Post Session Legislative Research: How to Track Legislation After Session Has Ended

This article is part two of a series on how to perform legislative research. The first article appeared in the February edition of the Countyline E-Newsletter

The General Assembly ended the 2016 Legislative Session on Thursday, March 24, 2016 and the Governor has until May 3, 2016 to sign, veto, or allow legislation to become law without his signature. In the last days of the legislature, bills can be drastically changed, combined, or repurposed. Further, the legislative process allows for both chambers to make additional changes after the legislation has initially passed each chamber, which can be confusing. As such, it can be difficult to determine what has passed. The following overview of how to track legislation after session has ended will hopefully help you to properly navigate the system so that you can find the information that you need.

Determining Final Passage of a Bill

The first step in legislative research is to determine whether the bill in question actually passed. This process is a bit trickier than you may think. A bill can be acted upon by both the House and Senate but in the end may not have received final passage. If a bill is changed in one chamber (in committee or on the floor), the other chamber must approve that change. For example, if a House bill is changed in a Senate committee, the House must agree to those changes before the bill can pass. What makes this process confusing is that one chamber may agree to the changes the other chamber has made *but only* as they have amended them. In this case the bill would then have to go back to the other chamber for approval before it can pass. For example, a House bill is amended in a Senate committee, the House can then vote to accept those changes on the floor but only with changes they have made. At this point the Senate would have to accept the new changes the House made in order for the bill to have final passage. However, the opposing chamber could also choose to further amend the bill instead of agreeing to the changes. In our example above, instead of the Senate approving the House changes made on the floor, the Senate can choose to approve as they have further amended the bill. In this case the House would have to approve those changes for the bill to receive final passage.

While the House and Senate both have the option of amending legislation in the above stated manner, they may also choose to disagree to the changes the opposing chamber has made. For example, if a House bill has been amended in a Senate committee, but the House does not like the changes they can disagree. As this point, there are two ways that the bill can eventually pass. The first, is for the Senate to rescind their position, meaning that they remove the changes they made. The second, is for the Senate to insist on their position and for both the House and Senate to appoint a conference committee to work out their differences. If a conference committee is created, both the House and the Senate have to adopt the conference committee reports in order to have final passage on a bill.

Now that you have a better understanding of the process, we can review the tools available for verifying the final status of any given legislation. The Georgia General Assembly website provides everything you need in order to verify the status of a bill. There are two ways that you can verify the status. One, is through the bill composite. The 2016 composite is the tracking document for all legislation that was introduced during the 2015-2016 legislative cycle that did not pass in 2015. Each bill is listed with the committee they were assigned and every action (except for subcommittee action). Using the information that you learned about the final passage process, you can determine if a bill was changed after it left its originating chamber and if so, whether these changes were properly approved. The

composite also contains information on when the legislation was sent to the Governor for review and the act number assigned. The preliminary final version of the composite is now available on the General Assembly website. It will be replaced by the final version in May after the Governor's review period has concluded.

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STATE OF GEORGIA - HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2016 COMPOSITE STATUS

