**2020 Legislative Session**

Legislative Days 5-9 January 31, 2020

## **Activity Ramps Up**

While the House and Senate did not officially gavel in last week, lawmakers were busy working to draft and finalize legislation. That was evident this week as more than 300 bills and resolutions were introduced over the five-day workweek. Committees also began meeting in earnest to consider, amend and report legislation. Next week lawmakers will be in session Monday through Thursday.

## **Priority Issues**

**Professional Health Program (**[**SB 346**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/sb/346)**) Sen. Ellis Black, R-Valdosta**

**Prefiled in the Senate on Jan-31**

SB346 comes at the request of the Association. It allows the state board to contract with a professional health program to provide rehabilitative services to impaired veterinarians. The measure also creates a seat on the state board for a veterinary technician.

## **Professional Issues**

**Annual Drug Update (**[**HB 759**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/HB/759)**) Rep. Butch Parrish, R-Swainsboro**

**Favorably reported from the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee on Jan-31**

HB 759 is the annual update to the Controlled Substances Act. The Association has received the proposed changes and does not foresee any impact on veterinarians or their patients.

**Medical Cannabis and Hemp.** In response to pressure from members and animal owners, the Association is exploring options to permit veterinarians to legally discuss, sell and/or recommend cannabis-derived products for animal use. This is a complex issue involving nearly a dozen federal and state laws, regulations, and bureaucratic agencies. On January 30, lawmakers in the House introduced legislation ([**HB 847**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/hb/847)) to clean up last year’s hemp farming bill.

## **Animal Welfare and Regulation**

**Animal Protection (**[**SB 338**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/sB/338)**) Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick, R-Marietta**

**Assigned to the Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee on Jan-31**

SB 338 revises the standards for pet dealers and pet dealerships. It requires those dealers to be licensed by the Department, submit to annual licensure fees, and carry a surety bond. This is a collaborative effort by Senator Kirkpatrick and the Department of Agriculture.

**Horse Racing (**[**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)**) Sen. Brandon Beach, R-Alpharetta**

**Hearing only in the Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee on Jan-29**

SB 45 allows for pari-mutuel horse racing at a limited number of licensed equestrian centers. SR 84 contains the constitutional amendment that would be required to legalize horse racing. Horse racing is touted as an economic development tool, particularly in rural areas of the state.

**Rabies Vaccination Exemption.** Since the end of the 2019 session, the Association has been contacted by a couple of legislators seeking information on the necessity of universal rabies vaccination in domestic animals. Constituents are pressing legislators to carve out an exemption. While we have provided lawmakers data to support universal vaccination, an exemption bill is possible.

## **Licensing**

**Military Reciprocal Licensing (**[**HB 773**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/HB/773) **and** [**SB 316**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/sB/316)**) Rep. Scot Turner, R-Holly Springs**

**Assigned to the House Regulated Industries Committee on Jan-15**

HB 773 provides for reciprocal licensing of all professions, occupations, and trades for individuals licensed outside Georgia, including veterinarians. The bill requires the licensee to meet certain requirements to be granted reciprocity. SB 316 provides that military spouses licensed in other states can practice certain professions – including veterinarians – with an endorsement, rather than a license. The Senate legislation doesn’t appear to require communication with the Professional Licensing Boards regarding implementation.

## **General Business Legislation**

**Notary Modernization (**[**HB 785**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/hb/785)**) Rep. Joseph Gullett, R-Dallas**

**Pending in the House Judiciary Committee**

HB 785 provides for electronic notarizations and remote online notarizations.

**Occupational Taxes (**[**HB 715**](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20192020/hb/715)**) Rep. Shaw Blackmon, R-Bonaire**

**Pending in the House Ways and Means Committee**

HB 715 in an occupational tax reform measure that removes gross receipts as the reference for local business taxes. It also removes the provision that allows a local government to use square feet or project cost in new construction or renovation projects to determine the amount of a regulatory fee.

*As the second in a two-year legislative session, all bills from the 2019 session remains available for consideration. The Association is monitoring over 45 pieces of legislation; those reported here are priorities or active.*

## **Political Shake-Up**

On Wednesday, Republican US Congressman **Doug Collins** announced he intends to run for the US Senate seat currently held by Governor Kemp-appointee **Kelly Loeffler**. Rev. **Raphael Warnock**, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, also announced Wednesday that he is officially entering the race as a Democrat.

Meanwhile, both state Senator **John Wilkinson** (Chairman of the Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee) and state Representative **Kevin Tanner** (Chairman of the House Transportation Committee) have announced they will seek Collins’ vacated ninth district congressional seat. With House Agriculture Chairman **Tom McCall** also not seeking reelection, the Association will see two new chairmen in the 2021 session.