

# The 2021 Georgia General Assembly Legislative Session Report

An in-depth analysis of Georgia state  
legislative data



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# Executive Summary

For the past year, Georgia has been at the center of national political news, from establishing itself as a battleground state during the 2020 election to former President Trump's attempts to contest the validity of the 2020 state's election process to subsequent changes to voting laws. In many ways, all eyes are on Georgia. While these events significantly impacted the people of Georgia, Georgia's state legislation, elected officials, and mixed political landscape have also garnered increasing relevance as a political bellwether of the larger American system.

In 2021, during the short 40 days of the legislative session, legislators of Georgia's General Assembly authored 1,172 bills comprised of over 7,000 pages of legal text. Although the numbers in aggregate tell us part of the story of the 2021 legislative session, they fail to demonstrate whether or not the legislative branch is enacting legislation that is responsive to the needs of the state and the people of Georgia. This report seeks to make widely accessible the emergent trends and key impacts of these 7,000 plus pages and to act as a tool for voters to understand the orientation of policy within the state and the nation at large.

Within the first part of this report, we examine the sorts of changes proposed and successfully enacted by this legislation by looking at issue areas. The vast majority of introduced bills were related to government operations, proposing often straightforward procedural changes to local governments. After these government bills, legislators prioritized taxes, criminal justice, and voting as the top three issues. Meanwhile, while legislators invested energy into introducing bills on some of the top political issues of the past year, such as policing, civil rights, and guns, legislation in these three topic areas largely failed to pass or make substantive change this session.

For many Americans, the federal legislative branch serves as a mental prototype for understanding Georgia's state legislative bodies. Part of Branch's mission in producing this report is to show how Georgia state politics diverges from what we understand about the national political landscape, with political party dynamics being one such example. Within the second part of this report, we examine partisan priorities, relative legislative success, and areas where partisan consensus was achieved this session. We will see that Republican and bipartisan legislation experiences significantly higher passage rates than that of Democratic legislation. We will see that the two parties largely differ in which issues they prioritize, with Democrats prioritizing changes to criminal justice, education, and healthcare, and Republicans prioritizing changes to voting, taxes, and criminal justice.

Georgia's state legislature has over 230 elected representatives. Finding concise, objective measures through which to compare efficacy and hold representatives accountable is often a challenge for voters. The third part of this report seeks to explore one such measure of accountability by examining bill authorships as a metric for legislator engagement during the session. From each party, five representatives authored the most legislation compared to peers from their own party over the course of the legislative session. On the other hand, three representatives did not author or co-sponsor any legislation during the 2021 legislative session.

The crux of a representative democracy is the involvement of the people, yet civic engagement for the average person today is largely defined by either a lack of engagement due to other priorities and inaccessibility or an intense engagement with national politics and comparatively little engagement with the impact of local government. Finding new and innovative ways to involve every Georgian in the incredibly impactful state legislative process is important to our success as a vibrant, engaged democracy. The last part of this report examines the impact of *The Session*, a daily legislative newsletter that offers one potential solution to engaging individuals in state and local political issues.

Branch is a nonpartisan startup located in Atlanta, Georgia. All information produced within this report is done through the lens of nonpartisanship. Branch is not affiliated with any political candidate, party, or ideology.

# Introduction

The Georgia General Assembly convenes each year from the beginning of January until the end of March. In 2021, Branch Politics launched *The Session*, a daily email newsletter that provided comprehensive coverage of the most important bills being considered by the General Assembly. To produce this newsletter, the Branch Policy Team tracked and categorized all 1,172 bills introduced during the 2021 legislative session, creating a robust dataset of legislative activity.

This report utilizes this dataset to examine both the high-level, quantitative trends that arise when examining all 1,172 bills introduced this session and the qualitative impact created by key pieces of legislation.

This report is produced by Branch Politics, a nonpartisan startup located in Atlanta, Georgia. Branch's mission is to empower as many people as possible to create a better society through the impactful, yet often overlooked, parts of government.

## Scope of Analysis

**1,172** .....  
bills tracked

*Our team tracked the progress of all 1,172 bills introduced this legislative session. Each of these bills was categorized into one or more issue areas and summarized at a high level.*

**140+** .....  
bills profiled

*Our team wrote in-depth summaries over 140 key bills introduced this session, many of which are highlighted throughout this report.*

**7000+** .....  
pages read

*In addition to reading bills for in-depth summaries, we created our own first-reader summaries for each bill to ensure accurate representation of the true impact of each bill.*

# Georgia's 2021 Legislative Session

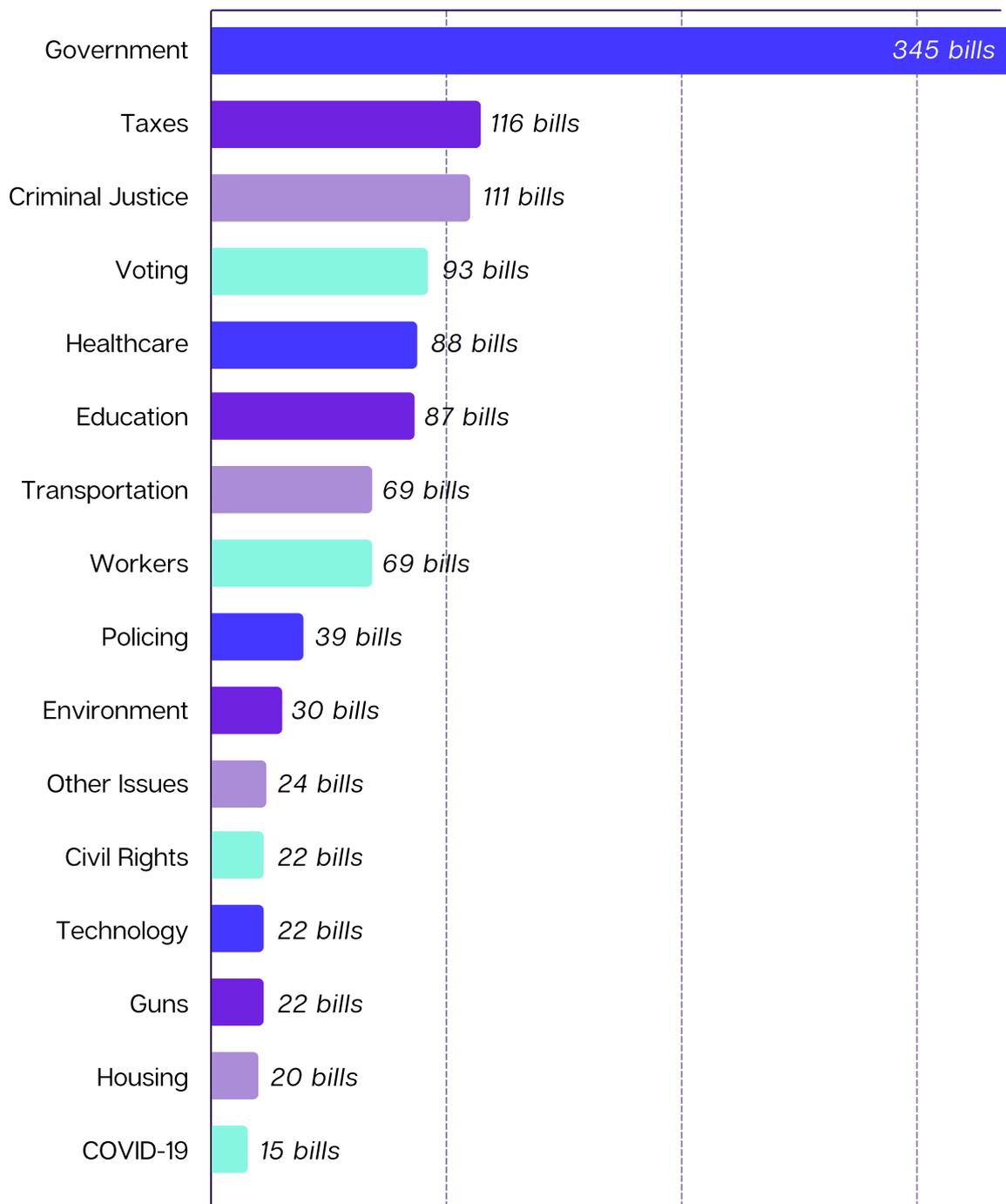
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**By Issue Area**

# Overview

During Georgia's 2021 General Assembly, legislators introduced 1,172 bills. After government-related bills, legislators' top 3 issue areas were taxes, criminal justice, and voting. This reflects some of the most prominent events of 2020, including a struggling economy, the Black Lives Matter protests, and the 2020 election.

**Bills Introduced, by Issue Area**



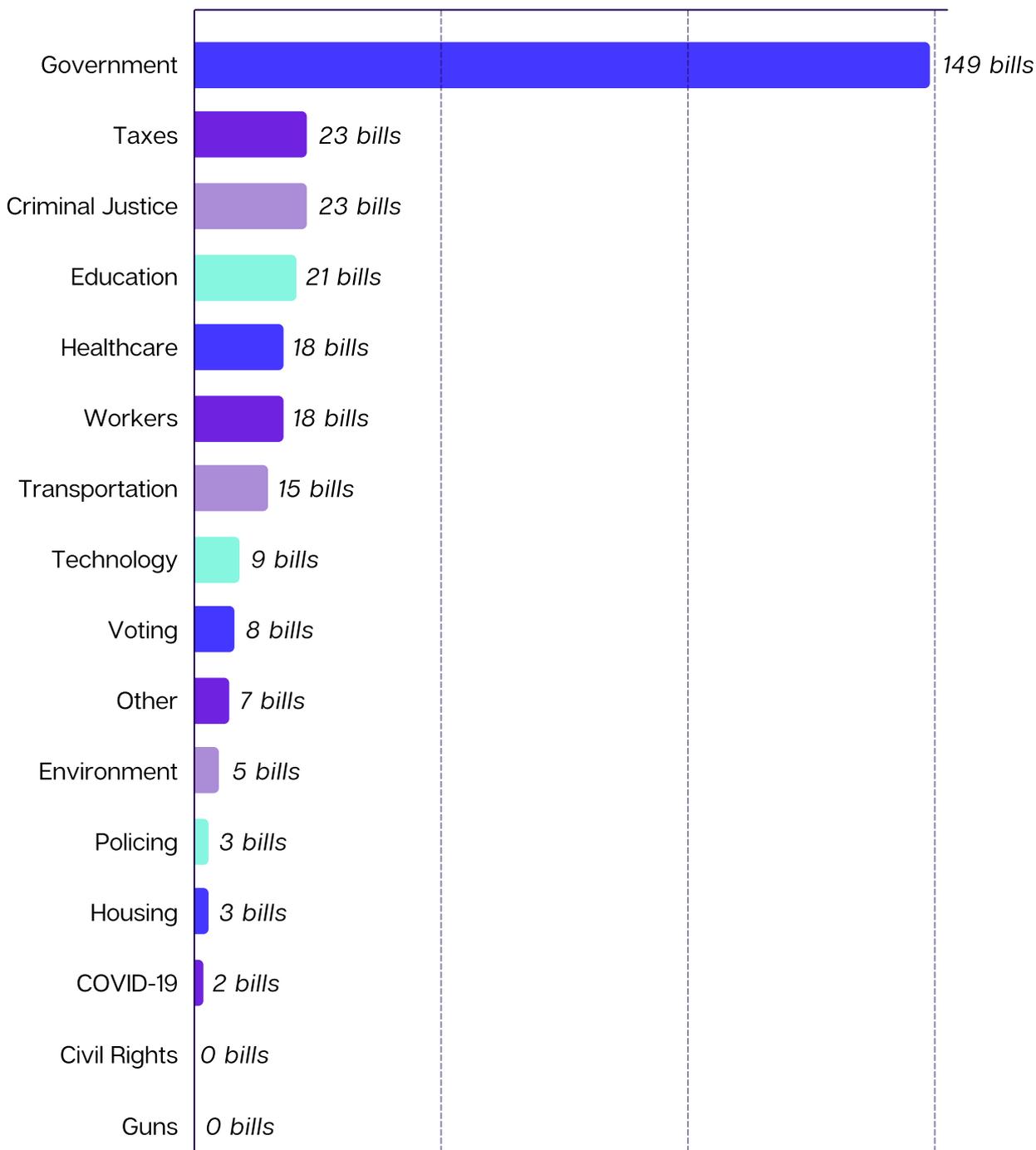
Source: Legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov).

Notes: Branch classified each bill into a primary issue area, based on the proposed changes of the bill. This reflects data about bills introduced as of April 1st, 2021 at 5pm EST.

Of the 1,172 bills introduced, 304 passed. In this report, a "passed bill" is one that has passed both chambers and has either been signed into law or is awaiting signature by the Governor. Government-related bills represented the largest segment of passed legislation. After that, taxes, criminal justice, and education were the three issue areas with the largest amount of passed legislation.

Some issue areas had a notable decline between the amount of legislation introduced and the amount of legislation passed. Specifically, 39 policing bills were introduced, but only 3 passed. 22 civil rights and 22 gun bills were introduced, but none passed.

### Bills Passed, by Issue Area



Source: Legislative data sourced from legis.ga.gov.

Notes: Branch classified each bill into a primary issue area, based on the proposed changes of the bill. This reflects data about bills introduced as of April 1st, 2021 at 5pm EST.

## Legislative Stages

For the purposes of this report, each bill has been classified into one of six legislative stages, each of which represents a high-level view of where the bill is in the legislative process. These six legislative stages are used throughout the remainder of this report.

### Introduced 1st Chamber

The bill was introduced in one of the two houses of the Georgia General Assembly: the House of Representatives or the Senate. This stage includes all bills in committee within the 1st chamber.

### Passed 1st Chamber

The bill was passed by a majority vote from the 1st chamber, where it was introduced.

### Passed 2nd Chamber

The bill was introduced into the 2nd chamber, went through the committee process, and passed both chambers by a majority vote.

### Awaiting Signature

The bill was passed by both chambers and needs to be signed by the governor, before becoming law. If the governor does not sign the bill within 40 days of the last day of the session, the bill automatically becomes law. The governor can also veto the bill.

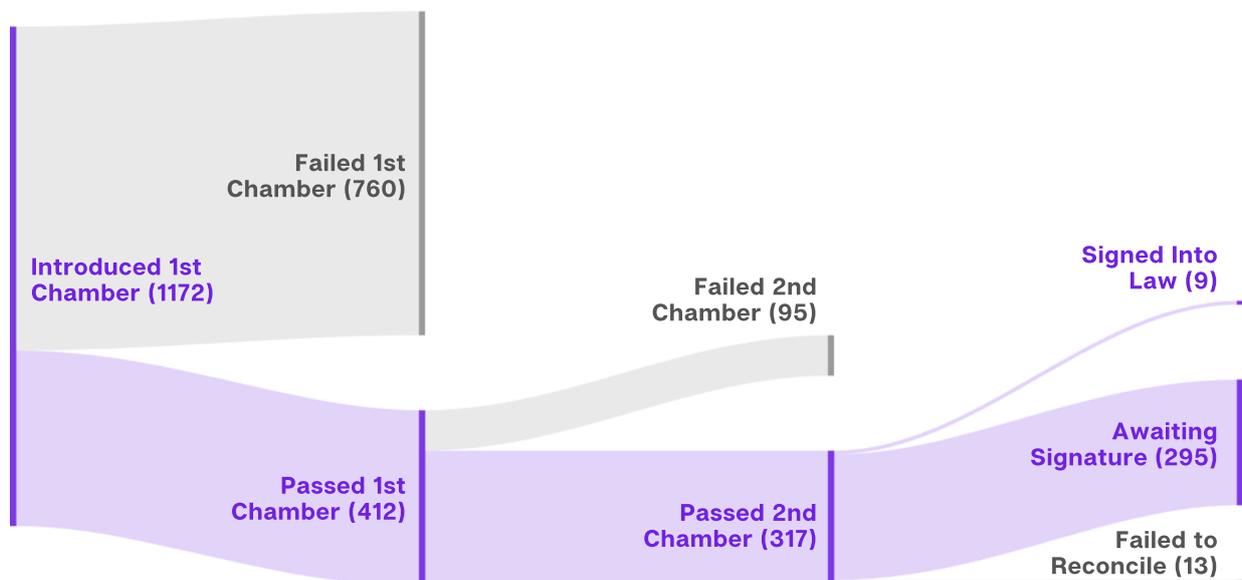
### Signed Into Law

The bill was signed into law by the governor.

### Failed To Reconcile

If the bill passed both chambers with different versions, the two versions must be reconciled and accepted by both chambers. Bills in this category were not reconciled before the conclusion of the legislative session.

Of the 1,172 bills introduced, 35.2% passed the 1st chamber and 27.1% of bills passed the 2nd chamber by the end of the legislative session. As of 5pm EST April 1st, 9 of these bills have been signed into law by Georgia Governor Brian Kemp.



Source: Legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov).

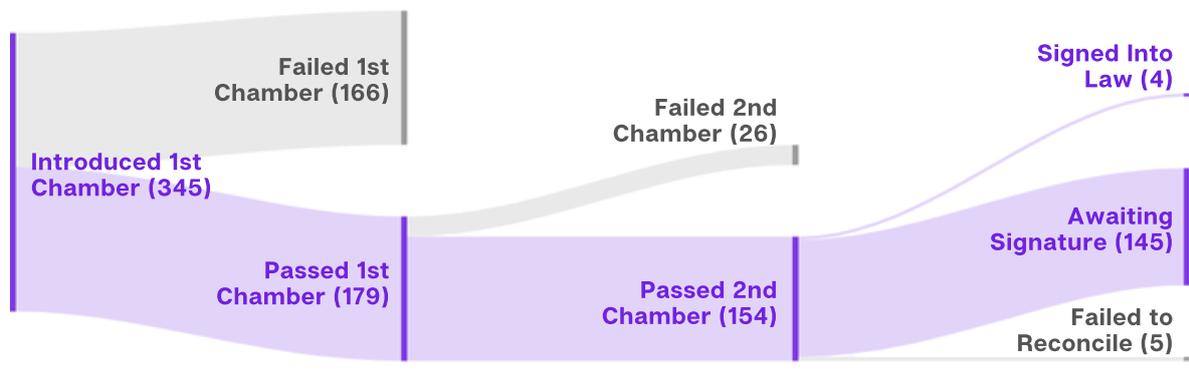
Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of bills introduced to the 2021 General Assembly as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

# Issue Areas in Detail

# Government

Government bills consist of bills that change civil court rules and procedures, make changes to local governments, issue town charters, change city and county boundaries, or change statewide industry regulation. The vast majority of these bills were specific to individual cities and towns, including issuing town charters, changing the composition of local governing bodies, and changing pay for local government officials.

For example, bills introduced this session sought to change the compensation of Clayton County Board of Education members, reduce the size of the Pelham City Council, and provide a new charter for the city of Cohutta. This session, 345 government bills were introduced, and 149 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov).

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of government bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Government Bills

### **S.B. 142: legalizes sports betting lottery games.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

SB 142 would have allowed sports betting lottery games in Georgia, including online betting. This bill legalizes betting on professional or amateur sports, including motor sports; Olympic sports; sporting events sanctioned by national or international organizations; and other events authorized by the Georgia Lottery Corporation. Horse betting and fantasy sports betting would have remained illegal in Georgia. In order to place bets, individuals would have needed to be at least 21 years old and physically present in Georgia when placing their bet with a licensed betting facility. SB 142 is a bipartisan bill.

