



LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT

2025



**GEORGIA
RETAILERS**

A NOTE FROM BEN COWART, VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

MEMBERS:

Thank you for your unwavering support throughout the 2025 legislative session! Together, we've navigated challenges and celebrated important victories that strengthen our industry and ensured the voice of retail is heard at the Capitol.

The the most significant accomplishments of this session was the passage of SB 68 and SB 69, key components of Governor Kemp's tort reform package. Tort reform has long been a top priority for Georgia Retailers, and we were proud to have a leadership role this year. GR led a coalition of businesses and associations in a strategic public relations campaign focused on premises liability and negligent security, which were central to the reform effort.

This was the first year of Georgia's biennial legislative cycle, meaning all bills introduced this session remain active and will resume from their current status when the General Assembly reconvenes in 2026.

As Governor Kemp now enters the 40-day period to sign, veto, or take no action on bills passed by the General Assembly, we will keep you informed on the status of this and other impactful legislation.

Looking ahead, Georgia Retailers remains committed to year-round advocacy. We will:

- Continue engaging with lawmakers during the interim,
- Support pro-business, pro-retail candidates through the GR PAC, and
- Participate in legislative study committees critical to the retail sector.

Below, you'll find a summary of legislation that GR actively monitored and lobbied during the session. As always, please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

It's our privilege to represent Georgia's retail community, and we thank you for your continued membership and partnership.

Sincerely,



Ben Cowart
Vice President of Government Affairs



TORT/LAWSUIT REFORM

SB 68 CIVIL PRACTICE; SUBSTANTIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE REVISION OF PROVISIONS REGARDING CIVIL PRACTICE, EVIDENTIARY MATTERS, DAMAGES, AND LIABILITY IN TORT ACTIONS. GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS; STATE FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025 SENATE PRO-TEM JOHN KENNEDY (R-MACON)

Governor Kemp's omnibus Tort Reform legislation. The bill was the subject of over 4 hours of testimony in the Senate and around 15 hours of testimony in the House. SB 68 received bipartisan support in both chambers but only passed the House by the necessary 91 votes.

This bill makes broad changes to Georgia's civil litigation process, including procedures for damages, liability, and evidence in tort cases. Key provisions include stricter rules for arguing noneconomic damages, revised timelines for civil case responses, limits on repeated dismissals, new standards for attorney's fees, and clarified liability for negligent security. It also permits seat belt non-usage evidence, allows consideration of insurance payments in medical expense recovery, and aims to bring more structure and clarity to civil court proceedings.

This was a long and hard-fought victory for the Georgia Retailers and the business community. Georgia Retailers expresses our deep appreciation to Governor Brian Kemp, Lt. Governor Burt Jones, Speaker Jon Burns, President Pro Tem John F. Kennedy, Whip James Burchett, and all state legislators who helped deliver this critical reform.

 **SUPPORTED**  **PASSED**

SB 69 "GEORGIA COURTS ACCESS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT" SENATE PRO-TEM JOHN KENNEDY (R-MACON)

As a key component of Governor Kemp's Tort Reform package, SB 69 creates a comprehensive legal framework for third-party litigation financing in Georgia, requiring financiers to register with the Department of Banking and Finance and banning entities linked to foreign governments. It mandates written agreements with consumer disclosures, limits financiers' influence and recovery, and allows plaintiffs to cancel within five days. The bill also includes penalties for violations, permits discovery of financing agreements in civil cases, and adjusts rules on seat belt evidence, with most provisions effective January 1, 2026.

 **SUPPORTED**  **PASSED**



[CLICK TO VIEW GOVERNOR KEMP'S PRESS RELEASE ON SIGNING HISTORIC TORT REFORM LEGISLATION](#)

ORGANIZED RETAIL CRIME (ORC)

HB 447 – CRIMES AND OFFENSES; CRIMES OF GIFT CARD THEFT, GIFT CARD FORGERY, AND GIFT CARD FRAUD

REPRESENTATIVE JOESPH GULLETT (R-DALLAS)

HB 447 was on the Senate Rules Calendar and expected to receive a floor vote on Day 40, but the Senate adjourned Sine Die earlier than anticipated, leaving the bill without a vote. Georgia Retailers had been actively engaged and optimistic about its passage. The bill remains alive and will only need a Senate floor vote for final passage in the 2026 legislative session.

