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Highlights:

- Legislators convened Jan. 11 to begin the 2010 session.
- The Georgia House of Representatives elected its new leadership:

House Speaker David Ralston
Speaker Pro-Tem Jan Jones
Majority Whip Edward Lindsey
- Gov. Sonny Perdue gave his final State of the State address on Jan. 13 without discussing his budget recommendations for amended FY 10 and FY11 budgets. Perdue released budget information Friday, Jan 15, when legislators were not in session.
- House and Senate Appropriations committees are holding joint budget hearings this week.
- Legislators are in recess until Jan. 25.

For more information on legislative priorities from our partner organizations, visit:

[Barton Law Clinic](#)
[Georgia Appleseed](#)
[Georgia Budget and Policy Institute](#)

Voices for Georgia's Children:
[Children's Policy Watch](#) and
[Blog for Georgia's Children](#)

The Georgia General Assembly convened the 2010 legislative session Jan. 11. This is the second year of a two-year cycle. Bills that failed to pass in the 2009 session are eligible for passage in 2010.

The first day opened to major leadership changes in the House. Amid scandal former Speaker Glenn Richardson resigned effective Jan. 1. Mark Burkhalter (R-John's Creek) stepped into that vacant role to convene the 2010 Session. Within a few hours, the full House elected David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) as House speaker. Other leadership changes include:

- Jan Jones (R-Milton), elected as speaker pro-tem, became the first woman to serve at this level of leadership in the Georgia General Assembly.
- Rep. Ed Lindsey (R-Atlanta) is the new majority whip.
- Rep. Jerry Keen (R-St. Simon's Island) remains House majority leader.
- Rep. Dubose Porter (D-Dublin) remains House minority leader.

Gov. Sonny Perdue gave his final State of the State address on Jan. 13. Perdue broke with precedent by not presenting his recommendations for the amended FY10 and FY11 budgets at that time. The governor's budgets were released on Friday, Jan. 15, when the legislators were not in session. The session is in recess until Monday, Jan. 25. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees plan to hold joint budget hearings from Tuesday, Jan. 19, through Thursday, Jan. 21. For the schedule and to view the hearings, visit gpb.org/general-assembly.

Budget Update

The governor's amended FY10 budget proposes many new reductions that are sustained in the FY11 budget. The budget cuts, deep as they are, would be much worse if not for federal stimulus dollars, which comprise about 9 percent of appropriated funds in FY10. It is difficult to calculate how deep the proposed amended FY10 budget cuts actually are since agencies were directed in July to take a portion of these cuts that ranged from 3 to 10 percent.

In the governor's budget address, Perdue said the average reduction for state agencies is 12 percent. The Department of Education (DOE) was reduced the least (3 percent) while some agencies were reduced 100 percent.

We will learn more as a result of the budget hearings scheduled this week. Meanwhile, here are some proposed items:

Department of Community Health

- Reduce Medicaid/PeachCare fees for doctors, dentists, and other providers except hospitals and home and community-based services by 2 percent.
- Reduce county health department grant-in-aid by \$6 million (9 percent) in FY10.

Department of Education

- Reduce funding for the Quality Basic Education (QBE) formula funds to local school systems by \$527 million.
- Reduce funding for school nurses by \$1.164 million in FY10, and by an additional \$436,500 in FY11.

Office of the Governor

Transfer operating funds and positions from the Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV), formerly housed in the Department of Corrections, to the Governor's Office for Children and Families, and cut funding for GCFV by \$119,513.

Department of Human Services

- Reduce funding for child welfare services in-home case management by \$2.02 million and transfer these duties to state case workers.
- Reduce funding for Independent Living Program by \$700,000.
- Reduce funding for Family Connection by \$895,209 in FY10, and additionally by approximately \$732,000 in FY11. Some state funds are replaced with federal funds in FY11.

All state employees in FY10 will be required to take three additional furlough days by June 30, the end of the fiscal year, for a total of six furlough days.

Committee Chairs

Late last week Ralston announced these changes in Committee chairs:

- Rules—Bill Hembree (R-Douglasville) replaces Earl Ehrhart
- Higher Education—Len Walker (R-Loganville) replaces Bill Hembree
- Insurance—John Meadows (R-Calhoun) replaces Tom Knox
- Governmental Affairs—Mark Hamilton (R-Cumming) replaces Austin Scott
- Budget & Fiscal Affairs Oversight—Richard Smith (R-Columbus) replaces Penny Houston
- Human Relations—Clay Cox (R-Lilburn) replaces Len Walker
- Special Committee on Small Business Development (new committee)—John Lunsford (R-McDonough)
- Subcommittee on Human Services, Vice-Chair—Penny Houston (R-Nashville) replaces Mark Butler