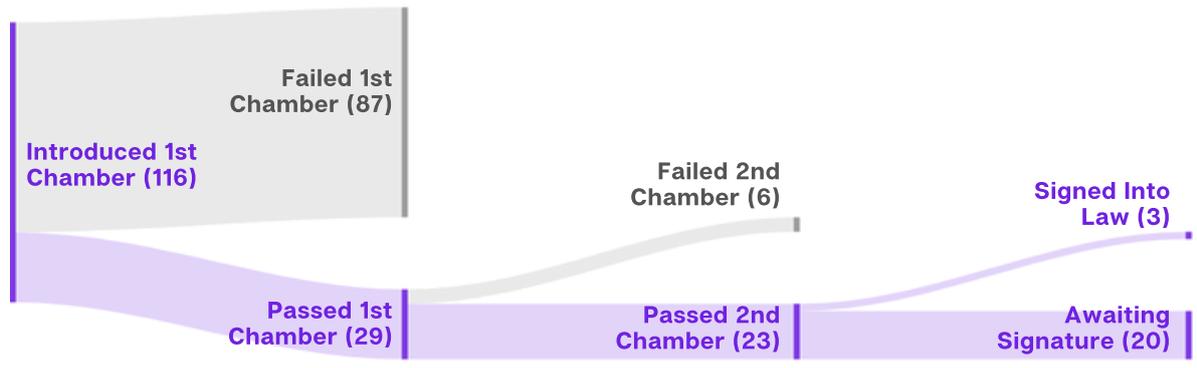
### **S.B. 218: stops pay for public officials suspended for a felony indictment.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

SB 218 would have stopped pay for public officials who are suspended because of a felony indictment, including all elected county officials, members of school boards, superintendents, members of the Public Service Commission, district attorneys, and solicitor-generals. Under current law, if a grand jury rules that there is enough evidence for a felony charge to be prosecuted and go to trial, a public official is still paid, if they are suspended. SB 218 is Republican bill.

# Taxes

Tax bills consist of pieces of legislation that sought to levy new taxes, change existing tax rules, or create tax exemptions. Tax bills introduced this session included bills to change tax credits for adopting foster children, to exempt ticket sales for fine arts performances from taxation, to revise sales tax exemptions, to change property tax exemptions, and to create the 2021 Special Council on Tax Reform and Fairness for Georgians. This session, 116 tax bills were introduced, and 23 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov)

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of tax bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Tax Bills

### **H.B. 593: increases the standard deduction from state income tax for individuals.**

#### **Signed Into Law**

HB 593 increases the amount of the standard deduction for state income states. The deduction for a single taxpayer or head of household increased from \$4,600 to \$5,400, for married taxpayers filing separately from \$3,000 to \$3,550, and for married taxpayers filing jointly from \$6,000 to \$7,100. HB 593 is a Republican bill.

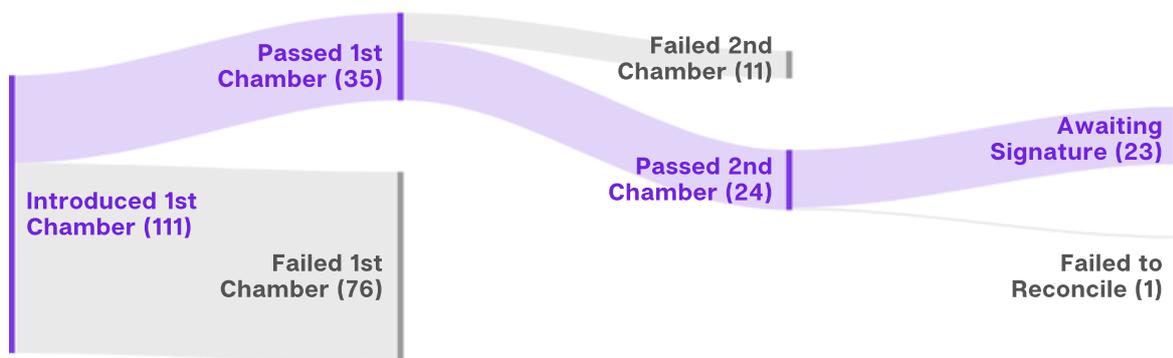
### **S.B. 25: increases the value of a state tax credit for child and dependent care to 100% of the federal credit.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

SB 25 would have changed the Georgia tax credit for all qualified child and dependent care, which is a tax credit that allows taxpayers to write off expenses paid for the care of children or dependents under the age of 13 or who are incapable of self-care if the taxpayer paid the expenses to allow them or their spouse to work or actively look for work. Under current law, Georgia's qualified child and dependent care expense tax credit is 30% of the federal tax credit. SB 5 would have changed this tax credit to 100% of the federal qualified child and dependent care tax credit. The raised tax credit would have applied to all taxable years after tax year 2020 and would not apply to taxpayers who are married and filing separately. SB 25 is a Democratic bill.

# Criminal Justice

Criminal justice refers to the laws, procedures, institutions, and policies in play after the commission of a crime. Bills that dealt with imposing criminal penalties, increasing or decreasing criminal penalties, changing criminal judicial procedure, or making changes to the probation system were considered criminal justice bills. Criminal justice bills proposed this session included bills to modify or eliminate citizen's arrest, to increase protections for pregnant inmates, to shorten the length of probation, to extend the statute of limitations for sexual assault and child sex abuse cases, to reduce criminal penalties for marijuana possession, to criminalize porch piracy, to increase criminal penalties for protesting and hazing, and to ban private prisons and the death penalty. This session, 111 criminal justice bills were introduced, and 23 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](http://legis.ga.gov)

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of criminal justice bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Criminal Justice Bills

### **H.B. 94: criminalizes possession of stolen mail and porch piracy.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 94 makes it illegal to possess stolen mail or commit porch piracy. Someone is guilty of possession of stolen mail if they have at least ten separate pieces of mail addresses to at least three different addresses, and they must know the mail is stolen. Someone is guilty of porch piracy if they take at least one package or article of mail from around another person's house without permission. Possession of stolen mail and porch piracy were both criminalized as a felony with one to five years in prison. HB 94 is a Republican bill.

### **S.B. 78: criminalizes posting nude or sexual photos or videos on a website without the subject's consent to harm or harass them.**

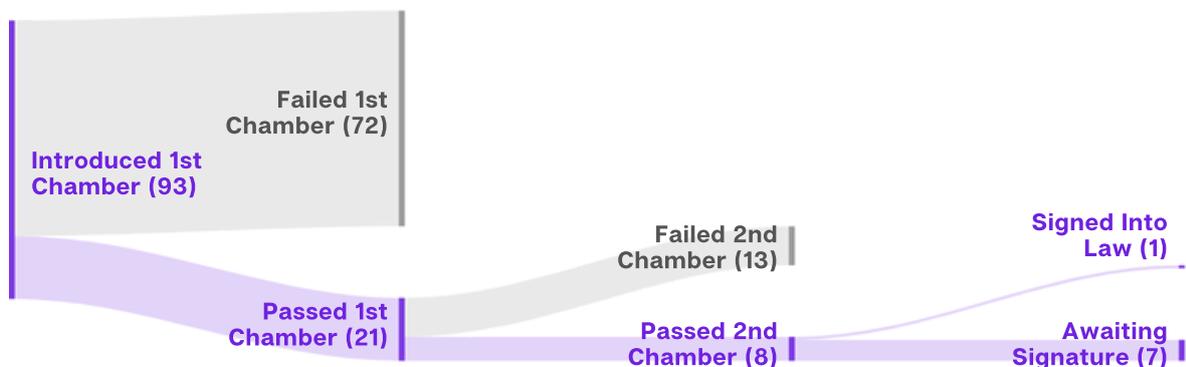
#### **Passed Both Chambers**

SB 78 makes it illegal to post revenge porn online with the purpose to harass or cause financial harm. Revenge porn is the act of sharing nude and sexual photos or videos of someone without their consent. The crime is a felony and is punishable by one to five years in prison and/or a fine of up to \$100,000. The bill is in addition to Georgia's existing revenge porn law, which criminalized sharing revenge porn with one or more people with the intention of causing harm as a high and aggravated misdemeanor punishable by up to 12 months in prison and/or a fine of up to \$15,000. SB 78 is a Democratic bill.

# Voting

Voting was one of the top issue areas to receive media coverage during the 2021 legislative session. Voting bills encompassed legislation that sought to change election monitoring, rules, and governing bodies, in addition to voting procedures and practices. Voting bills introduced this session included bills to require identification for absentee voting, to change the time for counting absentee ballots, to end no-excuse absentee voting, to increase or decrease early voting location hours; to make election day a holiday, to increase criminal penalties for election fraud, to prohibit private donations to local election authorities, to allow individuals and outside groups to present evidence against individuals registered to vote to contest their registration, to abolish and reconstitute local election boards, and to allow people convicted of felonies to remain eligible to vote.

This session, 93 voting bills were introduced, and 8 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov)

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of voting bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Voting Bills

### **S.B. 202: makes broad changes to voting, absentee voting, and elections administration.**

#### **Signed Into Law**

SB 202 makes a wide range of changes to Georgia's voting process. It criminalizes distributing food, drinks, or other items to voters waiting in line; prevents polling places from extending their hours on election day unless there was a period of time on election day when voters could not vote there; decreases precinct sizes if wait times are more than an hour; allows individuals or outside groups to challenge voters' right to vote an unlimited number of times and expedites hearings; makes all ballots public record; prevents organizations from sending out absentee ballot applications to certain individuals; requires an ID number or copy of an ID when voters request absentee ballots; gives the state government the power to take control of county elections and decide how election rules are implemented; limits ballot drop boxes to one box per every 100,000 registered voters; requires constant surveillance for ballot drop boxes; makes it a felony to open or accept and return someone else's absentee ballot; and allows absentee ballots to start being counted as early as the third Monday before election day but prevents officials from tabulating the count until polls close on election day.

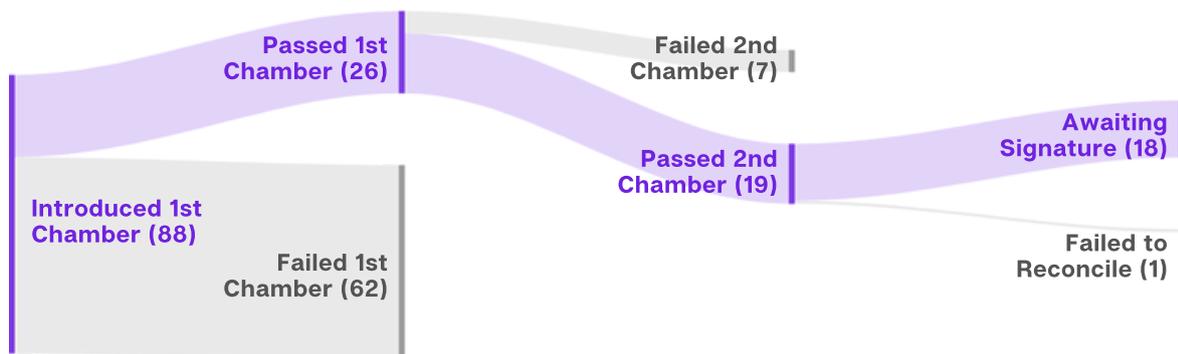
## **H.B. 113: allows same-day registration and voting.**

### **Did Not Pass**

HB 113 would have allowed voters to register and vote during early voting or on the day of the primary or election. Voters would have gone to the polling place in their precinct, filled out an official voter registration application, provided the necessary identification, and voted via provisional ballot. Their provisional ballot would have been verified by the board of registrars within three business days. If their registration was accepted, their vote would have been counted. If it was rejected, they would have been notified with the reasons for the rejection within three business days. If they registered correctly but voted in the wrong precinct, only the votes they were eligible to cast would have been counted. HB 113 is a Democratic bill.

# Healthcare

Healthcare bills are pieces of legislation having to do with the organized provision of medical care to individuals or a community, either through insurance companies or government programs. Healthcare bills introduced this session included bills to change insurance standards, to expand Medicare, to provide coverage to individuals with disabilities or ensure affordable coverage to those with pre-existing conditions, to decrease insulin costs, to allow for telemedicine services, and to prevent doctors from helping children transition. This session, 88 healthcare bills were introduced, and 18 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov)

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of healthcare bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Healthcare Bills

### H.B. 73: limits out-of-pocket costs for insulin for Georgians.

#### Did Not Pass

HB 73 would have limited the maximum price of a 30-day supply of insulin to \$50 for Georgians covered either by a private insurance company, Medicaid, or PeachCare for Kids. Currently, insulin costs about \$25 to \$300 per vial, and three to more than six vials are required for a month's supply. HB 73 is a Democratic bill.

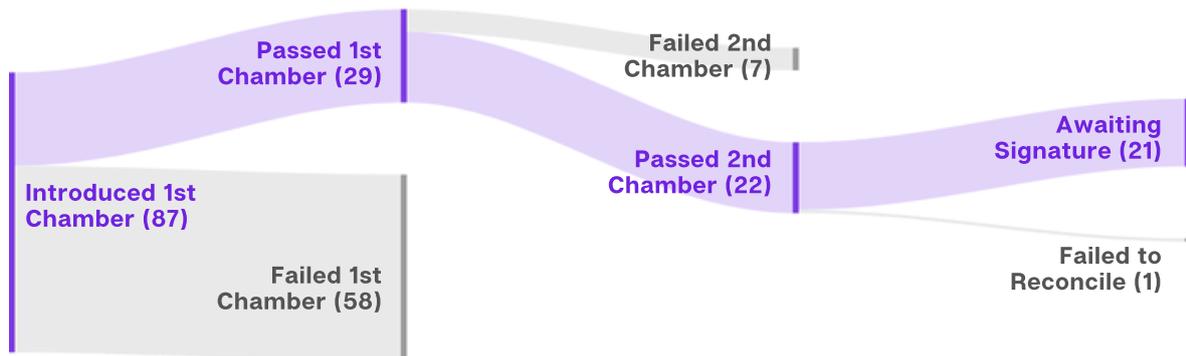
### H.B. 128: prohibits discrimination based on disability for organ transplants.

#### Passed Both Chambers

HB 128 prohibits discrimination against disabled people seeking an organ transplant. Healthcare providers are banned from basing certain decisions solely on someone's disability, including deeming them ineligible for an organ transplant, denying them medical services related to a transplant, not putting them on a transplant waitlist, giving them lower priority on a waitlist, denying them a transplant due to concerns about their inability to follow post-transplant medical guidance, and refusing their insurance for covering transplant costs. Healthcare providers can take a patient's disability into account when making transplant recommendations if the disability significantly impacts the procedure. Insurance companies also cannot deny coverage for a transplant based on disability. If discrimination occurs, the patient can sue their healthcare provider. HB 128 has some bipartisan support.

# Education

Education bills are any piece of legislation that changes law concerning primary education, secondary education, or higher education. Education bills this session included bills to change the admissions process for Georgia colleges and universities, to change scholarship requirements and amounts for higher education, to fund charter schools, to require recess and ban homework, to change mandatory primary school education to include information on vaping, Black history, tampon use, elections, and civics education, to ban trans athletes from competing in school sports, and to pay college athletes for their labor and image. This session, 87 education bills were introduced, and 21 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov)

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of education bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Education Bills

### **H.B. 287: requires schools provide tobacco and vaping education along with mandatory alcohol education for grades K-12.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 287 requires that schools provide mandatory education on tobacco and vaping along with alcohol education for all grades K-12. Grades 6-12 will also receive an additional class on human trafficking. Vaping is the act of using an electronic cigarette to inhale flavored water vapor, nicotine, and other substances. Schools are already required to provide mandatory instruction on alcohol and drug uses, although which drugs are not specified. HB 287 is a Republican bill.

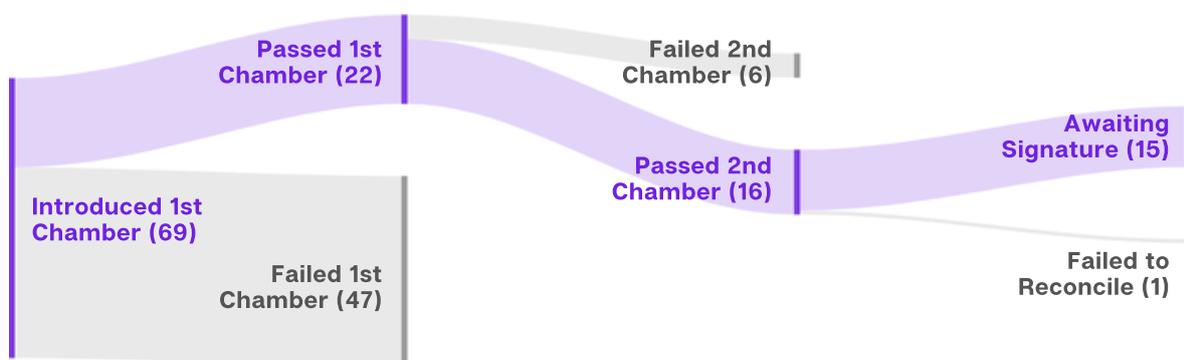
### **H.B. 88: replaces the Zell Miller scholarship and increases HOPE grants to cover all tuition expenses.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

HB 88 would have gotten rid of the Zell Miller scholarship and replaced it with an increase in the HOPE scholarship. Under the bill, HOPE would have been increased to cover all tuition costs for eligible students. Currently, Zell Miller covers all tuition costs for Georgia college students who had a high school GPA of 3.7 and scored 1200 on the SAT or 26 on the ACT. HOPE covers about 90% of tuition for students with a high school GPA of 3.5 and scored 1160 on the SAT or 25 on the ACT. Under HOPE, students must maintain a 2.00 or 3.00 GPA, depending on which school they attend. Zell Miller's requirements are higher at some schools. HB 88 would have applied the lower HOPE requirements to all eligible students while increasing tuition coverage to match Zell Miller's. HB 88 had some bipartisan support.

# Transportation

Transportation bills consist of any piece of legislation that deals with license plates, driver's license issuance, the rules of the road, public transportation, or traffic enforcement. The overwhelming majority of these bills pertained to driving rather than public transportation or other transportation systems, and many of these bills were about issuing specialty license plates to recognize certain groups, including breast cancer survivors, veterans, firefighters, military spouses, and the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. Transportation bills introduced this session included bills to change the requirements for driver's licenses, to prohibit the operation of farm tractors on interstate highways, to provide a pilot program for funding bus routes, to allow insurance companies to offer a reduced premium for active duty service members, to exempt fully autonomous vehicles from certain vehicle requirements, to set standards for issuing digital license plates, and to allow mounts to be placed on the dashboard inside vehicles for cell phones. This session, 69 transportation bills were introduced, and 15 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from legis.ga.gov

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of transportation bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Transportation Bills

### **H.B. 353: sets up procedures for a driver to overtake a bicyclist.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 353 requires drivers to pass bicyclists by either changing lanes or slowing down. If the traffic and road allows, the driver should change to a lane not adjacent to the bicyclist. If the driver is unable to change lanes, they should slow down to either 25 mph or 15 mph less than the speed limit, whichever is higher. If drivers do not comply, they can be convicted of a misdemeanor and fined up to \$250. HB 353 is a bipartisan bill.

