

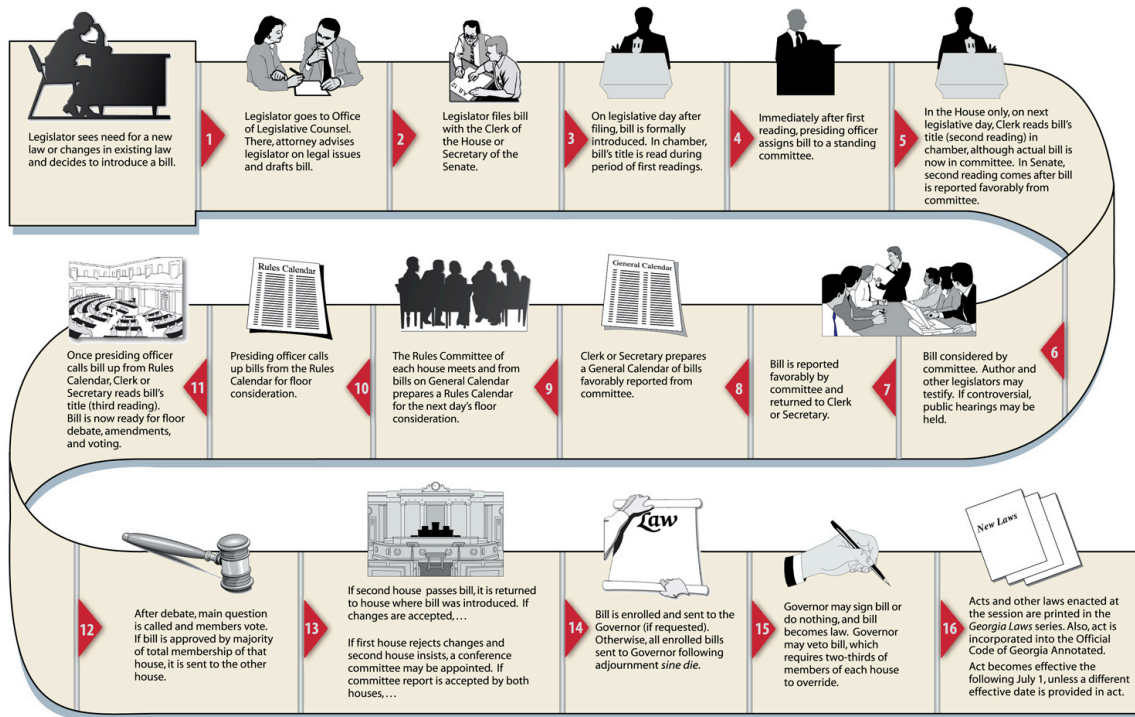


{{FirstName or 'Friends'}} --

This week we completed Day 10 of Georgia’s 40-day legislative session.



[Georgia’s Constitution](#) stipulates the state’s annual legislative session “*may continue in session for a period of no longer than 40 days in the aggregate each year,*” and my personal (unpopular) opinion is that **this is way too short to do all the work that needs to get done for the people of Georgia.** However, barring a resolution proposing a constitutional amendment to change this requirement, **we have only 30 legislative days left this year to pass any new laws,** with some significant milestones to meet in between.



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Source: georgiaplanning.org.

In order for a bill to become law, it has to pass through many, many steps, and for good reason. **Ideally, any new law should be thoroughly vetted, edited, modified, and voted through multiple times through both chambers** of the legislature before being signed or vetoed by the Governor. There are ways to subvert some or even most of these steps, of course, which we'll discuss in a future newsletter, but generally speaking, bills should and do go through every step of this process.

We face some significant deadlines each session. **Day 28** of our 40-day session is known as "**Crossover Day**," the day by which any bill must be voted out of one chamber (e.g. the House) and "cross over" to the other chamber (e.g. the Senate) in order to be considered for final passage this year. **Bills that do not make it out of the originating chamber by Crossover Day are technically dead for the year**, with the stakes even higher in the second year of a two-year term, like 2024.

Crossover Day for 2024 is February 28th, a day when you can expect us to be at the Capitol until close to midnight, as we scramble to give as many bills a chance to "cross over" as possible before the deadline. Remember that no matter how inconsequential some bills may seem, **every piece of legislation is**

someone's baby, and there are plenty of broken hearts when the gavel comes down late in the evening on Crossover.