HB 447 outlines clear legal definitions and penalties for crimes involving gift cards in Georgia, including theft, forgery, fraud, and the use of fraudulently obtained cards. Convictions could result in 1 to 10 years in prison and fines up to \$5,000. Georgia Retailers will continue to prioritize this legislation next year.

 **SUPPORTED**  **ALIVE FOR SESSION 2026**

SWIPE FEES ON SALES TAX

HB 431 – CONSUMER INFLATION REDUCTION AND TAX FAIRNESS ACT

REPRESENTATIVE TODD JONES (R-SOUTH FORSYTH)

HB 431 was assigned to the House Banks and Banking Committee but did not receive a hearing this session.

This bill would have stipulated that payment card networks cannot apply interchange fees based on an amount greater than the goods and services consumer purchase price and must either exclude taxes from interchange fee calculations or provide quarterly refunds for fees attributable to taxes.

Georgia Retailers is immensely thankful to Chairman Jones for championing this initiative and demonstrating his commitment to addressing this significant burden on retailers.

 **SUPPORTED**  **ALIVE FOR SESSION 2026**

DATA PRIVACY AND AI

SB 111 - GEORGIA CONSUMER PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT

SENATOR JOHN ALBERS (R-ROSWELL)

SB 111 would have established the Georgia Consumer Privacy Protection Act, creating new rights for consumers and obligations for businesses handling personal data. It applies to certain large businesses and gives consumers the ability to access, correct, delete, and opt out of the sale or use of their personal information. Businesses must provide clear notices and obtain consent for processing sensitive data. The law is enforceable only by the Attorney General and includes a 60-day cure period for violations. It preempts local privacy laws and takes effect on July 1, 2026.

The bill passed the Senate and cleared the House Technology and Infrastructure Innovation Committee before being sent to the House Judiciary Committee, where it will resume in the 2026 session. Georgia Retailers monitored the legislation closely, and it received committee support from the Metro Atlanta Chamber and the Georgia Technology Association.



MONITORING



FAILED TO PASS

SB 164 - TRADE PRACTICES; SURVEILLANCE-BASED PRICE DISCRIMINATION AND SURVEILLANCE-BASED WAGE DISCRIMINATION; PROHIBIT

SENATOR NIKKI MERRITT (D-GRAYSON)

SB 164 was assigned to the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee but did not advance this session. It will begin in the same committee during the 2026 legislative session.

The bill would have prohibited surveillance-based price and wage discrimination in Georgia by regulating the use of automated decision systems that rely on personal data. It bans businesses from setting individualized prices or wages based on characteristics, behaviors, or biometric information, with narrow exceptions for cost-based pricing and legitimate labor-related wage differences. Enforcement authority is granted to the Attorney General, while both prosecutors and private individuals may bring civil actions. Penalties include up to \$10,000 per violation, with additional damages available in cases of bad faith.



MONITORING



FAILED TO PASS

DATA PRIVACY AND AI

SB 37 - AI ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

SENATOR JOHN ALBERS (R-ROSWELL)

SB 37 was assigned to the Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee but did not move. The bill will begin here in the 2026 legislative session.

This bill would have established a comprehensive framework for artificial intelligence (AI) governance in Georgia, creating the Georgia Board for Artificial Intelligence and mandating AI usage plans for all governmental entities.



MONITORING



FAILED TO PASS

TAXATION

HB 111- INCOME TAX; REDUCE RATE OF TAX

REPRESENTATIVE SOO HONG (R-LAWRENCEVILLE)

This was a priority legislation of Governor Kemp. The bill revises Georgia's income tax rate structure by reducing the state income tax rate from 5.39% to 5.19%, effective January 1, 2025. It also sets forth a plan to continue lowering the rate by 0.10% annually until it reaches 4.99%. Each annual reduction is subject to specific economic conditions, which the Office of Planning and Budget must evaluate by December 1 each year.



SUPPORTED



PASSED

HB 425 -REVENUE AND TAXATION; PURCHASE OF AN EMERGENCY POWER GENERATOR TO CONVENIENCE STORES AND GROCERY STORES; PROVIDE TAX CREDIT

REPRESENTATIVE JAMES BURCHETT (R-WAYCROSS)

This bill would have established a tax credit for convenience stores and skilled nursing facilities that install emergency power generators between July 1, 2025, and December 31, 2026, to enhance storm preparedness. The credit is capped at \$5,000 per year for up to five years, with a \$5 million total cap, and is limited to five stores per taxpayer. To qualify, applicants must seek preapproval, include certification with their 2026 tax return, and the credit cannot exceed their annual tax liability; the program expires December 31, 2031.

