Mechanical Association of Georgia

Legislative Report

April 20, 2011

Bills introduced during the 2011 legislative session and not receiving final action this year will carry over to the 2012 legislative session. Some of the carryover bills and resolutions were introduced too late to meet the crossover deadline and have not been previously reported. These are marked with a ► symbol in the margin.

Key bills that passed.

Unemployment Compensation: The legislature passed HB 272, a bill to limit a pending increase in 2012 unemployment taxes for Georgia employers. The bill allows the Insurance Commissioner to increase unemployment taxes as much as 50%. Had the bill not passed, there would have been an automatic increase in the tax of 100% due to the \$634 million deficit in the Employment Security Trust Fund.

In addition, the lawmakers approved an increase in the duration of unemployment benefits from 79 weeks to 99 weeks. The additional funds for this extension will come from a federal grant available to any state. The money will not have to be repaid by the State, but ultimately must be repaid by employers nationally.

Immigration Reform: Employers with more than 10 employees will be required to use the federal E-Verify program to determine the eligibility of prospective employees under HB 87. For employers with 11 to 99 employees, the requirement takes effect July 1, 2013. For employers with 100 to 499 employees, the requirement takes effect July 1, 2012. Larger employers must comply by January 1, 2012. HB 87 also incorporates some of the enforcement provisions in the controversial Arizona law.

Ethics/Lobbyist Registration: Governor Nathan Deal has already signed HB 232, which excludes from lobbyist registration requirements any individuals who spend less than 10% of their working hours engaged in lobbying. This legislation became necessary due to a sweeping interpretation of the current law by the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission.

Bills that carry over to 2012.

SB 113 – Carter of Savannah: to clarify the authority of municipalities to enter into certain contracts; to change provisions relating to definitions relative to public works bidding. Passed Senate. Remained in House Governmental Affairs.

SR 20 – Rogers of Woodstock: a Resolution proposing a constitutional amendment to provide for state spending limits and disposition of excess revenues. Passed Senate and referred to House Ways & Means.

▶SR 393 – Ligon of Brunswick: to create the Senate Residential and General Contractors Licensing Study Committee. Among other things would focus on need to relax fees and proof of financial ability. Remained in Senate Regulated Industries Committee.

HB 57 – Holt of Social Circle: to allow unlicensed individuals to install, repair, or alter residential water treatment systems and the plumbing and plumbing equipment incidental to such systems. Technically, this bill will carry over to the 2012 session. Indications are, however, that the sponsor will not seek passage of the measure.

HB 288 – Special Joint Committee on Tax Reform: Provisions for sales taxes on household services were removed from HB 288, the tax reform bill, before it emerged from the Joint Committee. House Speaker David Ralston chose not to bring the bill to a vote this session. The bill will probably be considered at a later date, but it appears unlikely that taxes on services will be added back to the bill.

▶HB 492 – Heckstall of East Point: relating to water and sewer projects, would change the definition of “municipality” to include any municipality which is a member of a metropolitan sewer system pursuant to intergovernmental contacts, regardless of average waste-water flow. Remained in Ways & Means.

▶HB 507 – Fludd of Tyrone: Similar to HB 492 above. Remained in Ways & Means.

▶HB 558 – Spencer of Woodbine: would allow local governments to give preference to local resident businesses when considering bids for local public works projects. Remained in House Judiciary.

▶HB 643 – Jones of Atlanta: to require that secondary metals recyclers maintain fingerprints of persons delivering regulated metal property. Remained in House Judiciary.

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