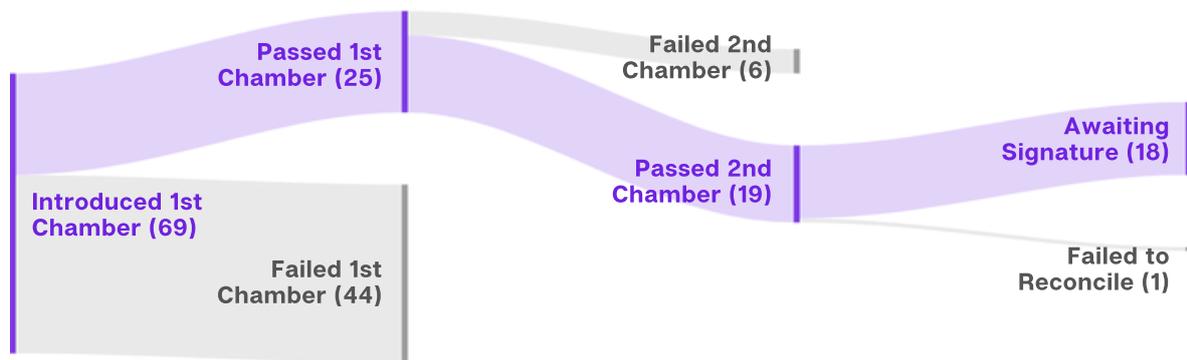
### **H.B. 43: allows drivers to declare conditions that make it hard for them to communicate to be shared with law enforcement.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 43 creates a section on DMV vehicle registration forms that allows drivers to detail any conditions that impede their ability or the ability of another person who drives the car to communicate. When law enforcement inquires about the vehicle tag, they would be able to see this information. Vehicle registration forms must be filled out after the purchase of a vehicle and every two years after that. HB 43 is a Republican bill.

# Workers

This topic area consists of pieces of legislation regarding workers rights, protections in the workplace, and rules governing the employee/employer relationship. Worker bills introduced this session included bills to change professional requirements for certain industries, to change pay or benefits for government employees, to require randomized drug testing for emergency response workers, to require employers to provide salary information to employees, to require employers to institute policies against bullying in the workplace, to allow police officers to break strikes, to provide for daily overtime pay for employees, and to provide certain benefits for employees, such as half hour rest breaks or paid parental leave. This session, 69 worker bills were introduced, and 18 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from legis.ga.gov

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of workers bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Workers Bills

### **H.B. 116: raises the minimum wage to \$15 and gets rid of exceptions to the minimum wage.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

HB 116 would have raised the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$15 and gotten rid of exceptions to the minimum wage. Employees who currently do not qualify for the minimum wage and whose income is composed of only tips would have had 50% of the minimum wage paid to them by their employer. HB 116 is a Democratic bill.

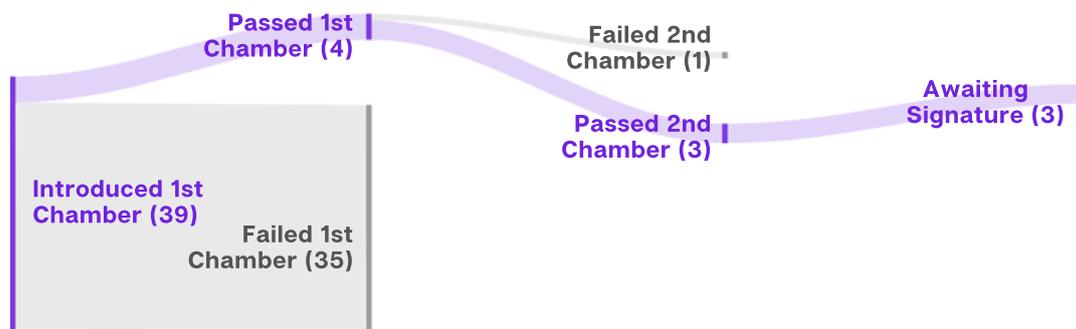
### **H.B. 146: provides paid parental leave to eligible state employees.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 146 provides paid parental leave to eligible state employees. Employees may take parental leave if they or their spouse give birth to a child, adopt a minor child, or foster a minor child. Paid leave is limited to 120 hours, which is roughly two work weeks, during each 12 month period. Eligible employees are employees of the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the Georgia government or a local board of education who work full time and have been employed by the government for at least six months. Unused leave has no cash value. HB 146 is a Republican bill.

# Policing

This legislative session, policing bills were particularly relevant following the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and calls for police reform. Here, policing bills encompass legislation that has to do with the relationship between the public and the police, government oversight and guidelines for policing, and legal liability for the police as government officers. Policing bills introduced this session included bills to decrease police funding, to ban decreases in police funding, to end qualified immunity for police officers, to raise police salaries if they complete education courses, to ban no-knock search warrants, to allow the police to sell unclaimed property (including guns), to establish police training courses on topics such as PTSD and languages other than English, and to prohibit officers from using certain weapons or military-grade equipment. This session, 39 policing bills were introduced, and 3 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](http://legis.ga.gov)  
Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of policing bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Policing Bills

### **H.B. 479: restricts arrest powers for law enforcement and private citizens.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

Currently, any citizen can arrest someone who committed a crime in front of them through citizen's arrest. HB 479 restricts that power to food service and retail owners, truck weight inspectors, private inspectors, and private security officers. Food services and retail owners can only detain someone suspected of stealing. Using force that causes serious injury or death to detain someone is banned, unless it is done to protect oneself or another person, one's property, or to prevent a felony from being committed. The bill also restricts law enforcement authority to make warrantless arrests outside their jurisdiction to situations where the crime is committed in front of the officer, the officer pursues the offender out of their jurisdiction, or the officer is assisting officers in another jurisdiction. HB 479 has bipartisan support.

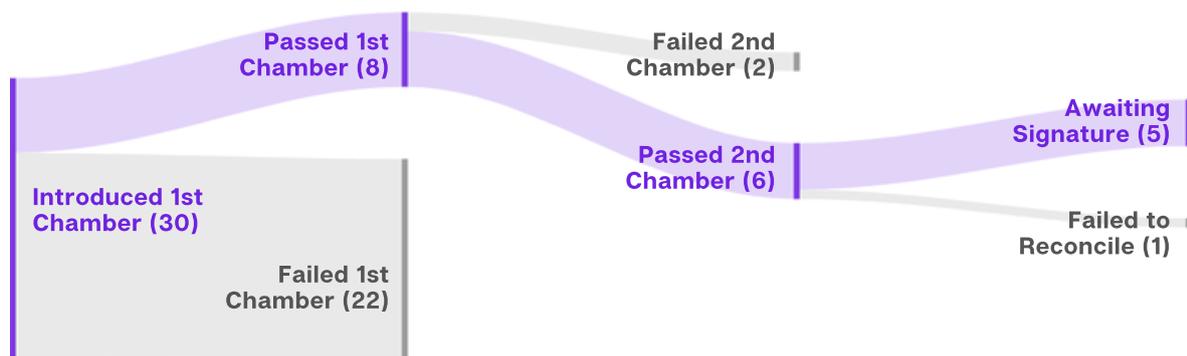
### **H.B. 286: restricts counties' ability to decrease police funding.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 286 bans local governments from decreasing police budgets by more than 5% of their current budget for the next five years. Counties are exempt from the ban if they have a one-time significant decrease in revenue, share police forces with a neighboring county, have been court-ordered to provide substantial new services, or have less than 25 police officers. HB 286 is a Republican bill.

# Environment

Environment bills are pieces of legislation that address the impact of humans on the natural world, either positively or negatively. Environment bills introduced this session included bills to prohibit restaurants from using single use plastic or foam containers; to change permitting for emissions; to stop soil amendment regulations; to require lead testing in water; to prohibit the use of flame retardants; to change landfill regulations; and to make environmental justice a mandatory consideration when new projects are being proposed to the government. This session, 30 environment bills were introduced, and 5 passed both chambers.



Source: legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](http://legis.ga.gov)

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of environment bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Environment Bills

### **S.B. 104: bans retailers from distributing plastic bags and foam containers to customers.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

SB 104 would have banned retailers for distributing single use plastic bags or foam containers to customers. Single use containers for trash, medicine, raw meat, pre-prepared food, and newspapers would have been exempt from the ban, as well as garment bags and packaging for bulk items. Business owners who violate the ban would have been punished with a misdemeanor offense, which comes with up to 12 months in prison and/or a \$250 fine. SB 104 is a Democratic bill.

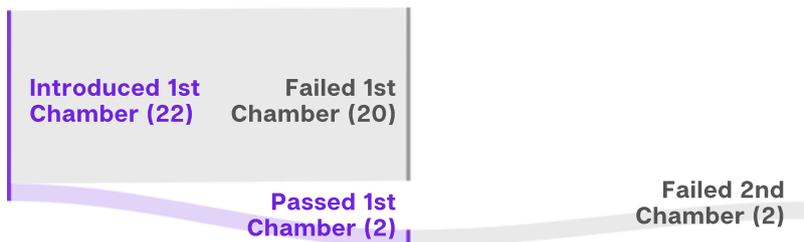
### **H.B. 150: prohibits the government from making any law that bans particular energy sources.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 150 prohibits local governments from making any law that bans the use of particular energy sources. Specifically, they cannot make policy prohibiting connection or reconnection of a customer to an electric utility, gas company or gas service, or the sale of petroleum gas or petroleum gas products. The bill explicitly does not limit government authority to choose utilities services for properties that they own. The bill responds to a national trend of cities banning natural gas in favor of other energy sources. HB 150 has some bipartisan support.

# Civil Rights

For the purposes of this report, civil rights bills are bills that focus on guaranteeing people equal opportunity and equal protection under the law, regardless of race or other personal characteristics. Civil rights bills introduced this session included bills to prohibit discrimination based on personal characteristics, such as hairstyles associated with race, color, or national origin, to establish commissions to ensure the rights of citizens in specific groups, such as Black women and girls, and the blind and visually impaired, to erect monuments to or commemorate civil rights leaders, to waive sovereign immunity so that state employees can be held legally responsible for constitutional violations, to prevent discrimination against veterans, and to expand access to individuals with disabilities. This session, 22 civil rights bills were introduced, none of which passed both chambers.



Source: legislative data sourced from legis.ga.gov

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of civil rights bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Civil Rights Bills

### **S.B. 90: creates the Georgia Commission on African American History and Culture.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

SB 90 would have created the Georgia Commission on African American History and Culture (GCAAHC), which would have had the mission to preserve and promote Georgia's African American history. GCAAHC would have created exhibits on this history, provided insight on African American history in Georgia, and worked with local government, business, and citizens to provide education on the African American experience. SB 90 is a bipartisan bill.

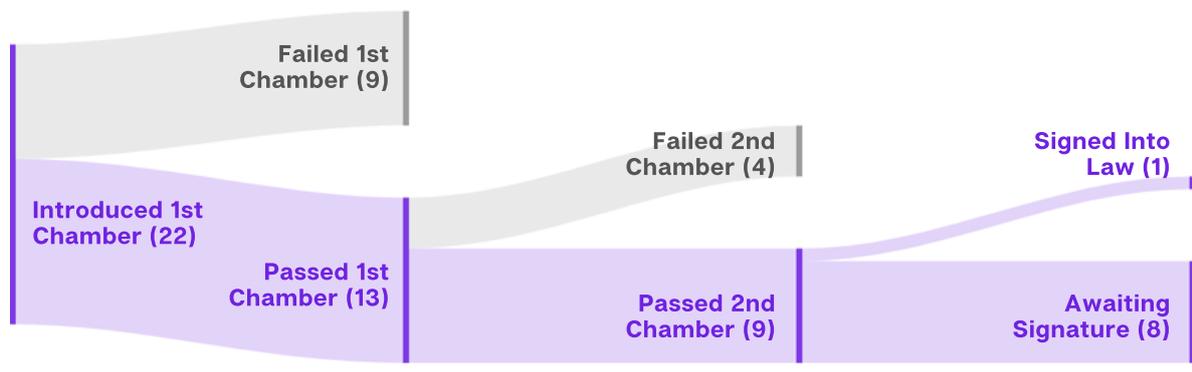
### **H.B. 569: bans the practice of conversion therapy for minors.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

HB 569 would have banned the practice of conversion therapy for minors by professional counselors, physicians, and psychologists. Any licensed professional counselor, physician, or psychologist who engages in conversion therapy for minors would have been considered to have engaged in unprofessional conduct and would have been subject to professional discipline. "Conversion therapy" is defined as any practice or treatment that seeks to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, including efforts to change behaviors, change gender expression, or reduce romantic or sexual attraction to same-gender individuals. HB 569 is a Democratic bill.

# Technology

Technology bills are bills that regulate, implement, or authorize the use of any form of technological device or service in relationship to government, the economy, or private use. Technology bills introduced this session included bills to establish standards for state agency website design; to allow government or corporate meetings and hearings to be held by teleconference; to prohibit actions by digital app distribution platforms regarding store processing services; to limit the ability of local governments to regulate fence detection systems; to regulate the provision of broadband services; and to require government agencies to report any cyberattack on their digital infrastructure. This session, 22 technology bills were introduced, and 9 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](http://legis.ga.gov)

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of technology bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Technology Bills

### **S.B. 205: prohibits third-party food delivery platforms from charging restaurants more than 15% of a total order price during COVID-19.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

SB 205 would have prohibited third party food delivery platforms from charging restaurants more than 15% of the order price during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill would have prevented the platforms from responding to the legislation by reducing rates paid to drivers or taking drivers' tips. "Third-party food delivery platform" is defined as a website, mobile app, or other electronic service that facilitates online orders of food and drinks, or arranges pick up or delivery, such as Postmates, Grubhub, UberEats, and Doordash. The bill would have applied to restaurants with fewer than 25 locations in Georgia, so large chain restaurants would be exempt. SB 205 is a Democratic bill.

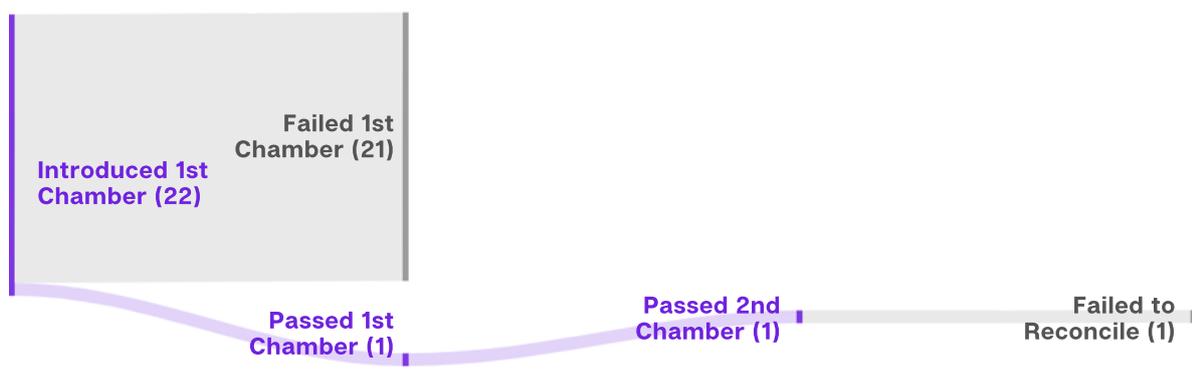
### **S.B. 52: creates a legal defense for companies against consumer lawsuits for data breaches.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

SB 52 would have created a legal defense for companies against customers who's data was breached. Personal information is defined as name, social security number, ID number, account passwords, and health insurance policy number. The defense would have only apply to companies that follow the cybersecurity standards for administrative, technical, and physical security set out in the bill or have another cybersecurity protocol certified by an independent security company. SB 52 is a Republican bill.

# Guns

Gun bills are pieces of legislation tightening, loosening, or otherwise changing laws around guns and gun carrying, access, and ownership. Gun bills introduced during this session included bills to require more comprehensive background checks, to allow court officials to carry weapons in the courtroom, to allow people not licensed to open carry in Georgia to open carry without obtaining a license, and to otherwise strengthen gun rights protections. This session, 22 gun bills were introduced, none of which passed both chambers.



Source: legislative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](http://legis.ga.gov)

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of gun bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Gun Bills

### **S.B. 2: allows law enforcement to destroy seized guns.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

SB 2 would have given Georgia police agencies the power to destroy weapons collected from a crime scene or from an arrested person. Currently, the police must return seized weapons to gun owners found innocent and sell any remaining weapons. The Atlanta police force has a stockpile of 6,000 confiscated weapons that they refuse to resell, citing public safety concerns. SB 2 was a Democratic bill.

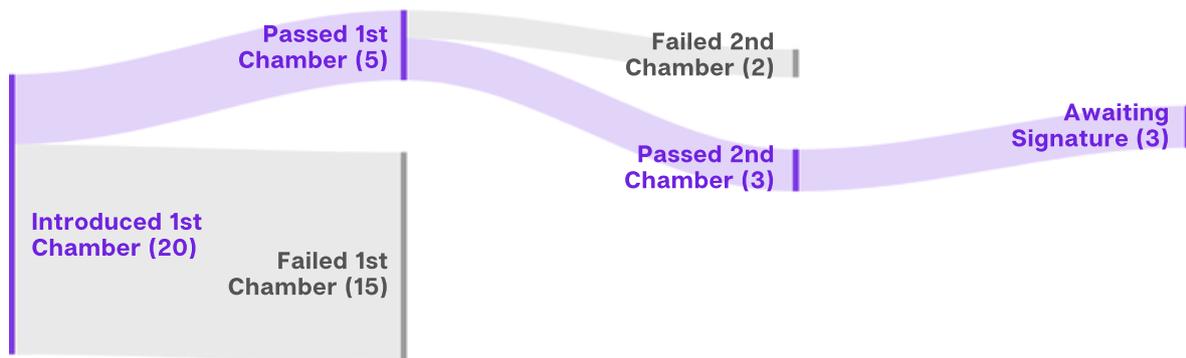
### **H.B. 218: authorizes people who are licensed to carry weapons in other states to carry in Georgia.**

#### **Failed to Reconcile**

HB 218 would have authorized people licensed to carry weapons in other states to carry in Georgia without being licensed in Georgia. Currently, Georgia only recognizes licenses from another state if that state also recognizes licenses from Georgia. The bill would have also banned the creation of a database that tracks across multiple jurisdictions citizens who have applied for or who have a gun license. Individuals included in such a database would have been able to sue the government. HB 218 would have also allowed counties to sell guns to any citizens, regardless of whether or not the buyer had a gun license. If counties did not sell seized weapons within 12 months, citizens would have been able to sue them. The government would also have been banned from revoking gun licenses or not accepting gun licenses during a state of emergency. HB 218 is a Republican bill. It passed both chambers in different forms, but those forms were not reconciled by the end of the legislative session.

# Housing

Housing bills refer to legislation about where people live, how buildings can be constructed, and what is legally allowed in landlord-tenant relationships. Housing bills introduced this session included bills to limit property owners' association fees, to require mobile homes to display decals, to create a separate eminent domain process for blighted property, to require notice before tenants are evicted, to create eviction diversion programs, and to provide for registration of maternity supportive housing residences. This session, 20 housing bills were introduced, and 3 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from legis.ga.gov

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of housing bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key Housing Bills

### **H.B. 138: requires that law enforcement post online monthly records of crimes committed at apartment buildings.**

#### **Did Not Pass**

HB 138 would have required law enforcement agencies to make monthly posts on their website listing specific crimes committed at apartment buildings or complexes. Assault, battery, rape, gang-related crimes, and felony drug crimes would all have been required to be on the list. The police would have been required to publish data for apartment buildings with 10 or more residential units. The records would have been required to be posted for two years, and the police would have had to provide paper copies when they were requested. HB 138 is a Democratic bill.