An even more definitive deadline, of course, is **Sine Die, the final day of the legislative session**. Bills that do not pass by Sine Die will need to be reintroduced the following legislative year, in the new biennium, which, after another round of elections, always introduces new variables and challenges. **Sine Die for 2024 is March 28th.**

But we have plenty of work to do until then.

Let's get into it.

GUN SAFETY LEGISLATION

Those who have been following my work for years know that **gun violence prevention has long been a priority**. And I'm going to be honest, this is not easy work to do in a state like Georgia, for all the reasons you might expect. However, I do think we're at a tipping point socially and politically, and I think in particular, **our work around safe storage has started to make inroads with our colleagues across the aisle.**

POLITICS

Gun safety storage bill gets hearing in Georgia legislature, a first since Atlanta spa shootings

State Rep. Michelle Au presented HB 161 to a Georgia House subcommittee Thursday morning.



Author: Jonathan Raymond (11Alive)
Published: 11:14 AM EDT March 16, 2023
Updated: 11:14 AM EDT March 16, 2023



[Click here to read full article](#)

This week, [HB 971](#) was filed, which **proposes a tax credit for the purchase of safe storage equipment**, as well as for gun safety informational courses. Many have noted that this bill is strikingly similar to my bill [HB 855](#), the Safe Storage Tax Credit Act, [which was endorsed by the gun rights group Georgia Second Amendment](#).

This new gun safe storage tax credit bill, in contrast, is sponsored entirely by Republicans, many in swing districts, **which I'm hoping will give it the strongest possible chance to pass.**

HB 971

Firearm Safe Handling and Secure Storage Tax Credit Act; enact

Current Version

Sponsors

No.	Name	District
1.	Newton, Mark	127th
2.	Hilton, Scott	48th
3.	Reeves, Matt	99th
4.	Silcox, Deborah	53rd
5.	Hitchens, Bill	161st
6.	Dickey, Robert	145th

Committees

House Committee:	Ways & Means
Senate Committee:	N/A

Source: [Georgia General Assembly](#).

I am so gratified that so many of our friends across the aisle have come to recognize that safe storage of firearms is in fact a critical priority, and I will do everything in my power to ensure that this bill, and other bills prioritizing safe storage (like [HB 161](#), the Pediatric Health Safe Storage Act) are fairly heard, voted on, and signed into law. **HB 971** has been assigned to the House [Ways and Means](#) Committee, on which two of its sponsors sit and [chair relevant subcommittees](#) in which it can be heard.

I am also hoping that our Republican friends will prioritize the children legislation like this aims to protect, and **have a stiff enough backbone** to [stand up to the pro-gun lobby](#) who have already started loudly agitating against this and other gun safety bills.



Pro-gun groups use threats and intimidation to scare people away from doing what is right. I am so grateful for the courageous gun safety advocates whom we've partnered with all over the state and the country who show up, day after day, to advocate on behalf of Georgians and our children. ***I hope the Republicans who chose to carry this tax credit bill can be half as brave as the advocates I work with every day.***

MEDICAID EXPANSION

This week [the AJC published my Op-Ed](#) making the case that there is "no better way to restore our voters' faith in the power and role of their government" than by showing them **members of both parties can stop fighting, work together, and pass substantive policy that could improve Georgians' lives, health, and finances.**

[That something is Medicaid Expansion.](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

OPINION

Opinion: Georgia, let's do bipartisan work and expand Medicaid

State lawmaker, physician says doing so would help restore voters' faith and improve health outcomes here.



Georgia's State Capitol.