Preliminary Final
Thursday March 24, 2016

House Bills				READ 1ST TIME	READ 2ND TIME	FAVORABLY REPORTED	COMM AMEND/SUB	RECOMMITTED	UNFAVORABLY REPORTED	READ 3RD TIME	PASSED/ADOPTED	COMMITTEE/FLOOR AMEND/SUBSTITUTE	LOST	NOTICE OF MOTION TO RECONSIDER	RECONSIDERED	POSTPONED	PASSED/ADOPTED	COMMITTEE/FLOOR AMENDMENTS/SUBSTITUTE	LOST	AMENDMENTS/SUBSTITUTE AGREED TO	AMENDMENTS/SUBSTITUTE DISAGREED TO	INSISTS ON POSITION	CONFERENCE COMMITTEE APPOINTED	CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT ADOPTED	RECEDES FROM POSITION	SENT TO GOVERNOR	DATE SIGNED BY GOVERNOR	ACT/VETO NUMBER
635	Judges of Probate Ct. Retirement Fund; increase contribution years; provisions	Ret	H	3/19	3/20	2/4	S			2/10	2/10	CS															3/28		
		RET	S	2/11	3/11	3/10				3/14	3/14																		
638	Atlanta, City of; corporate limits; independent school system; repeal amendment	GAff	H	3/20	3/23																								
			S																										
640	Gwinnett Judicial Circuit; salary supplements for judges; change provisions	LLeg	H	3/23	3/24	3/27				3/27	3/27																		
		SLGO(G)	S	3/27		3/31		1/11																					
		3/31/2015 Tabled in Senate; 1/11/2016 Taken from table in Senate; 1/11/2016 recommitted to SLGO-G in Senate																											
641	Spalding County; levy an excise tax	LLeg	H	3/23	3/24	3/25				3/25	3/25																3/28		
		SLGO	S	3/26		2/2					2/2																		
645	Clayton County; Board of Commissioners; provide salaries of members	LLeg	H	3/24	3/25																								
			S																										
646	Clayton Judicial Circuit; superior court judges; increase county supplement	LLeg	H	3/24	3/25	3/27				3/27	3/27																		
		SLGO	S	3/27																									
647	Clayton County; chief magistrate; change salary	LLeg	H	3/24	3/25	3/27				3/27	3/27																		
		SLGO	S	3/27																									
648	Clayton County; sheriff; change provisions relating to compensation	LLeg	H	3/24	3/25	3/27				3/27	3/27																		
		SLGO	S	3/27																									
649	Georgia Lactation Consultant Practice Act; enact	H&HS	H	3/24	3/25	1/27	S			2/8	2/8	CS								3/22							3/29		
		H&HS	S	2/9	3/8	3/7	S			3/15	3/15	CS																	
653	Taxation; transfer certain executions to person authorized by taxpayer; allow	W&M	H	3/25	3/26																								
			S																										
654	Tattoo studios; certain tattoos disqualify military service; post notification	RegI	H	3/25	3/26	2/24	S			2/26			2/26	2/26	2/29		2/29	CS											
		VM&HS	S	3/2	3/15	3/15	S																						
		3/22/2016 Tabled in Senate																											
658	DeKalb Co.; improvement districts may be created; change certain provisions	LLeg	H	3/25	3/26	3/27				3/27	3/27									3/24									
		SLGO	S	3/27		3/22	S				3/24	CS																	
659	Education; provide transparency of financial information of schools; provisions	Ed	H	3/25	3/26	2/4	S			2/10	2/10	CS								3/24									
		ED&Y	S	2/11	3/14	3/14	S			3/22	3/22	CSFA								3/24									
		03/24/2016 House agreed to Senate Substitute as House amended; 3/24/2016 Senate Agreed to House Amendment to Senate Substitute																											
660	Sharon Springs, City of; Forsyth County; incorporate	GAff	H	3/25	3/26																								
			S																										
662	Avondale Estates, City of; change corporate limits	LLeg	H	3/25	3/26	3/27				3/27	3/27																		
		SLGO	S	3/27		3/31				4/2	4/2	FA																	
		3/31/2015 Tabled in Senate; 4/2/2015 Removed from table in Senate																											
663	Decatur, City of; change corporate limits	LLeg	H	3/25	3/26	3/27				3/27	3/27																		
		SLGO	S	3/27																									
	Elections; automatic registration of voters	GAff	H	3/26	3/27																								

2016 Preliminary Final Composite

Aside from using the composite, you can also check the final status of legislation by looking up the bill number on the General Assembly website and reviewing the bill history listed. See an example below of the bill history for HB 727.

2015-2016 Regular Session - HB 727
Fireworks; certain further regulations by counties and municipal corporations; provide

Sponsored By

(1) Battles, Paul 15th
(2) Turner, Scot 21st
(3) Parsons, Don 44th
(4) LaRiccia, Dominic 169th
(5) Kaiser, Margaret 59th

Sponsored In Senate By

Mullis, Jeff 53rd

Committees

HC: Regulated Industries
SC: Public Safety

First Reader Summary

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 10 of Title 25 of the O.C.G.A., relating to regulation of fireworks, so as to revise provisions relating to the sale, use, or explosion thereof; to amend Chapter 60 of Title 36 of the O.C.G.A., relating to general provisions regarding local government provisions applicable to counties and municipal corporations, so as to provide for certain further regulations by counties, municipal corporations, and consolidated governments; to amend Article 7 of Chapter 13 of Title 48 of the O.C.G.A., relating to taxation of consumer fireworks, so as to provide for local excise taxation of consumer fireworks and the collection of such excise tax; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Status History