This bill started with a \$100,000 credit and originally included grocery stores. The bill was changed throughout the committee process and eventually did not make it out of the Senate Finance Committee.



SUPPORTED



ALIVE FOR SESSION 2026

TAXATION

HB 386 – BACK TO SCHOOL RELIEF ACT

REPRESENTATIVE IMANI BARNES (D-TUCKER)

This legislation was assigned to the House Ways & Means Committee and did not move. The bill will begin here in the 2026 legislative session.

This bill would have created an annual tax-free weekend in Georgia for clothing and school supplies during the last Thursday through Sunday of July, replacing a fixed exemption period from 2016. The "Back to School Relief Act" aims to ease the financial burden on families by making back-to-school purchases more affordable. The tax exemption will sunset on December 31, 2028, unless extended by future legislation.



MONITORING



FAILED TO PASS

HB 439 - REVENUE AND TAXATION; REVISE DEDUCTIONS ALLOWED TO DEALERS

REPRESENTATIVE BILL YERTA (R-SYLVESTER)

This legislation passed the House and stalled in the Senate Finance Committee. Under current law, dealers can deduct 3% of the first \$3,000 of taxes reported and 0.5% on amounts exceeding \$3,000. HB 439 raises these thresholds, allowing a 3% deduction on the first \$10,000 of taxes reported and 0.5% on amounts exceeding \$10,000.



MONITORING



FAILED TO PASS

GENERAL BUSINESS

SB 28 – RED TAPE ROLLBACK ACT OF 2025

SENATOR GREG DOLEZAL (R-CUMMING)

SB 28 passed the Senate and the House Budget and Fiscal Affairs Oversight Committee but did not receive a House floor vote before adjournment. The bill remains alive and will continue in the 2026 session.

This legislation would have reformed Georgia's regulatory process by requiring small business impact statements for proposed bills and expanding the definition of small businesses to those with up to 300 employees. It mandates economic impact analyses for high-cost regulations, establishes a four-year review cycle with automatic repeal for unaffirmed rules, and enhances legislative oversight—including rules from constitutional officers. The bill aims to streamline bureaucracy and reduce regulatory burdens across the state.



SUPPORTED



ALIVE FOR SESSION 2026

GENERAL BUSINESS

HB 529 – GEORGIA ONLINE AUTOMATIC RENEWAL TRANSPARENCY ACT REPRESENTATIVE CARTER BARRETT (R-CUMMING)

This bill passed the House but stalled in the Senate Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee after undergoing several substitutes in response to business community concerns.

The legislation aims to protect consumers by requiring clear disclosure of automatic renewal terms and easy online cancellation options. It would have mandated renewal notices, explicit consent, and treats unauthorized goods as unconditional gifts, with exemptions for certain regulated industries. Enforceable by the Attorney General, the law is set to take effect on December 31, 2025, applying to contracts entered into on or after that date.

 **MONITORING**  **FAILED TO PASS**

HB 295 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT; PROCEDURES FOR REAL PROPERTY OWNERS TO MAKE CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF PROPERTY VALUE OR EXPENSES INCURRED REPRESENTATIVE HOUSTON GAINES (R-ATHENS)

HB 295 passed out of the House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee but stalled afterward. The bill would have allowed property owners to seek compensation from local governments for financial losses due to certain policy failures or public nuisances. Claims—based on reduced property value or mitigation costs—are capped at the amount of local (non-education) property taxes paid over the past two years. The legislation waives sovereign immunity for qualifying claims, limits frivolous lawsuits, and excludes actions related to prosecutorial discretion, clemency, or mandates from state or federal authorities.

 **MONITORING**  **FAILED TO PASS**

HB 113 – STATE GOVERNMENT; PROHIBIT THE STATE OR ITS AGENCIES FROM PURCHASING GOODS FROM CERTAIN FOREIGN COUNTRIES OR RELATED ENTITIES REPRESENTATIVE LAUREN MCDONALD III (R-CUMMING)

This bill strengthens Georgia's restrictions on purchasing goods from foreign countries deemed security risks by introducing definitions for "foreign companies of concern" and "foreign countries of concern" based on U.S. Department of Commerce designations. It authorizes the Georgia Technology Authority to maintain a list of restricted goods and prohibits the state from buying these items, directly or through vendors, with violations resulting in steep penalties, contract termination, and future ineligibility. The bill also repeals earlier laws targeting specific countries and broadens the state's ability to assess security risks in tech-related procurements to better protect Georgia's economic and technological interests.

