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2014 Georgia General Assembly 2014 Legislative Wrap Up

While a wild end to the 2014 session of the General Assembly was expected, the frenzied pace and controversies that erupted the last two days of session exceeded expectations. Versions of bills ricocheted between chambers until midnight. Multiple bills were attached to other bills-- in some cases, several times, and with multiple different bill numbers. Amendments needed only an hour before the final vote was taken (and before amended language was available to public observers). In the midst of this high stakes chaos, some high profile bills passed and some did not. It took a week for the final language of all the bills to be posted and available to the public. Fasten your seatbelts for a quick ride through the results.

“Scope of Practice” bills fared poorly this session. [SB 94](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/SB/94) which removed restrictions to APRN ordering of radiographic imaging scans, failed to progress in the House despite identical language being passed by the Senate two years in a row. [SB 268](http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/display/20132014/SB/268) the PA’s Schedule II prescribing bill met a similar fate in the House Health and Human Services Committee after being passed by the Senate. [HB 971](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/HB/971), “The Consumer Information and Awareness Act” modeled after the American Medical Association’s “Truth in Advertising” campaign was held in the House Rules Committee and failed to progress to the House floor for a vote.

[HB 922](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/HB/922) Creating the limited pilot of providing a tax credit to physician preceptors of MD, APRN and PA students was amended onto [SB 391](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/SB/391) and passed late into the evening of the session’s final day.

[HB 251](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/HB/251) Making it unlawful to sell alternate nicotine products or vapor products to minors passed.

[HB 943](http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/display/20132014/HB/943) Limits co-pays to no more than $200.00 for any filled prescription of orally administered chemotherapy. The bill which passed also incorporated some language from the former [HB 707](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/HB/707) forbidding state or local governments from using their resources to promote Medicaid expansion or undertake some Affordable Care Act activities.

[HB 990](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/HB/990) Prohibits the expansion of Medicaid eligibility through an increase in the income threshold without prior legislative approval. Prior to this bill being passed Medicaid expansion authority resided solely with the Governor.

[HB 885](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/HB/885) The bill that would have allowed research of a non-hallucinogenic medical derivative of cannabis by academic medical centers for the treatment of cancer, glaucoma and seizure disorders (especially in children) which was passed overwhelmingly by the house was amended by the Senate onto [SB 397](http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/display/20132014/SB/397). This bill mandated insurance coverage for children with autism and was passed unanimously by the Senate. The House refused to pass the autism insurance mandate even with the medical cannabis bill attached, and the Senate refused to pass the medical cannabis bill unless the autism bill was passed, so both failed. Instead, [SR 981](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/SR/981) which created a study committee on violence toward health care workers was amended to add a medical cannabis derivative study committee.

[SB 273](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/SB/273) Which creates a Maternal Mortality Review Committee to review maternal deaths and to develop strategies for the preven­tion of maternal deaths, passed. Georgia currently has the highest rate of maternal deaths in the nation.

[HB 965](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/HB/965) legally protects certain drug users seeking emergency treatment and allows lay administration of opioid antagonists. Final version of the bill which passed included like provisions for treating an alcohol poisoning emergency as well.

[HB 772](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/HB/772) Requires drug testing for applicants for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and food stamps (SNAP). Dependent children under 18 years of age are exempt. The bill that passed would require testing at any time a reasonable suspicion (e.g. de­meanor, missed appointments and arrest, termination from employment due to unlaw­ful drug use, etc.) exists that an applicant or recipient is using an illegal drug

[HB 60](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/HB/60) Originally a bill allowing retired judges to carry weapons became a vehicle to add most of the provisions of the original [HB 875](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/HB/875). The final version that was passed removes restric­tions on guns in bars and in many government buildings. Church­es may choose to allow guns on their premises. School boards may arm employees. Honorably discharged military veterans under 21 years old can carry a concealed weapon. Provisions allowing weapons on college campuses were removed to get the Senate to agree to the amended bill**.**

Thanks to all who communicated to their Senators and Representatives during the course of the session. A special thank you to those who took time to come down to the Capitol during CAPRN’s “Legislative Working Days”. Your visits had an impact. Remember, **NOW IS THE TIME** to engage incumbents and other candidates prior to the **May 20** primary elections and beyond. See the advocacy page of the CAPRN website at [www.caprn.org](http://www.caprn.org) for a sample letter of introduction to your elected representative that you can send in about **three minutes.** Planning for the January 2015 session of the General Assembly starts soon, so stay tuned....

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