By Michelle Au

Jan 23, 2024

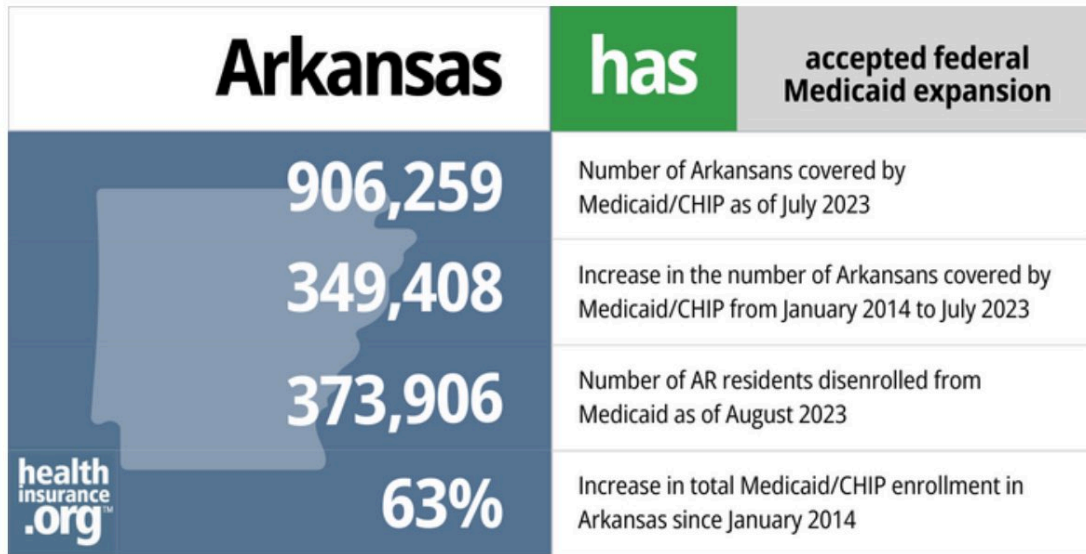


[Click here to read full article](#)

However, **we have yet to see any filed legislation, let alone any draft legislation from either chamber, proposing this change.** And while this obviously makes me somewhat anxious (I note again the tight timeframes we work under each session), I remain optimistic that good people in both chambers seem to want to prioritize improving healthcare access in this state, and hope we can come together on a workable solution that is both **fiscally prudent and morally sound.**

Much has been made of the speculation that **Georgia may be considering “the Arkansas model”** as a possibility for Medicaid expansion, with some

wondering if this plan would, in fact, be as advantageous as full expansion under the ACA.



Louise Norris | December 2, 2023

Source: healthinsurance.org

In brief, **the Arkansas model is full Medicaid expansion in all the ways that matter.** It would still increase federal funding to cover patients up to 138% above the federal poverty level, and it would still avail Georgia of the 9 to 1 federal match dollars for extending this access. The difference in this model from “traditional” Medicaid expansion is that it **allows the state to use Medicaid funds to cover the cost of securing private qualified health insurance plans through the Marketplace/exchange** instead of using a fee-for-service or Medicaid managed care approach.

Due to these differences, **there would be some concomitant differences in administration and cost** of such an expansion. (For example, as private health insurance premiums and reimbursements are higher than that for traditional Medicaid, I’d expect this to be somewhat more expensive than what we’d been projecting for a more standard Medicaid expansion model.) However, if this is the way Georgia can get to yes on this recalcitrant problem of having one of the highest non-insured rates in the nation, personally, I’m all for it.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



AJC

HEALTH NEWS

Number of Georgians dropped from Medicaid nears 500,000

At the halfway point in the year of Medicaid “redetermination,” the state is behind in re-evaluating all 2.8 million Georgia Medicaid recipients



Credit: Hyosub Shir

MEDICAID REVOCATIONS. As Georgia lawmakers consider some form of Medicaid expansion, state health officials report that at least 488,000 Georgians have had Medicaid benefits revoked since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

More residents will lose coverage as officials continue to work through an eligibility audit, known as a redetermination, of the state’s 2.8 million Medicaid recipients. At this point, the state has reviewed the qualifications of fewer than half the current Georgia recipients.

[Click here to read full article](#)

Meanwhile, the numbers don’t lie, and we continue to receive indications that **the status quo, and the paltry measures adopted thus far, are not working.** Reporting out of the AJC this week has also indicated that with the confluence of the under-resourced Medicaid redetermination process and the sluggish uptake of the Governor’s [Pathways to Coverage Program](#), [approximately as many Georgians have lost Medicaid coverage in Georgia as stand to gain it under full Medicaid expansion.](#) We are moving fast in the wrong direction.

Such failures are policy choices. It is my hope that we will make different choices soon.

TEAM AU IN ACTION

Our first Gold Dome Blood Drive of 2024 was a huge success, shattering records with the help of all our dedicated partners in all corners of the Capitol. Lawmakers, members of the press corps, lobbyists and legislative staff were all seen at the bloodmobile this Wednesday, and at the end of the day, **we were able to help up to 72 patients all over the state**, at hospitals including

CHOA, Grady, Emory, Piedmont, Northside, and Northeast Georgia Medical Center!



Let's keep things going and aim to break our own record at [the next blood drive](#), which is scheduled for **March 21st**, exactly 8 weeks and 1 day after the last, so **if you donated this time, you can donate again!** Meanwhile, eat your iron-rich foods and get ready to roll up your sleeves and save lives.