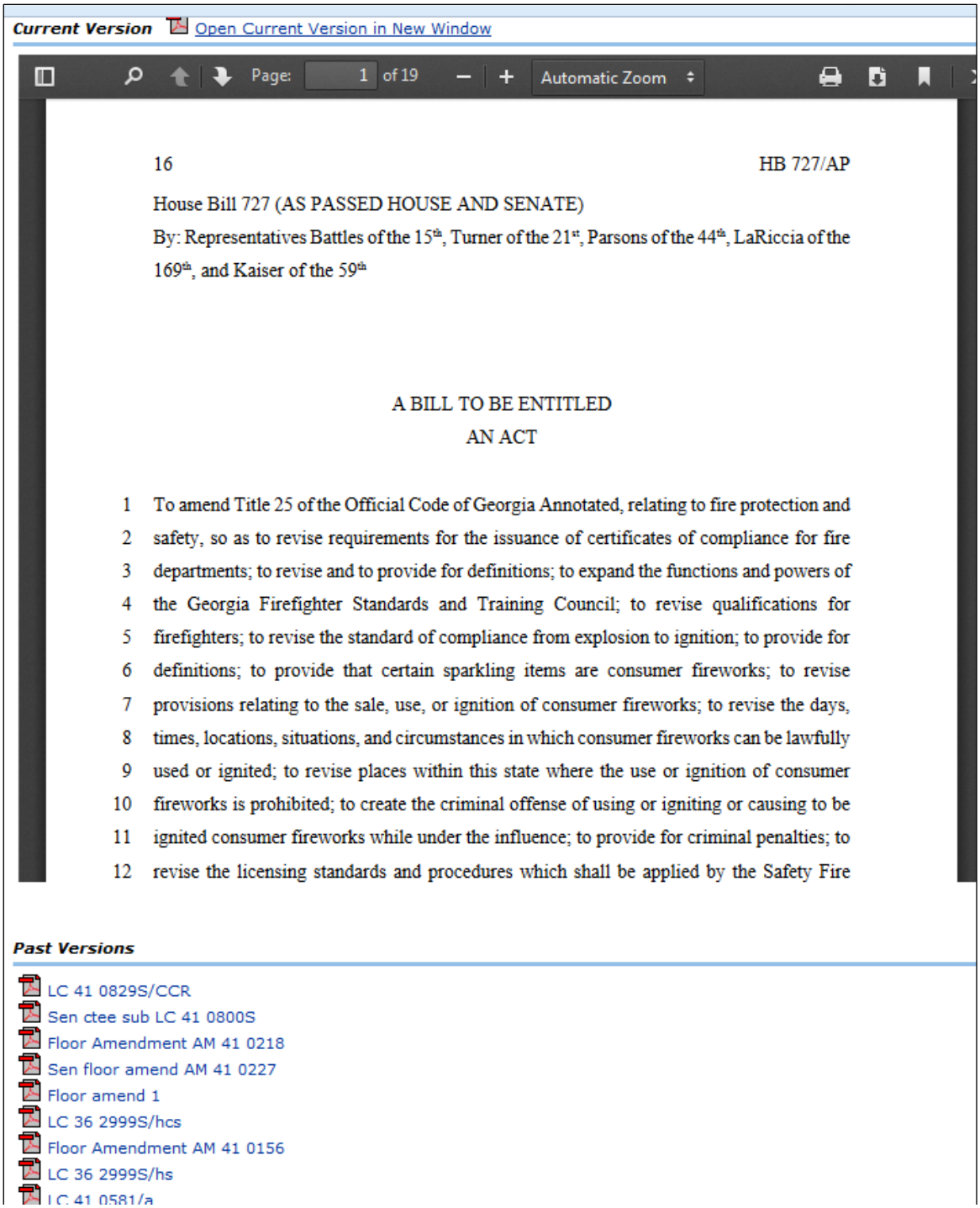
Mar/25/2016 - Senate Conference Committee Report Adopted
Mar/24/2016 - House Conference Committee Report Adopted
Mar/24/2016 - Senate Conference Committee Appointed 1st, 53rd, 7th
Mar/24/2016 - House Conference Committee Appointed 15th, 17th, 21st
Mar/24/2016 - House Insisted
Mar/24/2016 - Senate Insisted
Mar/24/2016 - House Disagreed Senate Amend or Sub
Mar/24/2016 - Senate Agreed House Amend or Sub As Amended
Mar/22/2016 - House Agreed Senate Amend or Sub As Amended
Mar/15/2016 - Senate Passed/Adopted By Substitute
Mar/15/2016 - Senate Third Read
Mar/11/2016 - Senate Read Second Time
Mar/10/2016 - Senate Committee Favorably Reported By Substitute
Mar/02/2016 - Senate Read and Referred
Feb/29/2016 - House Passed/Adopted By Substitute
Feb/29/2016 - House Third Readers
Feb/24/2016 - House Committee Favorably Reported By Substitute
Jan/13/2016 - House Second Readers
Jan/12/2016 - House First Readers
Jan/11/2016 - House Hopper