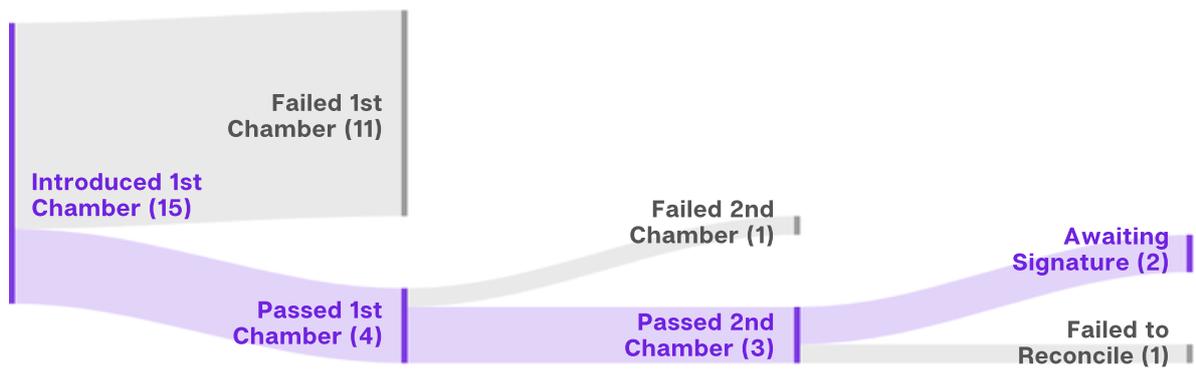
### **S.B. 75: allows victims of stalking to terminate their leases.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

SB 75 allows victims of stalking to terminate their leases with 30-day notice after a civil or criminal stalking order is issued. Stalking is defined as the continuous monitoring or contacting of another person with the purpose to harass or intimidate. A civil stalking order is a protective order issued in civil court, and a criminal stalking order is defined as bail or probation for the perpetrator for stalking the victim. Currently, Georgia allows victims of family violence to end their leases but not victims of stalking. SB 75 is a Democratic bill with some Republican support.

# COVID-19

Bills were classified as COVID-19 bills if they mentioned the COVID-19 virus or a similar virus in their text, were responsive to state of emergency declarations, or dealt with major topics surrounding the virus, such as mandated closures or vaccines. COVID-19 bills introduced this session included bills to make businesses immune from lawsuit because of the pandemic, to limit executive power to close businesses or religious institutions during a state of emergency, to prevent nursing homes from restricting visitation to residents, to provide temporary housing for homeless Georgians during the pandemic, and to provide protections to consumers and residents. This session, 15 COVID-19 bills were introduced, and 2 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from legis.ga.gov

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of COVID-19-related bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Key COVID-19 Bills

### **H.B. 290: prohibits hospitals and nursing homes from creating policies that prevent visitation from friends or family members of patients.**

#### **Failed to Reconcile**

HB 290 would have prohibited hospital and long-term care facilities from creating visitation policies that are more strict than the policies used by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Hospitals and long-term care facilities would have been allowed to create reasonable safety requirements for in-person visitation. However, the policy would have been required to be narrowly tailored. If facilities do not comply, they could have had their operating permits revoked. The bill was a response to executive orders in Georgia in 2020, which banned visitation for seven months, until restrictions were eased to allow for visitation in facilities that had no COVID-19 cases for 14 days. HB 290 has some bipartisan support.

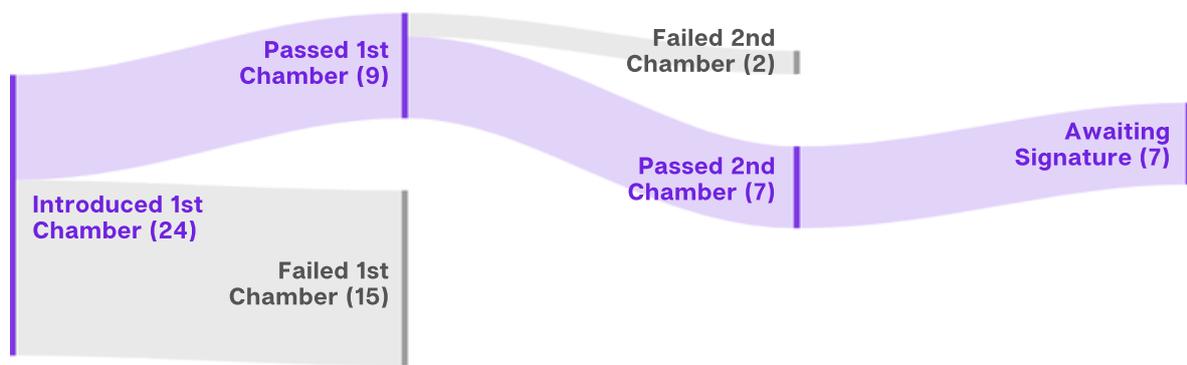
### **H.B. 112: extends immunity for businesses and hospitals from legal claims based on COVID-19 for one year.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 112 extends legal immunity for healthcare providers and businesses from claims based on COVID-19 for one year. Under the bill, individuals cannot sue businesses for COVID-19 exposure or transmission and cannot sue hospitals based on treatment for COVID-19, unless they can prove that the business or hospital was causing harm deliberately or recklessly. To qualify for legal immunity, businesses must post large, legible signs at their entrance explaining the risks of COVID-19 or require a ticket purchase for entry. The bill is set to expire in July 2022. HB 112 is a Republican bill.

# Other Issues

For the purposes of this report, this category of bills is made up of pieces of legislation that did not fit into the large topic areas of this legislative session. Subtopic areas within the other bills category include retirement plans or nursing homes, utility regulation bills, bills regulating the sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages, and bills about daylight savings. Other bills introduced this session included bills to change the term “National Guard” to the term “organized militia”, to abolish or make permanent daylight savings time, to prohibit marketing of domestic animals in certain locations, to allow for horse racing facilities, to require 911 be called if an excavator damages a gas or hazardous liquid pipeline, to let retired teachers change their beneficiaries, and to prohibit cover bands from appearing or performing without the original artist’s approval. This session, 24 bills related to other issues were introduced, and 7 passed both chambers.



Source: Legislative data sourced from legis.ga.gov

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of other issue bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM.

## Other Key Bills

### **S.B. 100: makes daylight saving time year round.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

SB 100 would make daylight saving time year round, getting rid of the twice-yearly time changes. This means that Georgia would follow the time schedule that it currently uses from March until November all year. Under this system, the sun would rise and set later throughout the year. This would only go into effect if Congress updated the federal Uniform Time Act of 1966 to allow for this change. SB 100 has some bipartisan support.

### **S.B. 236: allows restaurants to sell take home cocktails.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

SB 236 allows restaurants licensed to sell alcohol to sell customers two take home cocktails per entree in sealed containers, meaning one with no openings or straw holes that is labeled with who prepared and sold the drink. Each cocktail is limited to 3 oz. of liquor, which is about two shots. Cocktails would need to be accompanied by a food order, and the person who paid for the drinks would need to pick them up. If the customer is driving, they would need to put the drinks in the glove compartment, trunk, or the back of the vehicle. The bill is meant to help the restaurant industry recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. SB 236 has some bipartisan support.

# Georgia's 2021 Legislative Session

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**By Political Party**

# Overview

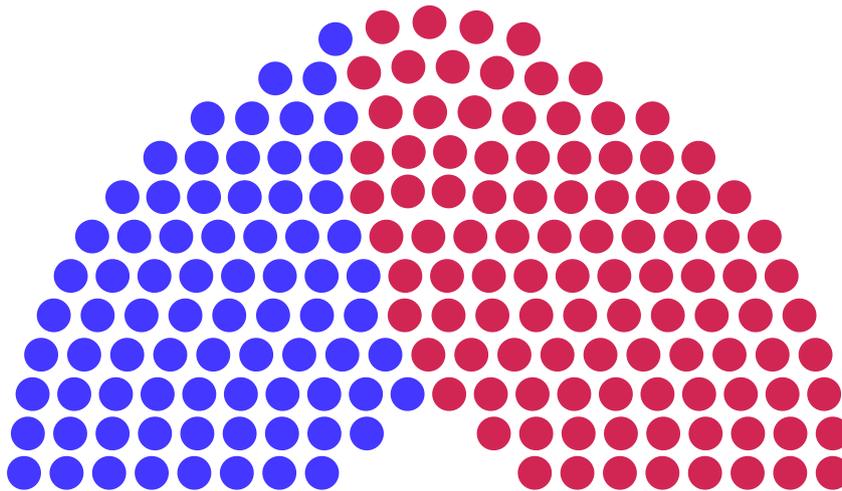
The Georgia General Assembly consists of two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House of Representatives has 180 total seats. Currently, 103 of those seats are held by Republicans, and 77 are held by Democrats. The Georgia Senate has 56 total seats, 34 of which are currently held by Republicans and 22 of which are currently held by Democrats. The Republican party has a majority in both chambers.

Bills pass in each chamber by majority vote. In the House of Representatives, 91 votes in favor of a bill are necessary in order for it to pass. In the Senate, 29 votes in favor of a bill are necessary for it to pass.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives is David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge), and the Senate President Pro Tempore is Sen. Butch Miller (R-Gainesville).

## 2021 Georgia House of Representatives

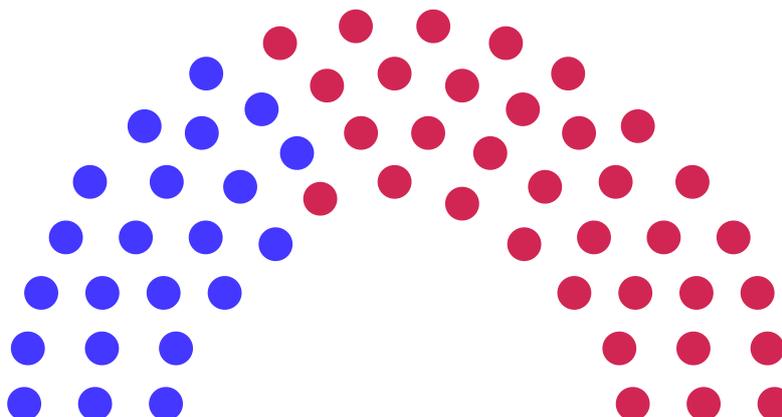
77 Democrats    103 Republicans



Source: Representative data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov)

## 2021 Georgia Senate

22 Democrats    34 Republicans



Source: Senator data sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov)

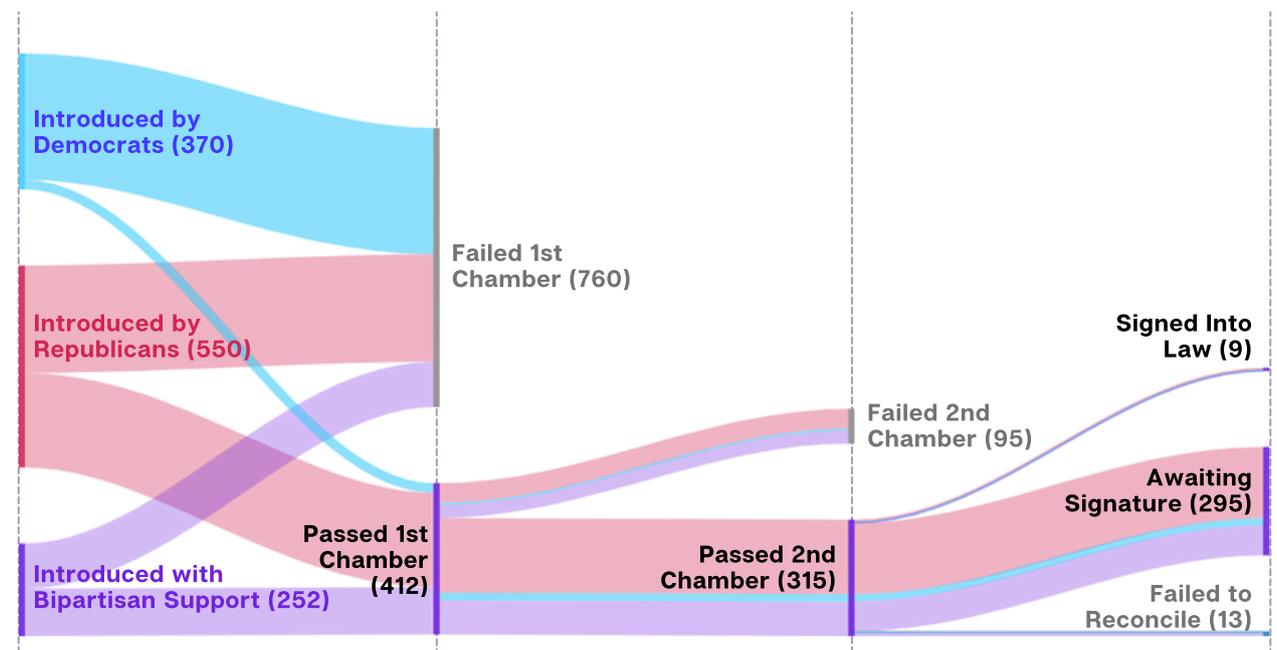
For the purposes of this report, the phrase “bipartisan” will be used to denote bills that had at least some support from members of both parties. Bills classified as bipartisan had at least one cosponsor from each party. Bipartisan in this context is not meant to convey any sort of value judgment or classification of issues or bills as inherently following the ideology of one or more political parties; it is merely meant to express that Georgia legislators from more than one party provided support for the bill labelled as “bipartisan.”

## Bipartisan Legislation

Bills classified as bipartisan within this report are those that had at least one cosponsor from each political party.

Of the 1,172 bills introduced, 550 were introduced by Republicans, 370 were introduced by Democrats, and 252 were introduced with bipartisan support. Of the 550 Republican bills, 201 bills (36.6%) passed both chambers. Of the 370 Democratic bills, 20 bills (5.4%) passed both chambers. Of the 252 bipartisan bills, 83 bills (32%) passed both chambers

### 2021 Bill Progress By Party



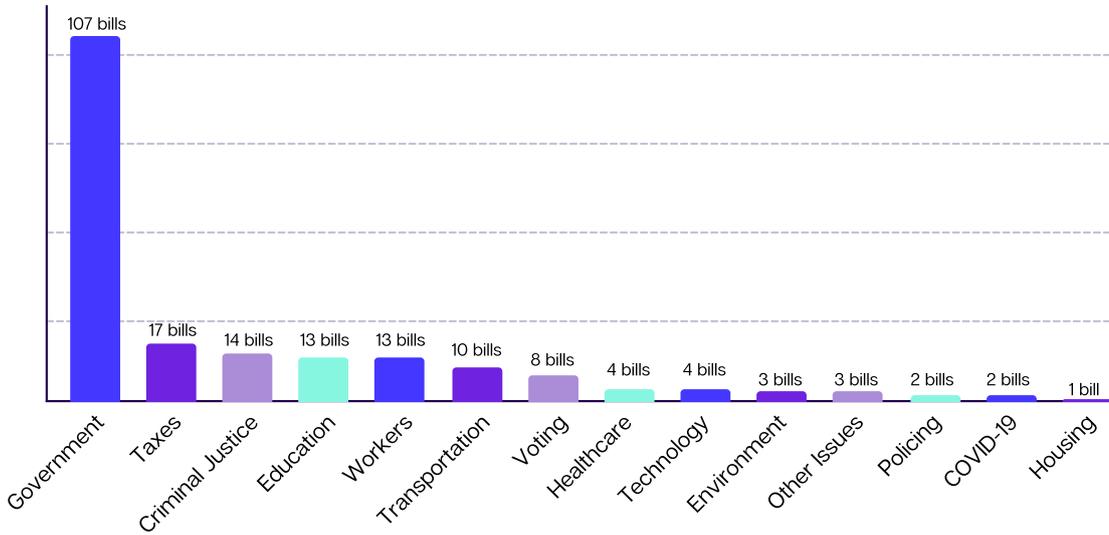
Source: legis.ga.gov

Notes: This graph reflects the legislative status of all bills as of April 1st, 5:00PM. Bipartisan bills are those cosponsored by at least one member from each party.

Which bills are passed is determined in part by which bills are selected for a committee vote, as well as which bills are selected for a floor vote. Committee chairs decide whether to call up bills assigned to their committee for a vote. If bills are not called up for a vote, they die in committee and do not get a chance to be voted on by the entire chamber. If a bill is called up for a vote and approved by the committee, it must then be called up for a vote by the entire chamber. Many bills also die at this stage by not being called up for a vote. The leaders of each respective chamber decide which bills are called up for a vote in their chamber. The leader of the House is Speaker of the House of Representatives David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge), and the leader of the Senate is Senate President Pro Tempore Butch Miller (R-Gainesville).

The following graphs provide more detail as to bills from which issue areas passed for each party.

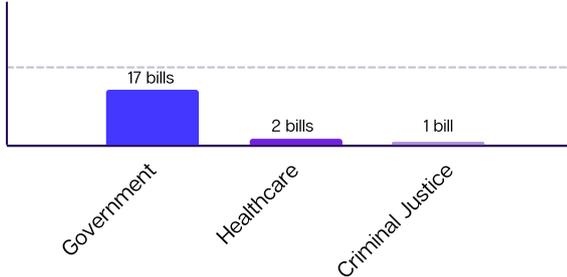
### Republican Bills Passed By Issue Area



Source: legislative data was sourced from legis.ga.gov

Notes: Branch classified each bill into a primary issue area Republican bills are those cosponsored by only Republicans. This reflects data about bills introduced as of April 1st, 2021 at 5pm EST.

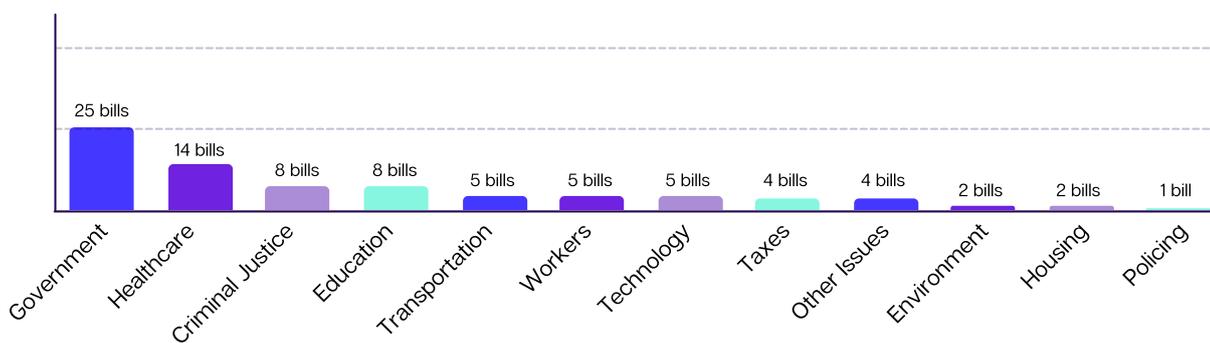
### Democratic Bills Passed By Issue Area



Source: legislative data was sourced from legis.ga.gov

Notes: Branch classified each bill into a primary issue area. Democratic bills are those cosponsored by only Democrats. This reflects data about bills introduced as of April 1st, 2021 at 5pm EST.

### Bipartisan Bills Passed By Issue Area



Source: legislative data was sourced from legis.ga.gov

Notes: Branch classified each bill into a primary issue area. Bipartisan bills are those cosponsored by at least one member from each party. This reflects data about bills introduced as of April 1st, 2021 at 5pm EST.

# Consensus

Of the 304 bills that passed this legislative session, certain bills were met with a high degree of consensus among representatives. The following bills passed both chambers by the highest vote margins.