* * *

Every year I look forward to this **visit with the medical students and pediatrics residents** from the [Morehouse School of Medicine](#) on their Health Policy and Advocacy rotation! I wish I'd had an elective like that when I was a med student, but I'm **so pleased that this new generation of doctors will have a chance to get engaged with patient advocacy at the legislature** so early.



We discussed Medicaid Expansion (their top priority!), the budget, mental health access, and concerns about [HB 897](#), which seeks to **repeal any measures to require vaccinations for public school attendance**. Needless to say, for the public health community and the pediatrics community in particular, this continued erosion of trust in established preventative medicine norms is alarming, and we will be watching bills like this very closely.

* * *

Georgia's Legislative Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Caucus was proud to be honored at a reception by the [Georgian Asian Pacific American](#)

[Bar Association \(GAPABA\)](#) this week, and celebrate our AAPI Caucus Chief of Staff **Vy Vu** for being awarded a grant to fund her work with the Caucus!



Sometimes when I speak with people outside Georgia they can barely believe that we have even *one* Asian lawmaker at the Georgia General Assembly. In fact, with 11 members, **we have one of the largest legislative AAPI Caucuses in the continental United States.** This fact is a testament to our rapidly diversifying state, and our growing and engaged electorate. One central priority of our bipartisan Caucus is to **continue to grow AAPI voter engagement**, and 2024 is going to be a huge year for this work in battleground Georgia.

TEAM AU EVENTS

As the Chair of Georgia's Legislative Asian American Pacific Islander Caucus, it is my honor to invite you to **Lunar New Year Day at the Capitol, February 15th, 2024!**



**GEORGIA'S LEGISLATIVE
ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC
ISLANDER (AAPI) CAUCUS**
*Invites you
to attend*

*Lunar New Year
at the Capitol*
**THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 15**



12:00 - 1:00 PM
*Community
Recognitions*
3:00 - 4:00 PM
Lion Dance

This event will be historic in nature, and will feature **the first ever traditional Lion Dance under the Gold Dome** to celebrate the Lunar New Year and usher in the Year of the Dragon!

This event is open to all. We will be having a community recognition ceremony at the South Steps of the Capitol from 12:00 to 1:00pm, a lunch reception, and enjoy the lion dance starting at 3:00pm. **Please join us; children are welcome!**

Please RSVP so we can get an accurate headcount, and for an email address where we can send helpful information including a schedule, parking, and tips for entering the Capitol building!

HOUSE DISTRICT 50 UPDATES

I was so happy to welcome multiple students from HD 50 and neighboring districts this week at the Capitol!



First I was proud to stand with my friend Rep. Shea Roberts to honor **Yohance Badyal** and **Cynthia Bai**, students at [Alpharetta High School](#) who created

Making An Impact, a student-led organization recognizing the impact paralysis has on patients, their families, and the community.

Second, I loved welcoming **Evan Wang**, a 7th grader at [Taylor Road Middle School](#) who served as a House Page this week!



House Pages get to work in the House chamber while lawmakers are doing the business of the day. Pages usually pass out legislation, deliver messages, alert lawmakers when constituents want to speak with them at the rope line outside the chamber, and get a front-row view of the business of the legislature.

(They also get to try out the Speaker's gavel, go home with a certificate, a stipend, and a free Chick Fil-A sandwich for lunch! In addition, this is also a great way to log in some volunteer hours for school graduation requirements or Beta Club!)



If you're 12-18 years old and interested in being a House page for a day, [apply here](#). Each legislator is only allowed a certain number of pages total for the legislative session, so if you're interested, make sure to put in your paperwork soon!

* * *

Even if you're not a page, know that **you can come any day we're in session to the Capitol and watch the work of the legislature from the gallery,** and if you [let my office know in advance](#) we will make sure you or your organization can be recognized by the entire House of Representatives.

Make sure you're [signed up to receive updates](#) on all these projects and more as we continue to ensure that we are best serving everyone in House District 50!

It has never been more important to pay attention to the work of state legislatures, and nowhere is it more evident than in our district, at the epicenter of the changing electoral face of Georgia, the leading edge of where swing districts are still being fought and flipped.



As always, please **do not hesitate to [reach out to our office](#)** should you need any assistance, would like to drop by to visit the Capitol, or if you have any concerns you'd like me to address on your behalf.

It is my honor to be your voice in the Georgia House of Representatives.

In Service,



Paid for by Au for Georgia Inc.

5805 State Bridge Road, Suite G238
Johns Creek, Georgia 30097
United States

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