**2019 Legislative Session**

Legislative Days 26-29 March 8, 2019

## **Crossover Day Passes**

The critical Crossover Day milestone was Thursday. While the Senate adjourned shortly before 7pm, the House worked until after 11pm. Their debate included hate crimes legislation and an abortion measure that was so contentious it threatened to derail the chamber’s remaining business.

Legislators were back to work on Friday, but met only briefly to assign newly-received legislation to committees. The Capitol was quickly vacated after the chambers adjourned and members will spend a much-needed break at home over the weekend. Next week, they will be in session Monday through Thursday. Eleven legislative days remain for members to shepherd bills to final passage. Adjournment is scheduled for April 2.

*These measures remain active after Crossover Day. Bills that are lost appear at the end of the report and will be removed next week.*

## **Priority Issues**

[**SB 76**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/SB/76)**: Practice Act Updates Sen. Ellis Black, R-Valdosta**

**Lost in the Senate Rules Committee**

This legislation seeks to make two clean-up changes to the Practice Act the legislature adopted last year. It adds a veterinary technician as a seventh member of the State Board and rebrands “veterinary technicians” as “registered veterinarian nurses.” Both amendments come at the request of the Association.

As the session has progressed, it has become clear that the effort to rebrand veterinary technicians lacks the necessary support. As a result, the bill was not placed on the Senate’s final debate calendar before Crossover Day and is lost for the year.

In an effort to move ahead with the provision to add a veterinary technician to the State Board, the Association will work with the House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee to incorporate the necessary language into Senate Bill 75, creating the Professional Health Program (described below).

[**SB 75**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/SB/75)**: Professional Health Program Sen. Ellis Black, R-Valdosta**

**Pending in the House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee**

This legislation allows the state board, via the Secretary of State’s Office, to contract with a professional health program to provide rehabilitative services to impaired veterinarians. A similar program exists but it limited to physicians and other professionals licensed by the Georgia Composite Medical Board. This is a priority of the Association’s Wellness Committee. The bill has been assigned to the House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee.

**Compounding.** The Association is actively working with the Georgia Board of Pharmacy and the Georgia Pharmacy Association to allow veterinarians to dispense non-controlled compounded drugs from a hospital supply in emergency care situations for a limited time.

The Association attended the Board of Pharmacy meeting on March 6. At that meeting, the Board voted in favor of initial adopted of the rule change. It is now in a public comment period and the Association plans to submit comments in support of the compromise language.

The Pharmacy Board’s next meeting is April 17 and the rule change could be finalized at that time. A special thanks to Dr. Vince Obsitnik for his effort on this issue.

## **Professional Issues**

[**HB 483**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/HB/483)**: Annual Drug Update Rep. Ron Stephens, R-Savannah**

**Adopted by the House on 3/7**

This is the annual drug update legislation, which reclassifies controlled substances. The Association has reviewed the measure and it does not appear to affect veterinarians. It does add Epidiolex to Schedule V drugs. Epidiolex is currently the only drug containing cannabidiol that is FDA approved.

[**HB 233**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/HB/233)**: Pharmacy Anti-Steering and Transparency Act Rep. David Knight, R-Griffin**

**Adopted by the House on 3/4**

HB 223 prohibits nonresident pharmacies from sharing patient and prescriber data with affiliates for commercial purposes, presenting a claim for a service based on a referral from an affiliate, or mailing a prescription to a patient when the prescriber calls for an in-person consultation. It further requires pharmacies to file an annual disclosure statement of its affiliates. This legislation may impact veterinarians who have a pharmacy storefront online.

## **Animal Welfare & Regulation Issues**

[**SB 32**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/sb/32)**: Animals in Hot Cars Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick, R-Marietta**

**Pending in the House Judiciary Committee**

This legislation is the direct product of the Senate Study Committee on Service Animals. It limits the liability for property damage caused by the rescue or attempted rescue of animals locked in motor vehicles, so long as the person first contacts emergency services. Similar legislation – [**SB 31**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/sb/31) – has also been filed; its liability limitation only applies to law enforcement officers attempting to rescue pets, not animals generally.

## **Taxation Issues**

[**HB 35**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/hb/35)**: Poultry Disease Monitoring Services Rep. Sam Watson, R-Moultrie**

**Pending in the Senate Finance Committee**

This bill creates a state sales tax exemption for sales to or by a nonprofit organization whose primary purpose is to provide poultry diagnostic and disease monitoring services. The bill comes at the request of the state’s poultry labs, which are administratively attached to the Department of Agriculture. The bill essentially stops one state agency (the Department Agriculture) from collecting and remitting sales tax to another state agency (the Department of Revenue). Watson sponsored an identical bill last year.

## **Licensing Issues**

[**SB 92**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/SB/92)**: Student Loans Sen. Brandon Beach, R-Alpharetta**

**Adopted by the Senate on 3/5**

SB 92 prohibits professional licensing boards from refusing to issue a license or suspending/revoking the license of a person who is in default on an education loan issued through the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation or through a federal agency. Proponents believe it is inappropriate for PLBs to serve as the collection agency or source of penalization for third-party loans.

## **Lost Legislation and Issues**

The following measures did not meet the Crossover Day deadline and will be removed altogether next week:

* [**HB 13**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/HB/13)to create a sales tax exemption for admission prices to nonprofit horse shows, rodeos, or livestock events or exhibitions;
* [**HB 112**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/hb/112) to prohibit the sale to and by minors of all drugs containing dextromethorphan; including veterinary applications;
* [**HB 136**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/HB/136)to require animal shelters to immediately post a photograph and information about impounded animals;
* [**HB 204**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/HB/204)to create an exemption from state sales and use tax for veterinary medications;
* [**HB 371**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/HB/371) to require live animals in the back of motor vehicles to be secured or contained;
* [**HB 416**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/HB/416) to create the State Vaccine Consumer Protection Office to assist members of the public who suspect vaccine injury;
* [**HB 508**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/HB/508)torequire the professional licensing division within the Secretary of State’s Office to self-fund operations based on revenue generated by licensing fees and other income;
* [**SB 45**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/SB/45) **and** [**SR 84**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/SR/84) to amend the constitution to allow for horse racing and create the Horse Racing Commission; and
* [**SB 69**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/SB/69)to prohibit a person convicted of animal cruelty from obtaining additional pet animals.

**The next legislative update will be available March 15**