**H.B. 231: Expands the applicability of protective orders for victims of stalking.**

Passed the House 174-0; Passed the Senate 53-0

**H.B. 346: Authorizes emergency medical staff to administer hydrocortisone sodium succinate to patients with a genetic disorder that impacts the adrenal glands.**

Passed the House 172-0; Passed the Senate 54-0

**H.B. 517: Restricts arrest powers for law enforcement and private citizens.**

Passed the House 173-0; Passed the Senate 52-1

**S.B. 237: Creates specialty license plates supporting the U.S. Army Rangers.**

Passed the House 170-0; Passed the Senate 54-0

**H.B. 208: Makes the second Wednesday in February each year "National Swearing-in Day" in Georgia.**

Passed the House 170-0; Passed the Senate 53-0

**H.B. 619: Authorizes the sale of Patrick's Fishing Paradise to a private entity.**

Passed the House 174-0; Passed the Senate 49-0

**H.B. 255: Requires that evidence of sexual assault be held when a victim chooses to not immediately report the assault, creates a sexual assault tracking system, and changes what information must be reported to federal Violent Criminal Apprehension Program.**

Passed the House 174-0; Passed the Senate 49-0

# Controversy

An examination of the final vote totals of the 304 bills that passed this session also gives us an understanding of where partisan sessions lie within the Georgia General Assembly. For the purposes of this report, the calculated vote margin is determined by taking the total "Yes" votes that each passed bill received in each chamber and subtracting the total "No" votes that each passed bill received. Passing bills with the lowest vote margin are those that resulted in the least consensus, thereby reflecting higher levels of disagreement among representatives, often along party lines.

## **S.B. 47: Expands eligibility and changes scholarship amount calculations for children with special needs.**

Passed the House 91-71; Passed the Senate 30-23

## **S.B. 221: Creates a leadership committee that can advocate for or against candidates.**

Passed the House 96-69; Passed the Senate 30-21

## **H.B. 517: Provides for the inclusion of earned interest in the calculation of minimum revenue obligations for scholarships and tuition grants and changes the reporting and auditing process for scholarships organizations.**

Passed the House 98-71; Passed the Senate 30-18

## **S.B. 202: Makes broad changes to voting, absentee voting, and elections administration.**

Passed the House 100-74; Passed the Senate 34-20

## **S.B. 256: Reorganizes the county boards of health.**

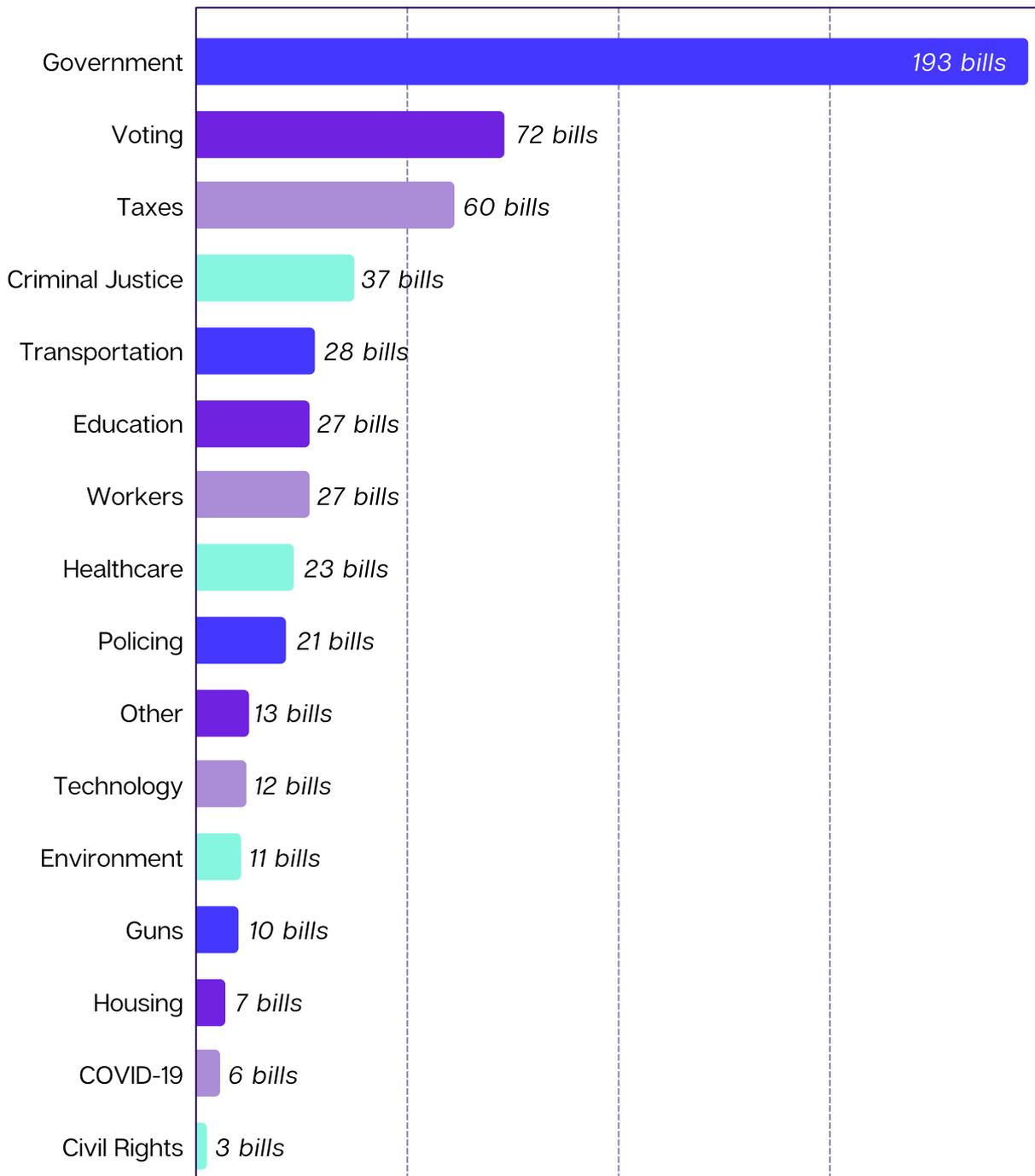
Passed the House 95-76; Passed the Senate 37-14

# Political Parties in Detail

# Republican Legislation

During the 2021 legislative session, 550 Republican bills were introduced in both chambers. Here, Republican bills are those introduced and cosponsored only by members of the Republican party. In total, 201 Republican bills were passed by both chambers. After government-related bills, the top issue areas for Republican bills were voting, taxes, and criminal justice.

**Republican Bills Introduced By Issue Area**



Source: legislative data was sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov)

Notes: Branch classified each bill into a primary issue area, based on the proposed changes of the bill. Republican bills are those cosponsored by only Republicans. This reflects data about bills introduced as of April 1st, 2021 at 5pm EST.

## Key Pieces of Passed Legislation

Of the 201 Republican-sponsored bills that passed in the 2021 legislative session, five bills were identified as most significant based on a number of factors, including level of engagement from Branch audience members, level of substantive change to Georgia law made by the bill, level of support by legislators during floor votes, and level of media coverage. These bills have successfully passed both chambers, and have either been signed into law by the governor or are awaiting the governor's signature.

### **S.B. 202: makes broad changes to voting, absentee voting, and elections administration.**

#### **Signed Into Law**

SB 202 makes a wide range of changes to Georgia's voting process. It criminalizes distributing food, drinks, or other items to voters waiting in line; prevents polling places from extending their hours on election day unless there was a period of time on election day when voters could not vote there; decreases precinct sizes if wait times are more than an hour; allows individuals or outside groups to challenge voters' right to vote an unlimited number of times and expedites hearings; makes all ballots public record; prevents organizations from sending out absentee ballot applications to certain individuals; requires an ID number or copy of an ID when voters request absentee ballots; gives the state government the power to take control of county elections and decide how election rules are implemented; limits ballot drop boxes to one box per every 100,000 registered voters; requires constant surveillance for ballot drop boxes; makes it a felony to open or accept and return someone else's absentee ballot; and allows absentee ballots to start being counted as early as the third Monday before election day but prevents officials from tabulating the count until polls close on election day.

### **H.B. 509: provides protections to Georgians with preexisting conditions if the Affordable Care Act is repealed.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 509 incorporates protections for people with preexisting conditions into Georgia law by requiring that insurers offer at least one reasonably priced plan to Georgians with preexisting conditions. Currently, people with preexisting conditions are protected from being denied healthcare coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). HB 509 explicitly states that it would only go into effect if the ACA is repealed by Congress or overturned by the Supreme Court, putting these protections directly into Georgia law. A "preexisting condition" is defined as medical advice, diagnosis, care, or treatment recommended or received before an insurance policy begins. This bill prevents insurers from denying coverage, charging higher benefits, limiting benefits to certain people, or delaying coverage in Georgia. The policy must also be actively marketed in Georgia.

### **H.B. 287: requires K-12 schools to provide tobacco and vaping education.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 287 requires that schools provide mandatory education on tobacco and vaping along with alcohol education for all grades K-12. Grades 6-12 will also receive an additional class on human trafficking. Vaping is the act of using an electronic cigarette to inhale flavored water vapor, nicotine, and other substances. Schools are already required to provide mandatory instruction on alcohol and drug uses, although which drugs are not specified.

## **H.B. 94: criminalizes possession of stolen mail and porch piracy.**

### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 94 makes it illegal to possess stolen mail or commit porch piracy. Someone is guilty of possession of stolen mail if they have at least ten separate pieces of mail addressed to at least three different addresses, and they must know that the mail is stolen. Someone is guilty of porch piracy if they take at least one package or article of mail from around another person's house without permission. Possession of stolen mail and porch piracy are both criminalized as a felony punishable by one to five years in prison.

## **H.B. 286: restricts the ability of counties to decrease police funding.**

### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 286 bans local governments from decreasing police budgets by more than 5% of the current budget for the next five years. Counties are exempt from the ban if they have a one-time significant decrease in revenue, share police forces with a neighboring county, have been court-ordered to provide substantial new services, or have fewer than 25 police officers.

## **Key Pieces of Failed Legislation**

Of the 349 Republican-sponsored bills that failed to pass during the 2021 legislative session, five bills were identified as most significant based on a number of factors, including level of engagement from Branch audience members, level of substantive change to Georgia law made by the bill, level of support by legislators during floor votes, and level of media coverage. Legislators can reconsider bills that failed during the 2021 session during the 2022 session next January.

## **H.B. 413: prohibits state and local governments from making laws requiring vaccinations in certain circumstances.**

### **Did Not Pass**

HB 413 would have banned the Georgia state or local governments from requiring people to get vaccinated, including getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccinations would not have been allowed to be mandated by the government for employment, school attendance, professional licensing, getting a degree, being admitted to any business or entertainment venue, or accessing transportations. In order for vaccines to be mandated, the vaccine would have to have been through a clinical trial that determines all possible short-term and long-term side effects, which could take multiple decades. Vaccines also could not have been required if there were other, non-vaccination methods available to mitigate the spread of the disease, such as mask wearing and social distancing.

## **S.B. 71: ends no excuse absentee voting.**

### **Did Not Pass**

SB 71 would have limited absentee voting to voters who are unable to be present at the polls because they are absent from their precinct on election day, who have a physical disability or are caring for someone with a disability, who observe a religious holiday that falls on election day, who work at a job that protects the public that they are required to be at the entire time the polls are open, or who are 65 years old or older. Voters would be allowed to cast an absentee ballot without providing a reason by delivering it to the registrar's office during the early voting period. Currently, anyone in Georgia can vote absentee.

## **H.B. 289/S.B. 71: criminalizes harassment by two or more people as an unlawful assembly and expands related punishments.**

### **Did Not Pass**

HB 289 and SB 171 would have criminalized harassment by two or more people as an unlawful assembly and broadly expanded related criminal punishments. Harassment, in this case, is a broad term not defined by the bill. This bill would have applied to protests where law enforcement deemed that harassment was taking place. If two to six people were present, the assembly would have been considered as a misdemeanor criminal offense. If there were seven or more people present, the assembly would have been considered a felony punishable by one to five years in prison and/or a fine of \$1,000 to \$5,000. If someone defaces a monument, cemetery or structure while in a group of two or more, it would have been a felony punished by one to fifteen years in prison and/or a fine of \$1,000 to \$10,000. People convicted under this law would have been broadly barred from state or local government employment and from receiving employment benefits, which are not typical criminal punishments. Obstructing a highway or street would have been considered a felony offense, which would be punished by one to five years in prison and/or a fine of \$1,000 to \$5,000. The bill would also have provided a legal defense for people who kill or injure attendees of the assembly, if that person believed that they or their property were in danger and they needed to leave the scene.

## **H.B. 1: prohibits colleges from creating “Free Speech Zones.”**

### **Did Not Pass**

HB 1 would have banned public colleges and universities from designating outdoor areas where all on-campus protesting and advocacy efforts must take place, which are referred to as “Free Speech Zones.” The bill would have made all outdoor places on campus open to demonstrators. “Free Speech Zones” originated in the 1980s and 1990s as a way for schools to minimize classroom interference by designating where demonstrations could occur. The bill would also require all colleges and universities to create policies that allow campus community members to meet and distribute literature. Schools can implement restrictions, but restrictions would have had to be very specific and content-neutral. The bill would have required the State Board of the Technical College System of Georgia to create an annual report about any barriers or actions taken by a school pertaining to free speech.

## **H.B. 401: makes it a crime for healthcare professionals to help children transition.**

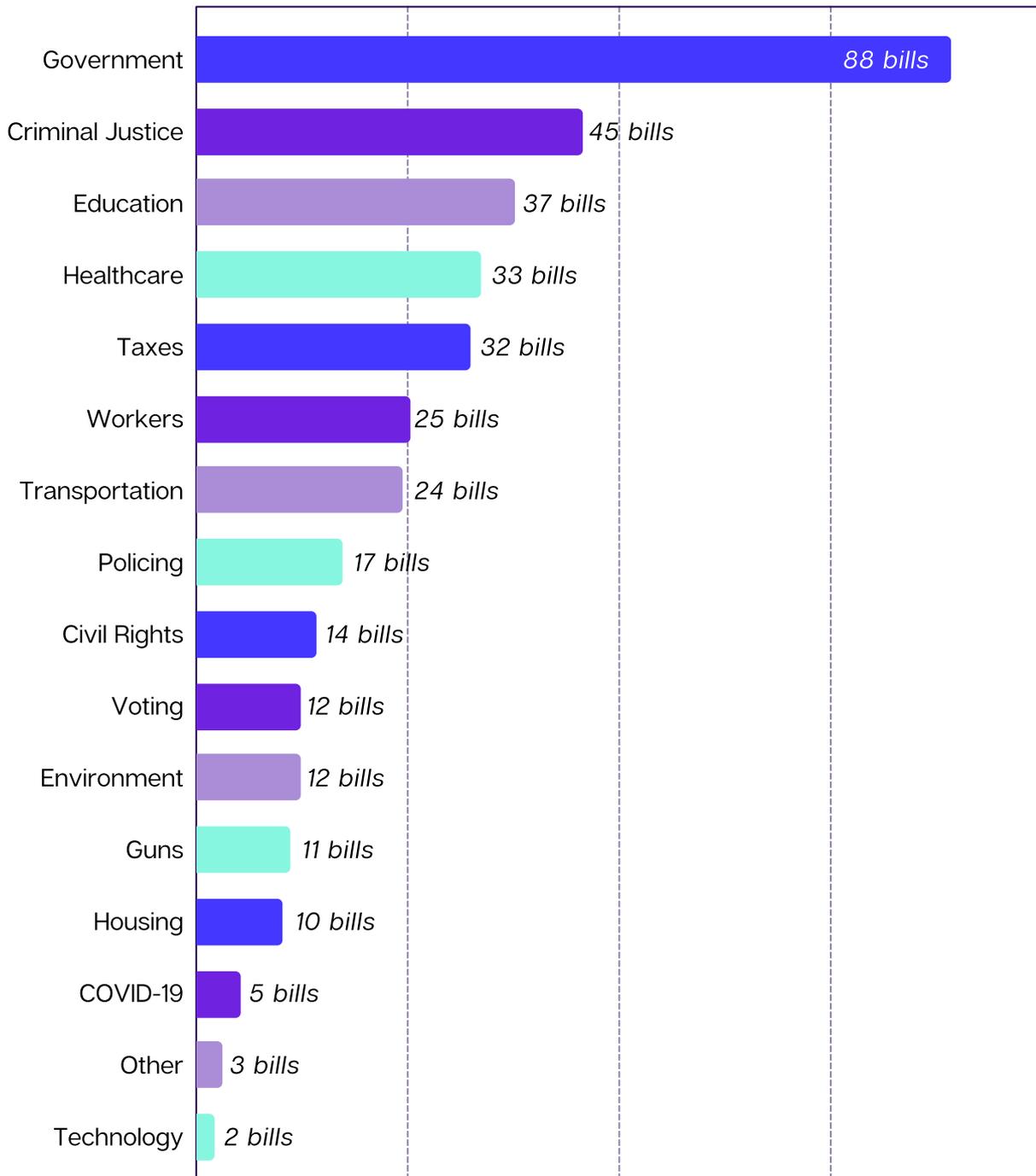
### **Did Not Pass**

HB 401 would have made it illegal for healthcare professionals to perform procedures or provide medication to minors to help them transition. Transitioning is a process where someone alters their appearance or biology to match a certain gender, and it is used by transgender people whose biological sex does not match their gender identity. The bill would have banned healthcare professionals from performing sterilizations, performing mastectomies, removing non-diseased organs, giving medication to block puberty, or prescribing estrogen or testosterone to any minor. Healthcare providers who provide any of these services would have been guilty of a felony punishable by one to ten years in prison and have had their medical license revoked. Exceptions would have been made for parents making decisions about their children who are intersex or have a sex development disorder.

# Democratic Legislation

During the 2021 legislative session, 370 Democrat bills were introduced in both chambers. Here, Democrat bills are those introduced and cosponsored only by members of the Democratic party. In total, 20 Democrat bills were passed by both chambers. After government-related bills, the top issue areas for Democrat bills were criminal justice, education, and healthcare.

**Democratic Bills Introduced By Issue Area**



Source: legislative data was sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov)

Notes: Branch classified each bill into a primary issue area, based on the proposed changes of the bill. Democratic bills are those cosponsored by only Democrats. This reflects data about bills introduced as of April 1st, 2021 at 5pm EST.

## Key Pieces of Passed Legislation

Of the 20 Democrat-sponsored bills that passed in the 2021 legislative session, five bills were identified as most significant based on a number of factors, including level of engagement from Branch audience members, level of substantive change to Georgia law made by the bill, level of support by legislators during floor votes, and level of media coverage. These bills have successfully passed both chambers, and have either been signed into law by the governor or are awaiting the governor's signature.

### **H.B. 757: allows the city of Atlanta to create urban enterprise zones with certain tax benefits.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 757 gives the city of Atlanta power to abate taxes in order to incentivize private enterprises to invest in economically distressed areas of the city. The bill allows the city to designate "urban enterprise zones" for economic development and workforce housing within city limits. Within the zones, qualifying businesses and services are eligible for exemption for ad valorem property taxes, which is a tax on property levied for county or municipal operations. Property taxes imposed by school districts or for general obligation debt are not eligible for exemption.

### **S.B. 78: criminalizes posting nude or sexual photos or videos on a website without the subject's consent in order to harm or harass them.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

SB 78 makes it illegal to post revenge porn online with the purpose to harass or cause financial harm. Revenge porn is the act of sharing nude and sexual photos or videos of someone without their consent. The crime is a felony and is punishable by one to ten years in prison and/or a fine of up to \$200,000. The bill is in addition to Georgia's existing revenge porn law, which criminalized sharing revenge porn with one or more people with the intention of causing harm as a high and aggravated misdemeanor punishable by up to 12 months in prison and/or a fine of up to \$15,000.

