



**\*\*Special *Sine Die* edition of *Public Policy for the People*: highlights of the budget and bills**

**\*\*Look for the next edition of *Public Policy for the People* in the summer!**

### **Insider Highlights**

On late Thursday night, April 2 (okay so technically it was a few minutes past midnight), the Georgia General Assembly adjourned "Sine Die," which means that they adjourned without any future date being designated. This concludes the first year of the two year 2015-16 legislative cycle. Any bills that did not pass this year will still be alive for consideration for the 2016 session. The 2016 Georgia General Assembly will convene on Monday, January 11, the second Monday in January.

Remember, while *Public Policy for the People* comes out more regularly during the Georgia General Assembly with more of a legislative focus, it will come out quarterly the rest of the year and feature a more wide range of public policy and advocacy issues of interest to the disability community. So be sure to look for the summer edition of *Public Policy for the People*.

In the last issue we featured some photos from this legislative session. Here are some more great moments:







## Advocacy Actions

The next Georgia General Assembly may not be until next year, but here are some simple things YOU can do right now to help make a positive impact for Georgians with disabilities.

1. If you have not already done so, please email EACH conference committee member to thank them for their support regarding the Unlock the Waiting Lists budget ASKS. The message is

simple: **"Thank you so much for supporting Unlock the Waiting Lists and keeping the 75 additional NOW/COMP waiver slots in the DBHDD budget and for keeping a \$0.75 increase for Personal Support Services for the ICWP waiver in the DCH budget."** Be sure to give your name, complete mailing address, and contact information. Be sure to cc: [unlockthewaitinglists@gmail.com](mailto:unlockthewaitinglists@gmail.com) on each note.

**Senator Shafer** - [david.shafer@senate.ga.gov](mailto:david.shafer@senate.ga.gov)

**Senator Cowsert** - [bill.cowsert@senate.ga.gov](mailto:bill.cowsert@senate.ga.gov)

**Senator Hill** - [jack.hill@senate.ga.gov](mailto:jack.hill@senate.ga.gov)

**Representative Jones** - [jan.jones@house.ga.gov](mailto:jan.jones@house.ga.gov)

**Representative Powell** - [jay.powell@house.ga.gov](mailto:jay.powell@house.ga.gov)

**Representative England** - [englandhomeport2@windstream.net](mailto:englandhomeport2@windstream.net)

2. This year's legislative session may be over, but advocacy is year-round. Get to know your state Senator and Representative in the off season in their home district. Call them and invite them to lunch or coffee. If there is a disability event going on in your area that you will be attending, invite them to come and meet you there. If you are or person with a disability or someone who cares about someone with a disability, help educate your legislator about what your day-to-day life is like, what your concerns are, and your ideas of what you think will make Georgia better. Look up your legislators here: <http://www.openstates.org>
3. If you are interested in joining the [Employment First](#) Coalition, please contact **Employment First** Co-Coordinator D'Arcy Robb at [darcy.t.robb@gmail.com](mailto:darcy.t.robb@gmail.com).

Forward this newsletter to a friend and invite them to join the GCDD Advocacy Network so they too can receive advocacy communications from GCDD. Tell them to go to [www.gcdd.org](http://www.gcdd.org), scroll down to the bottom of the page, click on "Join Our Advocacy Network", put in an email address, and follow the instructions. Be sure to select to receive the **Public Policy alerts** and **Unlock the Waiting Lists! alerts**. Please send an email to [nick.perry@gcdd.ga.gov](mailto:nick.perry@gcdd.ga.gov) if you have any problems with this process or if you think you should already be receiving these alerts but aren't getting them.

## FY 2016 Budget Highlights

**This section of the newsletter highlights the activities and information regarding FY2016. The FY2016 budget goes from July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016.**

During the last week of session, both Houses passed the final version of the \$21.8 billion FY2016 budget that had been agreed upon by the Conference Committee. To see the budget document that gives the House and Senate budget differences and agreements reached by the conference committee on those differences, please click on the following link.

[Differences Report](#)

To see the entire 251 pages of the FY 2016 budget document, click on the following link:

[Complete Budget](#)

Through our advocacy efforts, **Unlock succeeded** in getting over **\$3.1 million added to the FY 2016 Georgia state budget** for people with disabilities. Therefore, we want to thank YOU, our partners, allies, and friends both in the community and in the Georgia General Assembly without whom we could not have been so successful!!

The table below progress of the specific Unlock asks through the budget process in the 2015 Georgia General Assembly. The yellow highlights show the final amounts that were agreed upon.

