**2019 Legislative Session**

Legislative Days 30-32 March 15, 2019

## **The Steady March towards *Sine Die***

Two years ago, at the start of the 2017 session, the House and Senate agreed to move Crossover from legislative day 30 to legislative day 28. The change not only allows two additional days for considering viable legislation, but it has slowed the overall pace between Crossover and *Sine Die*, the final day of session. What used to be a frenetic and heated 10-day sprint appears to have become a calmer and more deliberate march towards day 40.

Consider this and next week’s legislative schedules. This week, the House and Senate were active Monday through Thursday, but reserved Tuesday as a committee work day. Next week, they’ll be at work each day and use both Tuesday and Wednesday as committee work days. These scheduled work days help balance the competing priorities of perfecting legislation at the committee level and passing measures in the House and Senate chambers.

Just two full weeks remain before *Sine Die* on April 2. With any luck, the steady and deliberate march will continue until then.

## **Priority Issues**

[**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.

In an effort to move ahead with provisions in the now-lost practice act update ([**SB 76**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/SB/76)), the Association is working with the sponsor and Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee to amend SB 75 to include a veterinary technician on the state board. We continue to support efforts by the Veterinary Technicians Association and their lobbying team to rebrand “veterinary technicians” as “registered veterinary nurses” but the Association’s priority remains access to a PHP program and adding a seventh member to the state board. As a reminder, SB 76 failed to come out of the Senate over opposition to the nursing provision.

We’ve also learned that the Georgia Dental Association intends to offer an amendment that would allow their state board to contract with a professional health program.

**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 adoption of the rule change. For a copy of the compromise language and instructions for providing written or oral comments, please click [**here**](https://gbp.georgia.gov/sites/gbp.georgia.gov/files/related_files/press_release/NOTICE%20OF%20INTENT%20TO%20AMEND%20Rule%20480-11-.02_03.14.19.pdf).

The Pharmacy Board intends to consider the proposed amendments for final adoption at their meeting on April 17 at 9am in Atlanta. 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**

**Pending in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee**

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**

**Pending in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee**

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**

**Scheduled for debate on the Senate Floor on 3/18**

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**

**Pending in the House Appropriations Committee**

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.

**The next legislative update will be available March 22**