### **H.B. 762: creates the Fulton Technology and Energy Enhancement Authority to address technology and energy underdevelopment.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 762 creates the Fulton Technology and Energy Enhancement Authority to enhance development of technological and energy resources in areas of the county where residents are locked into poverty. The Authority is responsible for identifying and alleviating areas of underdevelopment of technological resources and energy burdens causing poverty, increased unemployment rates, and failing school rates within the county by developing programs to address underdevelopment. The Authority will be made up of seven appointed members serving four year terms.

## **H.B. 777: creates the State Court of DeKalb County.**

### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 777 renames the DeKalb County court system from the Civil and Criminal Court of DeKalb County to the State Court of DeKalb County and sets up rules for the court system to operate. The bill sets out court fees, sets up meetings for all judges of the court, creates rules for selection of the chief judge of the court, changes punishments for contempt of court, and provides procedures for selection and removal of other court officials.

## **H.B. 724: changes compensations for members of the Cobb County Board of Commissioners.**

### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 724 changes compensation for members of the Cobb County Board of Commissioners. The bill sets the base pay for the chairperson at \$140,582 and at \$48,411 for commissioners. The bill also requires that the chairperson spend no more than 15 hours per week working for another business in order to receive full time pay. Members of the commission are also eligible for expense reimbursements, including mileage, secretarial services, travel, and lodging expenses related to county business.

## **Key Pieces of Failed Legislation**

Of the 350 Democrat-sponsored bills that failed to pass during the 2021 legislative session, five bills were identified as most significant based on a number of factors, including level of engagement from Branch audience members, level of substantive change to Georgia law made by the bill, level of support by legislators during floor votes, and level of media coverage. Legislators can reconsider bills that failed during the 2021 session during the 2022 session next January.

## **H.B. 73: limits out-of-pocket costs for insulin for Georgians.**

### **Did Not Pass**

HB 73 would have limited the maximum price of a 30-day supply of insulin to \$50 for Georgians covered by either a private insurance company, Medicaid, or PeachCare for Kids. Currently, insulin costs about \$25 to \$300 per vial, and three to more than six vials are required for a month's supply.

## **H.B. 113: allows same day registration and voting.**

### **Did Not Pass**

HB 113 would have allowed voters to register and vote on the day of the primary or election or during early voting. Voters would have gone to the polling place in their precinct, filled out an official voter registration application, provided the necessary identification, and voted via provisional ballot. Their provisional ballot would have been verified by the board of registrars within three business days. If their registration was accepted, their vote would have been counted. If it was rejected, they would have been notified with the reasons for the rejection within three business days. If they registered correctly but voted in the wrong precinct, only the votes they were eligible to cast would have been counted.

## **S.B. 61: prohibits discrimination based on hairstyles associated with race, color, or national origin.**

### **Did Not Pass**

SB 61 would have banned discrimination in employment, education, and housing based on hairstyles associated with race, color, or national origin, including protective hairstyles. Protective hairstyles are defined as braids, locs, twists, or other textured hairstyles. The definition of “race” in anti-discrimination laws would also have been expanded to include traits associated with race, color, or national origin, including hair texture, hair type, and protective hairstyles. In employment, employers would have been banned from failing or refusing to hire, discriminating in wages, pay, hours, or other conditions of employment due to protective hairstyles unless the protective hairstyle restricts the employee's ability to do their job.

## **S.B. 137: bans the use of private prisons.**

### **Did Not Pass**

SB 137 would have banned the use of private prisons in Georgia. The bill included prisons, jails, immigration detention centers, parole revocation centers, long-term and short-term youth detention centers, boot camps, and probation detention centers. Only government agencies or departments, including the federal government, would have been allowed to operate detention centers in the state. The bill would have gone into effect on January 1, 2021. Currently, Georgia has four for-profit private prisons that are funded by \$170 million in tax revenue each year.

## **S.B. 18: eliminates the statute of limitations for sex crimes in Georgia.**

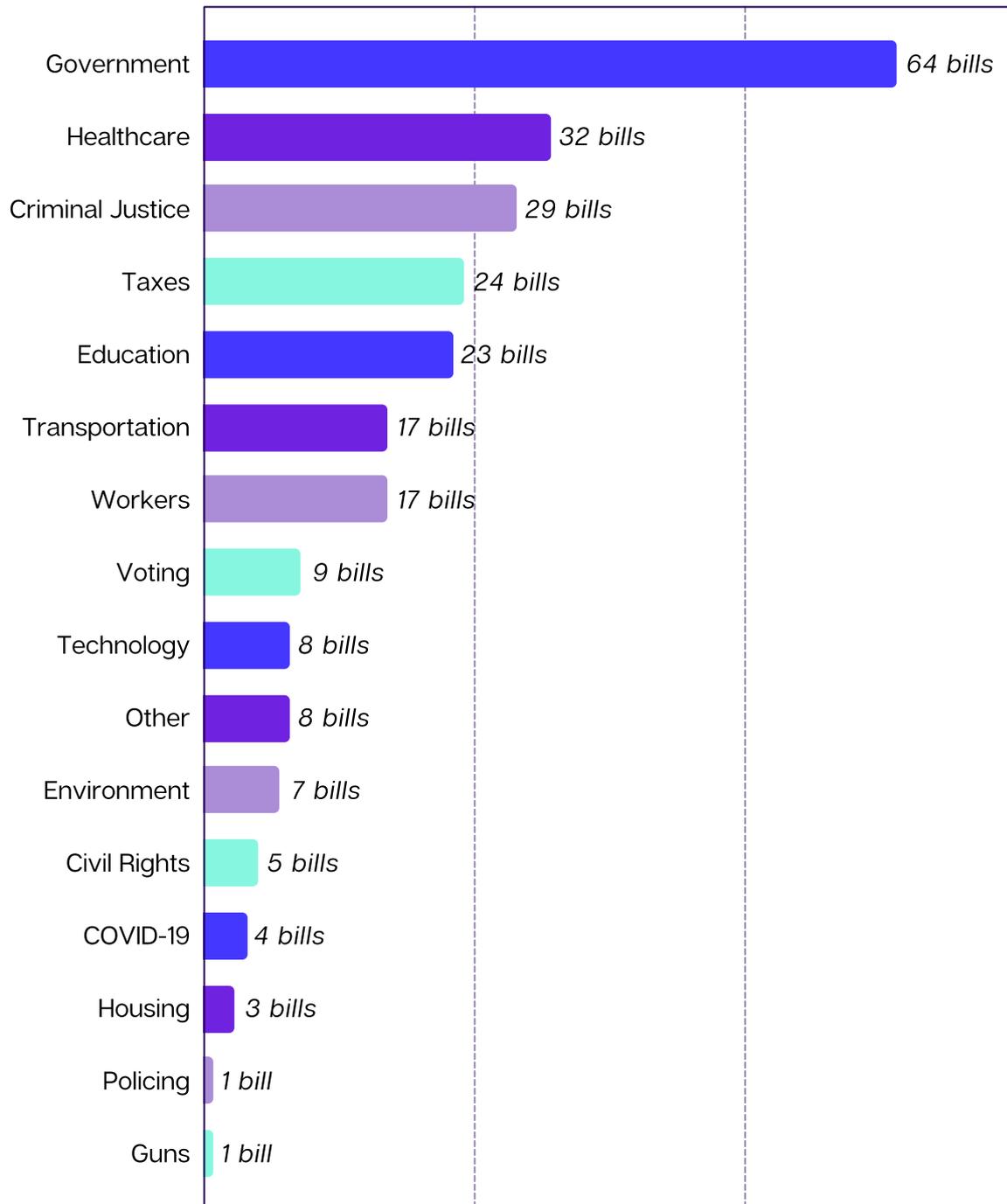
### **Did Not Pass**

SB 18 would have allowed charges for rape, aggravated sodomy, and aggravated sexual battery to be brought any time after the crime is committed. This would have eliminate the current statute of limitations for rape, which is 15 years, and aggravated sodomy and sexual battery, which is seven years. Currently, cases with DNA evidence did not have a statute of limitations. If SB 18 had passed, sex crime cases with no DNA evidence would also have no statute of limitations. The bill would have only applied to crimes committed on or after July 1, 2021.

# Bipartisan Legislation

During the 2021 legislative session, 252 bipartisan bills were introduced in both chambers. Here, bipartisan bills are defined as all bills that have at least one co-sponsor from each party. In total, 83 bipartisan bills were passed by both chambers. The top issue areas for bipartisan bills were government, education, and healthcare.

**Bipartisan Bills Introduced, by Issue Area**



Source: legislative data was sourced from [legis.ga.gov](https://legis.ga.gov)

Notes: Branch classified each bill into a primary issue area. Bipartisan bills are those cosponsored by at least one member from each party. This reflects data about bills introduced as of April 1st, 2021 at 5pm EST.

## Key Pieces of Passed Legislation

Of the 83 bipartisan bills that passed in the 2021 legislative session, five bills were identified as most significant based on a number of factors, including level of engagement from Branch audience members, level of substantive change to Georgia law made by the bill, level of support by legislators during floor votes, and level of media coverage. These bills have successfully passed both chambers, and have either been signed into law by the governor or are awaiting the governor's signature.

### **S.B. 105: allows former offenders to be released from probation early.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

SB 105 sets up a process that allows individuals who served at least three years on probation and met a list of eligibility criteria to seek an early end to their probation sentence. This criteria includes paying all restitution owed to the courts or crime victims, not having probation revoked within the past two years, and not having been arrested for anything other than a non-serious traffic offense. The Department of Community Supervision (DCS) will be responsible for considering these factors and notifying the court and the prosecuting attorney as to whether it recommends that probation be terminated. If it does, the prosecuting attorney can request a hearing within 30 days to contest the termination. Currently, probation sentences in Georgia average 6.3 years, compared to the national average of 2 years.

### **H.B. 479: restricts arrest powers for law enforcement and private citizens.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

Currently, any citizen can arrest someone who committed a crime in front of them through citizen's arrest. HB 479 restricts that power to food service and retail owners, truck weight inspectors, private inspectors, and private security officers. Food services and retail owners can only detain someone suspected of stealing. Using force that causes serious injury or death to detain someone is banned, unless it is done to protect oneself or another person, one's property, or to prevent a felony from being committed. The bill also restricts law enforcement authority to make warrantless arrests outside their jurisdiction to situations where the crime is committed in front of the officer, the officer pursues the offender out of their jurisdiction, or the officer is assisting officers in another jurisdiction.

### **H.B. 150: prohibits the government from making any law that bans particular energy sources.**

#### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 150 prohibits local governments from making any law that bans the use of particular energy sources. Specifically, they cannot make policy prohibiting connection or reconnection of a customer to an electric utility, gas company or gas service, or the sale of petroleum gas or petroleum gas products. The bill explicitly does not limit government authority to choose utilities services for properties that they own. The bill responds to a national trend of cities banning natural gas in favor of other energy sources.

## **H.B. 128: prohibits discrimination based on disability for organ transplants.**

### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 128 prohibits discrimination against disabled people seeking an organ transplant. Healthcare providers are banned from basing certain decisions solely on someone's disability, including deeming them ineligible for an organ transplant, denying them medical services related to a transplant, not putting them on a transplant waitlist, giving them lower priority on a waitlist, denying them a transplant due to concerns about their inability to follow post-transplant medical guidance, and refusing their insurance for covering transplant costs. Healthcare providers can take a patient's disability into account when making transplant recommendations if the disability significantly impacts the procedure. Insurance companies also cannot deny coverage for a transplant based on disability. If discrimination occurs, the patient can sue their healthcare provider or insurance company.

## **H.B. 617: allows student athletes to be paid for use of their name, likeness, or image.**

### **Passed Both Chambers**

HB 617 allows Georgia student athletes to seek and receive payment for use of their name, likeness, or images. Scholarships, attendance, or payment to the school do not count as payment and cannot be revoked because the student athlete seeks compensation. Compensation contracts need to be disclosed to the school and cannot conflict with any of the school's contracts signed by the athlete. The bill also bans schools and athletic conferences from creating contracts or policies that discourage student athletes from seeking compensation. All schools are also required to provide financial literacy workshops to student athletes in their first and third years of school.

## **Key Pieces of Failed Legislation**

Of the 169 bipartisan bills that failed to pass in the 2021 legislative session, five bills were identified as most significant based on a number of factors, including level of engagement from Branch audience members, level of substantive change to Georgia law made by the bill, level of support by legislators during floor votes, and level of media coverage. Legislators can reconsider bills that failed during the 2021 session during the 2022 session next January.

## **H.B. 485: repeals the death penalty in Georgia.**

### **Failed to Pass**

HB 485 would have repealed the death penalty in Georgia. It would also have changed all death sentences currently being served in the state to a sentence of life in prison without parole. If the death penalty had been repealed, Georgia court would no longer be allowed to sentences convicted felons to death as a punishment for their crimes. Instead, the strictest criminal sentence would have been life in prison without possibility of parole. In 2020, there were 40 men and one woman on Georgia's death row.

## **SB 233: restricts the use of new voting systems in elections.**

### **Did Not Pass**

SB 233 would have required that all elections be conducted by hand-marked paper ballots using a ballot marker, defined as a non-electronic marking tool. However, voters who vote in person would have been allowed to use an electronic ballot marking device, defined as a device that uses electronic technology to mark a paper ballot, if they wished to do so. After July 1, 2021, no elections would have been allowed to have been conducted on direct recording electronic voting systems, and these systems would have been decertified for use. Ballot counting would have been allowed to be conducted through manual counting or the use of an optical scanner. The bill would have banned the use of devices that can or are potentially capable of transmitting or receiving data over the internet or through other wireless means of communication. In 2020, Georgia upgraded its voting machines to a \$104 million system, instituting all new machines that include a wireless connection to the internet.

## **HB 810: exempts menstrual products from sales tax.**

### **Did Not Pass**

HB 810 would have exempted tampons, menstrual pads, sanitary napkins, panty liners, menstrual sponges, and menstrual cups from Georgia state sales tax. Any other products whose primary purpose is to absorb or capture menstrual flow would also be exempt from taxation.

## **HB 608: provides for planning, deployment, and incentives for broadband services in underserved areas throughout the state.**

### **Did Not Pass**

HB 608 would have provided government funding for the provision of broadband services in areas of Georgia that do not already have broadband services available. Broadband service providers and public bodies would have been eligible to apply for funding. Providers applying for funding would have had to agree not to charge more for broadband in underserved areas than it did in other areas of the states and to meet or exceed minimum levels of dependable services for the area that it received a contract to serve.

## **HB 675: increases pay for government officials, including General Assembly members.**

### **Did Not Pass**

HB 675 would have increased government salaries. The Lieutenant Governor's salary would have increased from \$54,920 to \$135,000, the Secretary of State's from \$102,708 to \$147,128, the General Assembly members' from \$16,200 to \$29,908, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives' from \$17,800 to \$135,000. The amount of daily expense allowances for General Assembly members would have been raised from \$75 to \$173 per day, and it would be adjusted for inflation in each subsequent year starting in 2024. The legislative session runs from the beginning of January to the end of March each year.

# Georgia's 2021 Legislative Session

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**By Representative**

# Authored Bills

Representatives in both chambers can engage with legislation in three ways. The first is by authoring a bill. If a representative authors a bill, this means that they are the bill's primary sponsor and are responsible for the text of the bill. The second is through co-sponsorship. If a representative co-sponsors a bill, this means that they have signed on to the text of the bill to express their support and endorsement of its text but are not the bill's author. The third is through voting. Representatives in both chambers can vote for or against a bill when it is brought before a committee that they are a part of or if it is brought to the floor of the chamber of which they are a member.

This section of the report specifically focuses on authorships, highlighting the representatives in each chamber who have authored the greatest number of bills during the 2021 legislative session. This ranking does not take into account co-sponsorships of bills, nor does it take into account authorship or co-sponsorship of resolutions, which are legislative expressions of opinion or recognition on some matter and do not have the effect of law when passed.

## Highest Bill Authorships Among Republicans



**Sen. Jeff Mullis, Chickamauga**

Authored 30 bills



**Rep. Shaw Blackmon, Bonaire**

Authored 19 bills



**Rep. Sharon Cooper, Marietta**

Authored 17 bills



**Sen. Randy Robertson, Cataula**

Authored 13 bills



**Rep. Kasey Carpenter, Dalton**

Authored 13 bills

## Highest Bill Authorships Among Democrats



**Rep. Marvin Lim, Norcross**

Authored 32 bills



**Rep. Sandra Scott, Rex**

Authored 27 bills



**Rep. Kim Schofield, Atlanta**

Authored 17 bills



**Sen. Gloria Butler, Stone Mountain**

Authored 17 bills



**Rep. Viola Davis, Stone Mountain**

Authored 14 bills

Of the 236 Representatives and Senators that held office during the 2021 Legislative Session, there were three representatives who did not author or co-sponsor any legislation. This does not take into account authorship or co-sponsorship of resolutions, which are legislative expressions of opinion or recognition on some matter and do not have the effect of law when passed.

## Lowest Legislative Activity



**Sen. Horacena Tate, Democrat-Atlanta**

No bill authorships or co-sponsorships



**Rep. Mickey Stephens, Democrat-Savannah**

No bill authorships or co-sponsorships



**Rep. Angela Moore, Democrat-Decatur**

No bill authorships or co-sponsorships

*Note: Rep. Angela Moore was sworn in on March 16, 2021, two weeks prior to the end of the session, after winning a special election. Sen. Horacena Tate and Rep. Mickey Stephens have both been absent this session, citing health concerns.*

# The Session Newsletter

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## Impact Report

**“An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people.”**

*Thomas Jefferson*

# The Session Overview

In everything we do, Branch Politics aims to empower people to create a better society through simplifying the most impactful, yet often overlooked, parts of government.

In May of 2020, Branch Politics launched out interactive web app: [www.branch.vote](http://www.branch.vote), a modern ballot-research tool that organizes concise, nonpartisan research on Georgia candidates and ballot measures into an intuitive user experience for voters. Through free this tool, Branch helped informed over 40,000 votes cast in Georgia's 2020 primary, general, runoff, and special elections.

In January 2021, Branch Politics launched The Session, a daily email newsletter that provided comprehensive coverage of the most important bills being considered by the Georgia General Assembly. Each of our emails highlighted one to two pieces of impactful legislation across a variety of issue areas, along with updates on the legislative progress of previously profiled bills. For each bill, the Branch Policy Team wrote summaries that focused on concise, nonpartisan information about about the potential impacts of each bill. Whenever possible, these emails included quotes from supporters and opponents on each issue, to provide voters with a holistic perspective on the universe of relevant viewpoints for each topic area.



## HB 479: Changes the law about citizen's arrest in Georgia.

Issues: Criminal Justice, Civil Rights

Status: Introduced to second chamber



### What is citizen's arrest?

Currently, under Georgia law, [any citizen can arrest someone](#) that committed a crime in front of them through a doctrine called **citizen's**

Notes: A preview of The Session Newsletter from March 29th featuring HB 479, which repealed citizen's arrest in Georgia.

Over the course of the 2021 legislative session, we tracked over 1,172 bills. We wrote 123 in-depth bill profiles, over 70 of which were included within The Session newsletter. Our audience, which consists primarily of Georgia residents, showed high levels of engagement, with an average of 45.7% of audience members opening the newsletter each day.