<b>Unlock Original ASK for ICWP:</b>	Gradually raise the ICWP Personal Support Services rate to \$20/hr. beginning with a \$3/hr. increase for FY 2016	\$7,975,490
<b>Governor's FY 2016 recommendation:</b>	No new ICWP increase	\$0
<b>House budget version:</b>	<u>\$.50 per hour rate increase</u> for Personal Support Services covered under the ICWP	\$1,329,428
<b>Senate budget version:</b>	<u>\$1.00 per hour rate increase</u> for Personal Support Services covered under the ICWP for Direct Support Professionals	\$2,658,856
<b>Conference committee:</b>	<u>\$0.75 per hour rate increase for Personal Support Services covered under ICWP</u>	<u>\$1,994,142</u>
<b>Unlock Original ASK for NOW/COMP:</b>	1,000 new NOW/COMP waivers for Georgians most in need	\$16,493,000
<b>Governor's FY 2016 recommendation:</b>	No new DD waivers	\$0
<b>House budget version:</b>	Increase funds for <u>75 additional slots</u> for the NOW and COMP waivers	\$1,124,226
<b>Senate budget version:</b>	Senate agreed with House	\$1,124,226
<b>Conference committee:</b>	<u>No changes from conference committee - 75 slot for NOW and COMP waivers</u>	<u>\$1,124,226</u>

Here are some additional budget highlights within the DCH and DBHDD budgets:  
[http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/2015info/FY\\_2016\\_Final\\_Bill\\_Conf\\_CmteDDandDCH.pdf](http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/2015info/FY_2016_Final_Bill_Conf_CmteDDandDCH.pdf)

Also of note within the budget:

- \$490 thousand was added within the Adult DD Services section of the DBHDD budget for additional supported employment slots for people with developmental disabilities.
- GVRA got \$900K within the Voc. Rehab budget (DHS) to assist training and employment support for Georgians with disabilities, which will allow \$3.6 million of federal funding to be drawn down for a total of \$4.5 million in new public funds to support employment for Georgians with disabilities.

Check out the Unlock website for the most current budget information.  
<http://unlockthewaitinglists.com/index.html>

## Bills

### 2015 Georgia Legislative Bills

Any bills that did not make it this year are still alive for consideration next year during the second year of this two-year cycle. Bills that passed both chambers of the Georgia General Assembly will move on to the Governor. He will have 40 days (by midnight May 12) in which to sign the bill into law or veto it. If he does not act on a bill within that time frame, it will become law.

Click on the [legislative report](#), to see all the bills that we are tracking and their latest status as of Sine Die. You can also click on the bill number within the report to link to the actual bill language itself and get even more detailed information.

**Bill and Resolution Highlights:** below are the statuses of some bills of interest to the disability community.

Several Study Committees were approved that we will be following closely. Stay tuned for updates on these committees and how you can be involved during the summer and fall. For more information on each of these, click on them within the legislative report.

**HR 618:** PASSED - This resolution creates a House study committee on Adult Day services.

**HR 642:** PASSED - This resolution, which creates a House study committee on Employment First and Post-secondary Education options for people with disabilities, has been passed by the House. We anticipate a study committee will be appointed after session ends, and are exploring ways to get the Senate involved. For more information on Employment First or to join the Employment First Coalition, please contact Employment First Co-coordinator D'Arcy Robb at [darcy.t.robb@gmail.com](mailto:darcy.t.robb@gmail.com).

**HR 767:** PASSED - House study committee on Provision of Community Based Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD) services, including the NOW/COMP Medicaid Waiver Services.

Also of note:

**HB 429** (Autism Insurance Bill): PASSED – SB1, Ava’s Law, was amended to HB 429 and passed on the last day of session.

For more information about the process a bill must take to become law in Georgia, click on the link below.  
[Tracking a Bill through the General Assembly](#)

For more information about how a bill is passed in the Georgia Legislature, click below:  
<http://www.senate.ga.gov/sos/Documents/habbal.pdf>

## Dates to Remember

**Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Board Meeting:** Thursday, April 23  
<http://dbhdd.georgia.gov/2015-dbhdd-board-meetings>

**National ADA Symposium:** Atlanta, May 10-13  
<http://adasymposium.org/>

**Date by which Gov. Deal has to act on bills passed by the General Assembly:** Tuesday, May 12

**Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Board Meeting:** Wednesday, May 13

**DD Advisory Council Meeting:** Friday, May 15

<http://dbhdd.georgia.gov/dd-advisory-council>

**Atlanta's ADA Parade:** June 13

**Prefiling for the 2016 session begins:** November 15

**2016 Legislative session begins:** Monday, Jan 11, 2016

## **Resources/Quick Links**

[Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities Public Policy Page](#)

[Unlock the Waiting Lists!](#)

[Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities](#)

[Georgia Department of Community Health](#)

[Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency](#)

[Georgia Department of Education](#)

[Georgia Division of Aging Services](#)

[Golden Rules of Legislative Visits](#)

[Webinar - Tips on How to Talk to Your Legislator](#)

[Accessibility on Capitol Hill](#)

[Find Your Senator and Representative](#)

### **National Resources:**

[I AM Olmstead](#)

[HBCS Advocacy](#)

[Disability.gov](#)

**Thank you from the GCDD Public Policy Team**

**Dawn Alford: Acting Public Policy Director**

**D'Arcy Robb: Public Policy Contractor - Employment First**

**Nick Perry: Public Policy Intern**

[Join our Advocacy Network Today!](#)



THE STATE'S LEADER IN ADVANCING PUBLIC POLICY  
ON BEHALF OF PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.