HB 727 Bill History

Determining the Final Format of a Bill

Not many bills make it through the legislative process without being changed at some point. If you started tracking a bill when it was first introduced but did not review the bill after the initial version, you may be in for a big surprise as to its final content. Bills can be amended in subcommittee, in full committee, on the floor or in a conference committee report. Bills may be amended by substitute or have one or more amendments added on the floor of either chamber. Some bills, referred to as vehicles, have the content of other bills attached to them, while other bills may be completely stripped of its original content. As such, it is very important for you to review the final version of a bill to understand what is included and is being considered to be signed into law by the Governor.

The best way to see the final version of a bill is through the General Assembly website. In addition to showing the bill history for any given bill, the website also provides every version (except for subcommittee) that has been passed out of a committee or amended on the floor through substitute or amendment. Using HB 727 as an example, you can see below that the "As Passed" version is provided in the window at the top of the bill. You can tell it is the most current version because "Current Version" is listed at the top of the bill page and the bill number in the right hand corner has the AP stamped beside it. You can also see all previous versions listed below the bill. Note that they are listed from latest to earliest.



Current Version Open Current Version in New Window

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16 HB 727/AP

House Bill 727 (AS PASSED HOUSE AND SENATE)

By: Representatives Battles of the 15th, Turner of the 21st, Parsons of the 44th, LaRiccia of the 169th, and Kaiser of the 59th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

To amend Title 25 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to fire protection and safety, so as to revise requirements for the issuance of certificates of compliance for fire departments; to revise and to provide for definitions; to expand the functions and powers of the Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council; to revise qualifications for firefighters; to revise the standard of compliance from explosion to ignition; to provide for definitions; to provide that certain sparkling items are consumer fireworks; to revise provisions relating to the sale, use, or ignition of consumer fireworks; to revise the days, times, locations, situations, and circumstances in which consumer fireworks can be lawfully used or ignited; to revise places within this state where the use or ignition of consumer fireworks is prohibited; to create the criminal offense of using or igniting or causing to be ignited consumer fireworks while under the influence; to provide for criminal penalties; to revise the licensing standards and procedures which shall be applied by the Safety Fire

Past Versions

LC 41 0829S/CCR
Sen ctee sub LC 41 0800S
Floor Amendment AM 41 0218
Sen floor amend AM 41 0227
Floor amend 1
LC 36 2999S/hcs
Floor Amendment AM 41 0156
LC 36 2999S/hs
LC 41 0581/a

HB 727 Current and Past Versions

While you can view the actual content of the final passage of any legislation through the General Assembly website, it will not tell you if or what other bills have been added to the original bill. The best source for this type of information is from the ACCG Legislative Updates for any general bill that impacts county government, or possibly through the Georgia House of Representatives Daily Reports produced by the House Budget and Research Offices.

How to Determine When a Bill Has Become Law

The Governor has 40 days from the end of session to review legislation and to sign, veto, or to allow a bill to become law without his signature. Once a bill is signed into law, it is no longer referred to by its bill number, but by its act number, which is assigned by the Governor. The Governor's Office maintains a list on its website of all bills, both local and general, that have been signed. They are listed by the bill number, include a description, and provide the date each piece of legislation was signed. The 2016 list is located through the following link: https://gov.georgia.gov/bills-signed/2016. The Governor's Office issues press releases when certain bills are signed, which can be found as follows: https://gov.georgia.gov/press-releases/2016.

Not every bill becomes law the day the Governor signs the legislation. In fact, most bills have either effective dates specifically listed in the legislation or don't have any at all, which means they go into effect on July 1, 2016. Only bills that specifically state that they become effective upon the Governor's signature actually become effect the date the Governor signs the legislation. Further, some bills have multiple effective dates, which means that some sections may become effective on one date while other sections become effective on another. Additionally, the effective dates of some bills may be contingent on the passage of a constitutional amendment or referendum, or may be contingent on funding. While most effective dates are listed at the end of a bill, others may be referred to in other sections. As such, it is very important to review the entire bill. ACCG will publish an effective date list for all bills that impact county government after the Governor's review period has been completed.