**70+**

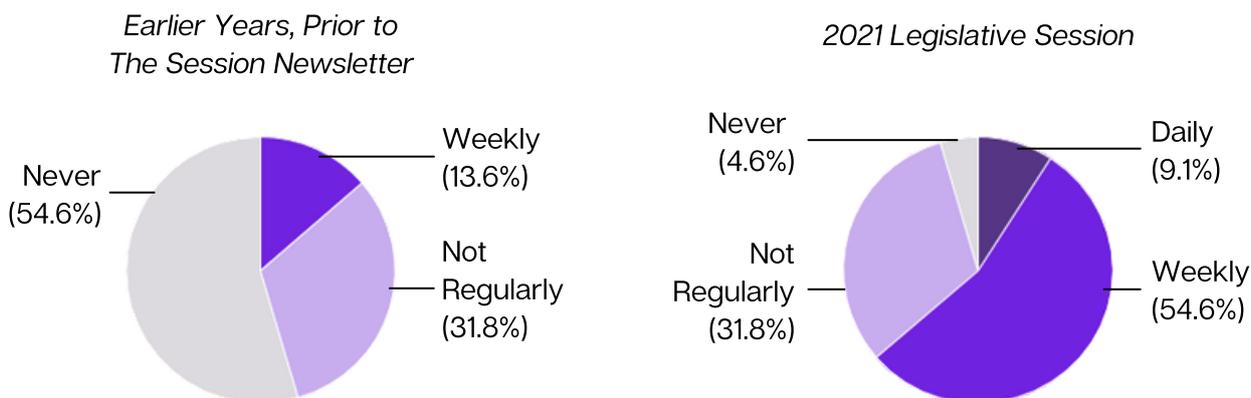
bills covered in  
*The Session* newsletter

**45.7%**

average daily open  
rate by subscribers

In a survey of audience members conducted after the conclusion of the legislative session, 95.4% of respondents indicated that they would subscribe to the newsletter again for the 2021 legislative session. This same survey demonstrated the positive impact that the newsletter created on audience members' general legislative engagement. When asked how often they discussed legislation with their friends in previous legislative sessions, 86.4% of respondents said "Never" or "Not Regularly". The Session newsletter dramatically improved that outcome during the 2021 legislative session, with 63.6% of respondents saying they now discussed legislation with their friends "Weekly" or "Daily".

### Reported Frequency of Conversations Regarding Georgia's State Legislation



Notes: Insights generated from a survey conducted with The Session newsletter audience. Readers were asked how often, both during previous legislative sessions and during the 2021 legislative session, they had conversations with friends about proposed state legislation.

# Real Impact on Real People



In previous years, my engagement with the state's legislative process was in a purely after the fact interaction. I would often learn about new legislation through a headline in a local paper but be left disengaged because of the lack of transparency into the process and actual state of the bill... What was really empowering about these emails is the break down of the life cycle of the bill. Specifically, which chamber it sits in, where the votes currently stand, next steps, key sponsors and opponents, and most critically, how you can get involved. It's services like The Session that will educate and activate the average citizen.



**Richard B.**



I work at Amani Women Center: a women's refugee center in Clarkston that provides refugee women with a wide spectrum of services that range from mental health services to economic empowerment. My role requires that I relay important information such as local policies to our larger refugee communities.



Usually, this information isn't as accessible to someone who doesn't understand the language used in these bills. Branch breaks down the important parts of legislation while highlighting key aspects, such as what opponents or supporters of the bill are saying.

As new Americans, being able to witness the lawmaking process transparently helps refugees understand their rights and encourages them to engage civically on their own behalf. I speak Amharic and Arabic; Branch has allowed me to transfer legislative information to refugee communities in a much more comprehensible way than I could've ever done if I hadn't discovered this newsletter.

**Iman M.**

# Partnerships

In order to reach a broader and more diverse audience, Branch worked with a number of established community organizations and voices. Branch provided the aforementioned bill summaries to these partners, who then used Branch's research as a starting point for simplified legislative education. In future years, Branch aims to continue to make quality, concise legislative research available as an affordable service to more community and media partners.

## Georgia Muslim Voter Project

Branch's first partner was Georgia Muslim Voter Project, a nonpartisan voter registration and mobilization organization focused primarily on boosting civic engagement amongst Georgia's Muslim communities. Georgia Muslim Voter Project primarily utilized Branch's legislative tracker and bill summaries to disseminate legislative information via social media. Social media posts focused on legislation by topic (e.g. "healthcare bills") or specific pieces of impactful legislation (e.g. S.B. 100: ends daylight savings time). In total, these social media posts reached over 5,000 unique individuals across Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.



Notes: Community partner Georgia Muslim Voter Project used Branch's legislative summaries to create engaging and informative social media posts.

## HannahJoyTV

Branch's second partner was HannahJoyTV, a media platform with a mission to share uplifting content and promote positivity, while staying engaged with important issues. HannahJoyTV hosted a weekly live video stream called The Session Talk, in which host Hannah Joy and a member of the Branch Policy Team would highlight three key bills in thirteen minutes. In total, over 30 bills were covered in partnership with HannahJoyTV. This live streams reached over 40,000 people in total.



Notes: Host of HannahJoyTV interviews Branch's Head of Legislative Research, Alexi Jenkins, in a weekly live stream titled "The Session Talk".

# Conclusion

During this session of the Georgia General Assembly, 1,172 bills were introduced. Over 345 government bills were introduced and 149 of these bills passed, making government the largest issue area of focus, in regards to bills introduced and passed. The next three largest issue areas were taxes, criminal justice, and voting, with 116, 111, and 93 bills introduced, respectively. Ultimately, 304 bills passed both chambers before the end of the session. As of April 1st at 5pm, nine of these bills had been signed into law. The remaining 295 bills were sent to Governor Kemp, who can sign them into law or veto them. Governor Kemp has until May 10, 2021 to take action on these bills, which is 40 days after Sine Die Day, or the final day of the legislative session, on March 31st. If no action is taken on a bill, it will automatically become law after the 40 days have elapsed. All bills that become law will take effect on July 1, 2021, unless another date was specified in the bill.

Of the bills that were introduced, 550 were Republican bills, 370 were Democratic bills, and 252 had at least some bipartisan support. Across both parties and bills with bipartisan support, the largest topic area was government bills. Of the Republican bills that were introduced, 201 (36.6%) were passed by both chambers. The top issue areas for Republican bills besides government bills were voting, taxes, and criminal justice. Of the Democratic bills that were introduced, 20 (5.4%) were passed by both chambers. The top issue areas for Democratic bills besides government bills were criminal justice, education, and healthcare. Of the bills with at least some bipartisan support that were introduced, 83 (32%) were passed by both chambers. The top issue areas for bills with bipartisan support besides government bills were education, healthcare, and criminal justice.

The key bills that received the highest degree of support when voted on in both chambers were H.B. 231, which expands the applicability of protective orders for victims of stalking, H.B. 517, which restricts arrest powers for law enforcement and private citizens, and H.B. 255, which requires that evidence of sexual assault be held when a victim chooses to not immediately report the assault, creates a sexual assault tracking system, and changes what information must be reported to federal Violent Criminal Apprehension Program). The bills that passed with the lowest level of support when voted on in each chamber were S.B. 47, which expands eligibility and changes scholarship amount calculations for children with special needs, S.B. 221, which creates a leadership committee which can advocate for or against candidates, and S.B. 202, which makes broad changes to voting, absentee voting, and elections administration.

The representatives who introduced the most legislation this session were Rep. Marvin Lim (D-Norcross), who authored 32 bills, and Sen. Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga), who authored 30 bills. Three representatives did not author or co-sponsor any bills this session.

The entire General Assembly will reconvene for the 2022 legislative session in January 2022. The next session will run until the end of March 2022. This fall, there will also be a special legislative session in order for legislators to convene for the redistricting process, where they redraw the lines of their districts based on the 2020 census data.

All General Assembly elected officials serve two year terms and are up for reelection during the 2022 election cycle. In serving the mission of empowering as many people as possible to create a better society through the impactful yet often overlooked parts of government, Branch Politics will be providing nonpartisan information about state legislative candidates during the 2022 election cycle.

# About Branch Politics

In everything our team does, we start first with our mission: to empower as many people as possible to create a better society through the impactful, yet often overlooked, parts of government. We combine technology, intuitive user experiences, and nonpartisan research to create the next generation of civic engagement tools and media that work for everyone.

In May of 2020, Branch began its work in Georgia with an interactive web app: [www.branch.vote](http://www.branch.vote), a modern ballot-research tool that organizes concise, nonpartisan research on Georgia candidates and ballot measures into an intuitive user experience for voters. Through free this tool, Branch helped informed over 40,000 votes cast in Georgia's 2020 primary, general, runoff, and special elections.

Branch was founded in 2020 as a Public Benefit Corporation. We are headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia. You can read more about Branch at [www.branch.vote](http://www.branch.vote) or contact us at [hello@branch.chat](mailto:hello@branch.chat).

## Our Promises

Branch is committed to doing things the right way. These promises guide the work we do, including the analysis done in this report.



### Nonpartisan Promise

Our goal is to inform voters about policy and never influence them. We never give preference to one representative or issue. Our team consists of individuals with diverse political perspectives.



### Journalistic Integrity Promise

Branch is structured to separate our legislative research process from all revenue-generating activities to ensure that politicians, corporations, and organizations will not influence Branch's objective research.

## The Team Behind *The Session*



### **Alexi Jenkins**

*Head of Legislative Research*

Alexi holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and a Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School. Alexi previously worked as a lawyer in California, where she was a member of the California Bar.



### **Helena Wright**

*Policy Research Intern*

Helena attends the Georgia Institute of Technology majoring in Public Policy with a minor in Business and Technology through the Denning T&M Program. At Georgia Tech, she has headed three different committees centered around political engagement and awareness.



### **Walter Ley**

*Founder*

Walter previously worked as a software architect, data scientist, and product manager in the financial technology industry. He graduated from Georgia Tech, with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and a minor in Business.



### **Chandan Hebbale**

*Social Media and User Experience Researcher*

Chandan has worked as UX Researcher in the civic technology space for the last 3 years. In 2016, Chandan successfully defended a master's thesis titled "Improving the Accessibility of Informed Voting", and has since worked on numerous civic technology projects.



# **Bills Passed in the 2021 Legislative Session**

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## **Appendix A**

## Passed House Bills

The following bills were introduced into House of Representatives and passed during the 2021 legislative session. In this context, a passed bill is one that passed both chambers and has either been signed into law by the governor or awaits the governor's signature. The short summaries of each bill are written by the Branch team based on the text of the bill.

**H.B. 32:** Creates a refundable income tax credit for teachers who teach in rural or low-performing schools.

**H.B. 34:** Changes licensing requirements for speech-language pathology and audiology.

**H.B. 43:** Requires motor vehicle registration application forms to include optional information about conditions that may make it hard for the person driving to communicate and shares that info with law enforcement when they ask about the vehicle tag.

**H.B. 61:** Provides for a referendum for the Redevelopment Powers Law for Whitfield County.

**H.B. 63:** Changes the definition of fair market value of motor vehicle to exclude interest and financing charges for leaser motor vehicles for the purposes of an ad valorem tax.

**H.B. 80:** Modifies the budget currently in effect.

**H.B. 81:** Modifies the budget set to take effect July 2021.

**H.B. 90:** Exempts certain people, firms, and corporations who buy land from certain civil court liabilities associated with cutting down timber.

**H.B. 93:** Repeals regulations for examination of human specimens in laboratories and methods for selection of blood donors.

**H.B. 94:** Makes porch piracy and possession of stolen mail crimes.

**H.B. 97:** Requires certain clerks in probate court to swear an oath.

**H.B. 98:** Allows certain state government meetings and public hearings to be held by teleconference.

**H.B. 103:** Changes compensation for Baldwin County Board of Education members.

**H.B. 105:** Authorizes pay for certain active duty state military personnel.

**H.B. 106:** Classifies members of the State Defense Force as law enforcement officers.

**H.B. 111:** Updates language in law relating to installment loans.

**H.B. 112:** Extends immunity from claims based on COVID-19 for one year.

**H.B. 114:** Changes a tax credit for the adoption of foster children.

**H.B. 119:** Allows chiropractors to own professional corporations with physicians.

- H.B. 124:** Add "cremation device" to a law about crematoriums.
- H.B. 128:** Creates protections for disabled people seeking an organ transplant.
- H.B. 129:** Increases the pay for sheriffs serving populations of 39,000 to 49,999 people.
- H.B. 134:** Changes the law so cybersecurity contracting meetings no longer have to be open meetings.
- H.B. 141:** Creates requirements for awards made from the Georgia Crime Victims Emergency Fund to medical service providers.
- H.B. 146:** Provides paid parental leave to eligible state employees.
- H.B. 149:** Allows elections to be made Subchapter "S" corporations for tax purposes.
- H.B. 150:** Prohibits the government from making any law that bans certain forms of energy.
- H.B. 152:** Changes the law regarding college inspections and financial bonds.
- H.B. 153:** Provides for requirements for solicitations of services for corporate filings required by the Secretary of State.
- H.B. 154:** Updates provisions relating to protection of children, including foster and adopted children.
- H.B. 156:** Requires government agencies and utilities to report any cyber attack to the director of emergency management and homeland security.
- H.B. 157:** Provides a new charter to the Town of Mount Airy.
- H.B. 160:** Provides for an audit of water and sewer projects and costs tax by the state auditor and redefines municipality.
- H.B. 161:** Removes a provision providing for the perpetual existence of downtown development authorities.
- H.B. 162:** Revise provision for Morgan County board membership.
- H.B. 163:** Directs the Department of Community Health to submit a plan for implementing express lane eligibility for Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids Program enrollment.
- H.B. 165:** Allows the use of cellphone mounts in cars.
- H.B. 168:** Makes certain information in inmate files for the Dept. of Corrections non-confidential.
- H.B. 169:** Changes the requirements for licenses and changes the length of validity of driver's permits.
- H.B. 172:** Reduces Culloden city council to five members.

**H.B. 173:** Increases the percentage of an eligible large retirement system's assets that can be invested in alternative investments.

**H.B. 174:** Updates the reference date to federal regulations regarding the safe operation of motor carriers and cars.

**H.B. 179:** Changes the logo design for special license plates to support breast cancer programs.

**H.B. 196:** Changes compensation for Terrell County Board of Education members.

**H.B. 205:** Provide a framework to regulate the travel insurance industry within Georgia.

**H.B. 207:** Allows people to electronically submit documents required by the Dept. of Revenue relating to car manufacturing, distribution, parts dealers, etc.

**H.B. 208:** Makes the second Wednesday in February each year "National Swearing-in Day" in Georgia.

**H.B. 210:** Exempts certain vehicles from recording odometer readings on certificates of title.

**H.B. 211:** Grants a new charter to the Town of Arabi.

**H.B. 223:** Gives authority to board of elections and registration in Jackson County to act in certain situations.

**H.B. 225:** Provides a new charter for the city of Wrens.

**H.B. 231:** Expands the applicability of protective orders for victims of stalking.

**H.B. 234:** Provides an option for self-funded healthcare plans.

**H.B. 236:** Provides additional monitoring to victims after a temporary protective order is granted.

**H.B. 241:** Changes the parameters for cancelling certain contracts.

**H.B. 242:** Removes the requirement for a city manager in Americus.

**H.B. 244:** Includes flood risk reduction in the purposes for county ad valorem taxes.

**H.B. 245:** Changes provisions relating to fingerprint and criminal background checks for podiatry practice.

**H.B. 251:** Changes compensation of Clayton County Board of Education Members.

**H.B. 253:** Creates the Jones County Public Facilities Authority and authorizes it to issue revenue bonds.

**H.B. 254:** Increases the Insurance Commissioner's enforcement authority over adjusters.

**H.B. 255:** Requires evidence of sexual assault be held when a victim chooses to not immediately report the assault, creates a sexual assault tracking system, and changes the what information must be reported to federal Violent Criminal Apprehension Program.

**H.B. 258:** Makes consent of victim not a defense to sexual battery when the victim is under 16.

**H.B. 265:** Incorporates certain provisions of federal tax law into state tax law.

**H.B. 268:** Authorizes the State Board of Occupational Therapy to administer the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact in Georgia.

**H.B. 271:** Authorizes the Department of Community Health to assess provider matching payments on ambulance services.

**H.B. 273:** Allows under certain conditions for limited retail sales of distilled spirits.

**H.B. 282:** Limits the determination of fair market value relating to ad valorem taxation of qualified timberland property.

**H.B. 286:** Restrict the ability of counties to decrease funding for the police.

**H.B. 287:** Includes vapes and tobacco in instruction provided on drugs and alcohol for K-12.

**H.B. 292:** Gets rid of certain training requirements for county board of equalization members.

**H.B. 306:** Allows corporations to hold shareholders' meetings by remote communication.

**H.B. 307:** Authorizes health care providers to provide telemedicine services from their home, workplace, or school.

**H.B. 316:** Increases the pharmacy to pharmacist technician ratio for providing direct supervision.

**H.B. 317:** Changes the definition of innkeeper and expands the state levy of a nightly excise tax to include all rooms, lodgings, and accommodations.

**H.B. 327:** Creates new record-keeping and reporting requirements for the sale and purchase of stored value cards.

**H.B. 328:** Establishes a one-time right of way permit fee and reduces the fees paid by telephone communities to local governments.

**H.B. 331:** Creates a new charter for the city of Sardis.

**H.B. 336:** Changes the Hemp laws to follow federal regulations (replaces criminal background checks with history reports, method for disposing hemp, and method for testing hemp).

**H.B. 338:** Changes the requirements for receiving a veteran's and other distinctive licenses.

**H.B. 346:** Authorizes emergency medical staff to administer hydrocortisone sodium succinate to patients with a genetic disorder that impacts the adrenal glands.

**H.B. 353:** Sets up procedures for a driver overtaking a bicyclist.

**H.B. 354:** Requires that the State Boards of Cemeterians/Funeral Service report suspected crimes to the sheriff.

**H.B. 355:** Adds building products in construction to the Georgia Carbon Sequestration Registry.

**H.B. 357:** Reduces the size of the City of Pelham's city council.

**H.B. 361:** Provides a new charter for the city of Edison.

**H.B. 362:** Changes Environmental Protection Division regulations on firearms and certain fish, creates a deer management program, and changes the effective date of the environmental regulations.

**H.B. 363:** Removes enhanced criminal penalties for crimes against the elderly.

**H.B. 364:** Exempts people who went through Georgia Peace Officer training from having to submit fingerprints to be licensed as a private guard, watchman, or patrolman.

**H.B. 367:** Changes provisions related to drug classifications.

**H.B. 370:** Sets term limits for members of joint hospital authorities.

**H.B. 374:** Exempts local authorities providing public water or sewer service from taxation.

**H.B. 375:** Allows the city of Bremen to levy an excise tax.

**H.B. 376:** Changes the compensation of members of the Bacon County Board of Education.

**H.B. 392:** Allows local governments to determine how far from school grounds alcoholic beverages can be sold from.

**H.B. 395:** Enacts the Professional Counselors Licensure Compact in Georgia.

**H.B. 396:** Repeals the act creating the South Georgia Regional Information Technology Authority.

**H.B. 409:** Provides a process for state-funded representation of certain judges in court cases about their performance.

**H.B. 410:** Transfers regulatory authority over bingo from Georgia Bureau of Investigation to the Secretary of State.

**H.B. 443:** Provides for new requirements regarding the transfer of structured settlement payment rights in torts cases.

**H.B. 445:** Changes the corporate boundaries of the City of South Fulton .

**H.B. 451:** Changes property tax exemptions.

**H.B. 453:** Creates standards for proof of eligibility for special license plates for firefighters.

**H.B. 454:** Creates coverage requirements for providers that become out of network during the plan year.

**H.B. 456:** Expands the Carroll County Board of Elections from 3 to 5 members.

**H.B. 458:** Requires sexual misconduct training for physicians, medical students, and members of the Georgia Composite and creates disciplinary actions and regulations over sexual assault committed by a healthcare provider.

**H.B. 459:** Prohibits local governments from annexing county operated airport property.

**H.B. 465:** Prohibits local governments from imposing civil penalties upon an alarm systems contractor for a false alarm that is not the fault of the alarm systems contractor.

**H.B. 466:** Changes the requirements for drivers licenses and driver tests.

**H.B. 470:** Changes the regulations for specialized land transactions so no plans are needed in certain circumstances.

**H.B. 477:** Extends the sunset date for the application for tax credits for qualified donations of real property.

**H.B. 479:** restricts arrest powers for law enforcement and private citizens.

**H.B. 480:** Provides for liens for labor/services by registered interior designers.

**H.B. 488:** All language of the bill has been removed.

**H.B. 490:** Removes bidding requirements from certain purchases made by Catoosa County.

**H.B. 495:** Changes the duties of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the Sexual Offender Registration Review Board when determining a sex offender's risk.

**H.B. 497:** Modernizes the Georgia Code to get rid of portions that are obsolete, declared unconstitutional, or been preempted.

**H.B. 498:** Expands tax exemptions for agricultural equipment and farm products.

**H.B. 509:** Requires insurers to make at least one reasonably priced comprehensive major medical health insurance policy available to Georgia residents without limitations or exclusions based on preexisting conditions.

**H.B. 511:** Provides for the establishment and revise of certain public trust funds.

**H.B. 517:** Provides for the inclusion of earned interest in the calculation of minimum revenue obligations for scholarships and tuition grants and changes the reporting and auditing process for scholarships organizations.

**H.B. 532:** Changes the power of the Commissioner of Labor and eligibility requirements for benefits.

**H.B. 533:** Creates the City of Sylvester Public Facilities Authority.

**H.B. 534:** Creates the criminal offenses of promoting and betting on illegal drag racing and laying drag.

**H.B. 535:** Authorizes the city of Sylvester to provide extraterritorial utility services.

**H.B. 546:** Provides a new charter for the city of Richmond Hill.

**H.B. 548:** Provides reasonable access to child abuse records for the Administrative Office of the Courts.

**H.B. 553:** Allows hearings and the filing of documents to be conducted by electronic communication and service.

**H.B. 560:** Changes compensation of members of the Thomas County Board of Commissioners.

**H.B. 562:** Allows judicial officers to issue arrest warrants for DCFS case manager.

**H.B. 567:** Creates the Newborn Screening and Genetics Advisory Committee.

**H.B. 574:** Provides for a Companion Local Government Animal Trust Fund for reimbursement of impoundment expenses incurred by local governments.

**H.B. 575:** Changes the regulations on joint and municipal sales and use taxes.

**H.B. 577:** Provides for a proposal guaranty for bids on certain highway, bridge, and ferry projects.

**H.B. 579:** Repeals the requirement for referendums prior to issuance of bonded indebtedness for new projects.

**H.B. 582:** Makes the elections for probate judge in Cherokee County nonpartisan.

**H.B. 588:** Provides for state sales tax exemptions for certain transportation companies and vehicles and changes the appropriation for different transportation-related fees and taxes.

**H.B. 591:** Authorizes marriage and family therapists to perform certain acts that physicians are authorized to perform.

**H.B. 593:** Increases the standard deduction from state taxable income for individuals.

**H.B. 595:** Changes compensation of members of the Clayton County Board of Education.

**H.B. 600:** Changes provisions about the quorum of mayor and council for the City of Hapeville.

**H.B. 603:** Authorizes the Brantley County Board of Commissioners chairperson to make and second motions and vote.

**H.B. 606:** Adds Georgia Independent School Association to list of accrediting agencies for the HOPE scholarship.

**H.B. 610:** Revise provisions for eligibility for the office of mayor in the Cities of Macon and Payne.

**H.B. 611:** Changes the definition of a small business.

**H.B. 613:** Levies an excise tax in the City of Perry.

**H.B. 617:** Allows student athletes to receive compensation for the use of their name, image, or likeness.

**H.B. 619:** Authorizes the sale of Patrick's Fishing Paradise to a private entity.

**H.B. 623:** Provides a new charter for the town of Cohutta.

**H.B. 625:** Creates the Tri-County Natural Gas Authority.

**H.B. 631:** Develops a system to collect information about an individual's ability to communicate with law enforcement.

**H.B. 634:** Sets a one-year term for Wilkinson County magistrates.

**H.B. 635:** Gives judges authority to perform any lawful judicial act regardless of their physical location.

**H.B. 653:** Revises the definition of "pharmacy care" in the Georgia Pharmacy Practice Act.

**H.B. 655:** Provides for filling vacancies in the offices of mayor and council members in Brookhaven.

**H.B. 658:** Revises provisions regarding members and employees of the Frankin-Hart Airport Authority contracting business with that authority.

**H.B. 676:** Makes the Georgia Farmers' Market and Produce Terminal Development Authority a legislative advisory committee.

**H.B. 680:** Creates the Board of Commissioners of Stewart County.

**H.B. 682:** Creates a board of elections and registration for Pickens County.

**H.B. 683:** Provides for the abolition of Pickens County board of elections on a certain date.

**H.B. 684:** Creates a board of elections and registration for Troup County.

**H.B. 685:** Provides a new charter for the City of Jasper.

**H.B. 693:** Prohibits the operation of farm tractors on interstate highways.

**H.B. 703:** Makes the elections for probate judges in Bleckley County nonpartisan.

**H.B. 704:** Makes the election for the chief judge of the Magistrate Court of Bleckley County nonpartisan.

**H.B. 705:** Allows the Bleckly County Probate Court to charge a technology fee.

**H.B. 707:** Provides a new charter for the City of Coolidge.

**H.B. 708:** Creates the City of Hapeville Public Facilities Authority.

**H.B. 709:** Increases the salary supplement for superior court judges in the Waycross judicial circuit.

**H.B. 711:** Provides ward residence requirements for the city council members of Sylvester.

**H.B. 714:** Changes requirements for settlement offers and arrangements for tort claims for injury and death.

**H.B. 724:** Changes compensation for the chairperson and members of the Cobb County Board of Commissioners.

**H.B. 730:** Creates the Whitfield County Public Facilities Authority.

**H.B. 732:** Removes sunset date on a City of Atlanta Independent School District ad valorem tax exemption.

**H.B. 734:** changes the corporate limits of the City of Euharlee.

**H.B. 739:** Provides for staggered terms for the mayor and city council members of the City of Blue Ridge.

**H.B. 740:** Adds two new members to the Pendergrass City Council.

**H.B. 742:** Provides powers of the board of education for the City of Gainesville School District.

**H.B. 743:** Adds three appointed members to the City of Fort Valley Utility Commission.

**H.B. 744:** Annexes territory into the boundaries of the city of Smyrna.

**H.B. 749:** Establishes the Chatham County Building and Facilities Authority.

**H.B. 750:** Creates the Chatham County Legislative Gang Prevention and Intervention Commission.

**H.B. 753:** Creates the Coweta County Public Facilities Authority.

**H.B. 754:** Provides for a new governmental structure for the city of Hoschton.

**H.B. 757:** Provides for findings and purposes of Atlanta's urban enterprise zones.

**H.B. 759:** Levies an excise tax in the City of Thunderbolt.

**H.B. 761:** Changes the corporate limits of the City of Lithonia.

**H.B. 762:** Creates the Fulton Technology and Energy Enhancement Authority.

**H.B. 763:** Revises provisions for compensation of the governing authority for Catoosa County.

**H.B. 764:** Provides for a referendum for the Redevelopment Powers Law for the city of Fort Oglethorpe.

**H.B. 765:** Creates the Catoosa County Public Facilities Authority.

**H.B. 766:** Provides for a referendum for the Redevelopment Powers Law for Catoosa County.

**H.B. 767:** Revises permitted use of funds raised through law library fees for the Lee County Magistrate Court.

**H.B. 768:** Provides city council posts for the City of Royston.

**H.B. 769:** Revises the composition of the Spalding County board of election.

**H.B. 770:** Authorizes assessment and collection of a technology fee for the Magistrate Court of Gilmer County.

**H.B. 771:** Provides for the annexation of certain territory into the boundaries of the City of Austell.

**H.B. 777:** Creates the State Court of DeKalb County, formerly known as the Civil and Criminal Court of Dekalb County.

**H.B. 778:** Provides for a referendum for the Redevelopment Powers Law for the city of Ringgold.

**H.B. 790:** Creates the City of Chickamauga Public Facilities Authority.

**H.B. 791:** Updates the boundaries of the City of Powder Springs.

**H.B. 792:** Creates the Wayne County Altamaha River and Leisure Authority.

**H.B. 793:** Creates the Wayne County Public Facilities Authority.

**H.B. 794:** Modifies compensation of members of the Richmond County Board of Education.

**H.B. 795:** Provides an applicability date for an act providing for a supplement for compensation for Glascock County Probate Court Judges.

**H.B. 799:** Repeals the Clarkston Development Authority Act.

**H.B. 800:** Authorize assessment and collection of a technology fee for the Ben Hill County Probate Court.

**H.B. 801:** Reestablishes the Stephens County board of elections and registration.

**H.B. 802:** Provide for the abolition of the Stephens County Board of Registration and Elections on certain date.

**H.B. 803:** Authorizes assessment and collection of a technology fee for the Fannin County Magistrate Court.

**H.B. 804:** Provides a new charter for the City of Hull.

## **Passed Senate Bills**

The following bills were introduced into Senate and passed during the 2021 legislative session. In this context, a passed bill is one that has passed both chambers and has either been signed into law by the governor or awaits the governor's signature. The short summaries of each bill are written by the Branch team based on the proposed changes of the bill.

**S.B. 4:** Makes it a misdemeanor for substance abuse providers to receive payment directly or indirectly for referrals, solicit payment, or aid in such payment, and makes billing for excessive drug testing insurance fraud.

**S.B. 5:** Makes administering conscious sedation at a dental facility or medspa without a license unlawful practice of dentistry, requires dental assistants and dental hygienists to complete board approved training to draw blood, and requires rules to be established about administering sedation.

**S.B. 6:** Allows the House Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committees to request up to five independent economic analyses by the Office of Planning and Budget on tax plans each year, sets up the 2021 Special Council on Tax Reform and Fairness for Georgians, creates a tax credit for pharmaceutical manufacturers that create jobs, creates a tax credit for high-impact aerospace defense projects of up to \$100 million, sets up \$100 million in capital investment funding for rural agribusiness, exempts ticket sales for fine arts performances from taxation, and extends a sales tax exemption for manufacturers to 2026.

**S.B. 9:** Creates the Columbia Judicial Circuit.

**S.B. 20:** Adds a current or former foster parent, a former foster youth, and a CASA to the Child Advocate Advisory Committee.

**S.B. 21:** Limits the mayor of Stonecrest to voting only when there is a tie of the council.

**S.B. 22:** Provides a code of ethics and establishes a board of ethics for the Commissioners of Henry County.

**S.B. 27:** Extends the time military veterans have to qualify for professional certifications from 180 days to 2 years.

**S.B. 28:** Changes procedural rules for juvenile court and requires annual training for juvenile court intake officers.

**S.B. 32:** Exempts certain personal state and federal employee records from public disclosure requirements.

**S.B. 33:** Provides a cause of action for victims of human trafficking to sue their traffickers.

**S.B. 34:** Allows victims of human trafficking to change their names under seal.

**S.B. 42:** Makes homeschool students eligible to participate in extracurriculars in their resident school system and includes school discipline data in annual reporting.

**S.B. 43:** Prevents insurers from requiring eye care professionals from accepting as payment an amount for services that aren't covered under the benefit plan as a condition of participating in its provider network, from circulating information stating or implying that they should extend discounts for noncovered eye care services, or requiring them from providing discounts on services that aren't covered.

**S.B. 46:** Subjects firefighters, EMTs, and cardiac technicians to randomized drug testing, removes automatic disqualification for former felons applying for a license as an EMT if they've received training and its been more than 5 years since conviction, allows EMTs and certified cardiac technicians and trainees to administer vaccines, allows individuals and minors to opt out of a statewide vaccine registry and requires pharmacists and nurses to check the Georgia Registry of Immunization Transactions and Services prior to administering vaccines.

**S.B. 47:** Expands eligibility and changes scholarship amount calculations for children with special needs.

**S.B. 49:** Allows applicants for building and housing inspection to hire their own private inspectors.

**S.B. 59:** Changes how charter schools receive funding and facilities and allows charter schools to opt into the state's health insurance plan.

**S.B. 60:** Authorizes the state indemnification fund to pay for police officers who have a heart attack, stroke, or vascular rupture.

**S.B. 66:** Allows the Georgia Foundation for Public Education to receive donations from taxpayers to support low performing schools.

**S.B. 75:** Allows victims of stalking to terminate their lease.

**S.B. 78:** Prohibits sending or posting nude or sexually explicit photos or videos for the purposes of harassing the person depicted.

**S.B. 80:** Provides standards for insurance utilization review.

**S.B. 81:** Requires the university system and the Technical College System of Georgia to report all non-lapsing revenue, plans for use of this revenue, and expenses paid from revenue each year to the executive and legislative branches.

**S.B. 85:** Changes the law around hazing and including minors in the definition of hazing.

**S.B. 88:** Invites the Georgia Teacher of the Year to serve as an advisor ex officio to the State Board of Education.

**S.B. 92:** Authorizes advanced registered nurses and physician assistants to certify an individual is disabled for purposes of obtaining special vehicle decals.

**S.B. 95:** Allows government meetings to be conducted via teleconference during a state of emergency or if necessary for a member to participate via teleconference due to health or absence from the jurisdiction at the time of the meeting.

**S.B. 100:** Makes standard time year round.

**S.B. 105:** Allows former offenders to be released from probation early.

**S.B. 107:** Classifies homeless students as in-state for tuition at Georgia colleges and universities, and waive tuition for foster youth in the University System and the Technical College System of Georgia.

**S.B. 114:** Revises the grounds for refusing to grant or revoking professional licenses.

**S.B. 117:** Changes the offenses of improper sexual contact by an employee or agent of the state.

**S.B. 119:** Requires permits to burn wood, lands, or marshes.

**S.B. 140:** Places a monument to Zell Miller in the capitol building or on the grounds.

**S.B. 143:** Changes statutes about waiver or lien and labor or material bond rights.

**S.B. 144:** Limits the ability of city housing authorities to operate outside city boundaries.

**S.B. 145:** Allows the legislature to call for a referendum election on the issuance of licenses to sell packaged distilled spirits.

**S.B. 153:** Allows for system-collaborative state charter schools to transition to operating as a state chartered special school or as an alternative charter school.

**S.B. 156:** Requires the chief labor officer to provide reports about unemployment compensation.

**S.B. 159:** Allows local school boards to use vehicles other than school buses to transport students.

**S.B. 163:** Suspends speedy trial requirements in Georgia law when it would be impracticable following a judicial emergency.

**S.B. 165:** Changes regulatory requirements for low-speed alternative fueled vehicles.

**S.B. 168:** Allows corporations to hold annual shareholders' meetings by remote communication.

**S.B. 169:** Provides for acceptance of electronic signatures and corporate seals on bonds.

**S.B. 174:** Allows appointed judges filling vacancies to issue an unsecured judicial release.

**S.B. 182:** Limits the ability of local governments to regulate or prohibit fence detection systems.

**S.B. 185:** Allows tax matters from the state board of equalization to be decided in court without deference to the Department of Revenue.

**S.B. 187:** Allows students with disabilities to apply for a waiver from certain HOPE scholarship requirements.

**S.B. 193:** Allows counties to require that mobile homes obtain and display decals.

**S.B. 195:** Allows low THC products to be sold in the state, provides that enough licenses to sell low THC oil and products will be issued throughout the state for the industry to be competitive and accessible and sets up a legislative oversight committee to come up with policies and procedures for testing and labeling THC oil and products.

**S.B. 198:** Allows the commissioner of the Department of Public Safety to increase department employee and communication officer salaries if they obtained a degree related to law enforcement.

**S.B. 201:** Requires financial institutions to provide account information for delinquent taxpayers to the Department of Revenue in order to collect taxes and fees.

**S.B. 202:** Makes broad changes to voting, absentee voting, and elections administration.

**S.B. 204:** Sets up a Dual Achieve Program for students to work on their GED and technical college diploma at the same time.

**S.B. 209:** Provides that the boundaries of the City of Atlanta independent school system will not be automatically extended by annexation, but through the DeKalb County school district and the City of Atlanta independent approving the change.

**S.B. 210:** Allows drivers to obtain digital license plates, which receive wireless data communication to display information electronically.

**S.B. 213:** Allows schools to use proceeds from local option sales taxes collected for educational purposes to pay for guaranteed energy saving contracts.

**S.B. 215:** Allows nursing homes to employ certified medication aides listed on the medication aide registry to administer medications to nursing home residents.

**S.B. 220:** Requires that schools provide a program on personal financial literacy for high school students.

**S.B. 221:** Creates a leadership committee which can advocate for or against candidates.

**S.B. 222:** Designates the pecan the official Georgia state nut.

**S.B. 225:** Makes a license plate for veterans of allied forces.

**S.B. 234:** Changes the process of mediation.

**S.B. 235:** Changes the misdemeanor criminal offense of wearing a mask, hood, or device which conceals one's identity so it must be done with the intent to conceal one's identity and does not include wearing COVID face masks.

**S.B. 236:** Allows restaurants licensed to sell alcohol to sell take home cocktails.

**S.B. 237:** Creates specialty license plates supporting the U.S. Army Rangers.

**S.B. 238:** Streamlines the Code of Georgia and clarifies that supplementary material included in the Code does not have the weight of law.

**S.B. 246:** Exempts student learning pods from state and local government and local school system rules such as staff ratios, daycare regulations, educational and childcare building codes, inspections, etc.

**S.B. 247:** Allows notice for public hearings about agricultural commodities to be communicated remotely.

**S.B. 255:** Creates a grant program to support retail and tourism projects within 25 miles of the state border.

**S.B. 256:** Reorganizes the County Boards of Health.

**S.B. 260:** Excludes certain soil amendments from regulation.

**S.B. 275:** Gives a homestead exemption for Bartow County residents over 65.

**S.B. 280:** Changes the qualifications for the Lumpkin County county manager.

**S.B. 282:** Abolishes the Lincoln County Board of Elections and registration.

**S.B. 283:** Reconstitutes and reestablished the Lincoln County Board of Elections.

**S.B. 285:** Adds a sixth member to the Henry County Water Authority Board.

**S.B. 286:** Appoints a sixth member to the Henry County Board of Commissioners.

**S.B. 290:** Changes compensation of the Evans County Board of Education members.

**S.B. 292:** Provides a homestead exemption for City of Decatur independent school district ad valorem taxes for educational purposes.

**S.B. 293:** Creates DeKalb County districts for the County Board of Education.

**S.B. 294:** Changes the municipal election districts in the City of Chamblee to provide for four council districts and one at-large district.

**S.B. 295:** Creates and establishes the City of Cleveland Building Authority.

**S.B. 296:** Gives the White County Board of Commissioners members an expense allowance for each meeting.

**S.B. 297:** Changes compensation for the Hall County board of education members.

**S.B. 300:** Changes compensation for the chairperson of the Tattnall County Board of Commissioners.

**S.B. 301:** Authorizes a referendum for the City of Carrollton to exercise all redevelopment powers.

**S.B. 302:** Changes compensation for future Pulaski County officers.

**S.B. 304:** Creates the Peach County Public Facilities Authority.

**S.B. 305:** Provides a homestead exemption for Early County school district ad valorem taxes.

**S.B. 306:** Allows the chairperson to fill a vacancy on the Henry County Board of Commissioners if the majority of the board fails to fill the vacancy on time.

**S.B. 307:** Creates the Pulaski County board of elections.