 **MONITORING**  **PASSED**

GENERAL BUSINESS

HB 311 – ADVANCING FAIR EMPLOYMENT FOR ALL AGES ACT

REPRESENTATIVE KIM SCHOFIELD (D-ATLANTA)

HB 311 did not advance this session. This bill would have amended Georgia's age discrimination law to protect workers aged 40 and older, removing the previous upper age limit of 70. It maintains protections against age-based employment discrimination, with exceptions for certain high-level positions that allow compulsory retirement under specific conditions. The legislation also updates language to be more gender-neutral and clarifies that age-based decisions are not allowed unless the job requirements justify such distinctions.



MONITORING



FAILED TO PASS

HB 321 – VINCENT FORT LIVING WAGE ACT

REPRESENTATIVE EL-MAHDI HOLLY (D-STOCKBRIDGE)

HB 321 failed to advance this session. The Vincent Fort Living Wage Act would have raised Georgia's state minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$15.00 per hour for all covered employees, aiming to provide a living wage that covers basic living expenses. This substantial increase, nearly tripling the current minimum wage, would require employers to pay at least \$15.00 per hour. The bill also includes a provision repealing conflicting laws to ensure smooth implementation.



OPPOSED



FAILED TO PASS

PHARMACY

HB 196 – STATE EMPLOYEES' HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN; DRUGS DISPENSED FOR SELF-ADMINISTRATION

REPRESENTATIVE TREY KELLY (R-CEDARTOWN)

This bill reforms how the state health insurance plan reimburses pharmacies for self-administered drugs, requiring a transparent pricing model based on NADAC or a discounted average wholesale price starting January 1, 2026. It sets dispensing fees at \$10.50 for chain pharmacies and \$11.50 for independent ones, prohibits insurers from bypassing these rules with discount programs, and gives enforcement authority to the Insurance Commissioner. The goal is to ensure fair and standardized drug reimbursement for participants in Georgia's state health plans.



SUPPORTED



PASSED

PHARMACY

HB 810 - INSURANCE; REQUIRE THAT FINAL REIMBURSEMENTS TO PHARMACIES FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ARE BASED ON CERTAIN FORMULAS

REPRESENTATIVE RICK JASPERSE (R-JASPER)

This bill would require pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) to reimburse pharmacies at no less than the National Average Drug Acquisition Cost (NADAC) plus a \$10.64 dispensing fee, adjusted annually for inflation—or at the wholesale acquisition cost if NADAC is unavailable. It bars PBMs from offering lower reimbursement rates to non-affiliated pharmacies and requires Medicaid care management organizations to comply, potentially via a state plan amendment. While certain state health plans are excluded, the bill promotes transparency and fair reimbursement across the pharmacy landscape.

Introduced on behalf of Georgia Retailers' pharmacy members late in session, this will be a key priority during the interim and into the 2026 legislative session.

 **SUPPORTED**  **ALIVE FOR SESSION 2026**

SB 195- PHARMACIES; PHARMACISTS ARE AUTHORIZED TO DISPENSE PREEXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS AND POSTEXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS

SENATOR HUFFSTETLER (R-ROME)

SB 195 passed the Senate and the House Health Committee but did not make it out of the House Rules Committee before Sine Die. It remains alive and will resume in the 2026 legislative session.

The bill would have authorized Georgia pharmacists to dispense and administer HIV prevention medications—PrEP and PEP—under defined protocols, broadening access to preventative care. Pharmacists must complete state-approved training by January 1, 2026, follow CDC guidelines, verify HIV-negative status for PrEP, and adhere to specific screening and notification procedures. It also outlines requirements for physician-pharmacist agreements for long-acting injectables and includes enforcement provisions to ensure patient safety and compliance.

 **SUPPORTED**  **ALIVE FOR SESSION 2026**

PHARMACY

SB 91 – STATE EMPLOYEES' HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN; BOARD OF COMMUNITY HEALTH FROM ENTERING INTO, EXECUTING, OR RENEWING A CONTRACT WITH ANY PHARMACY BENEFITS MANAGER THAT OWNS OR HAS AN OWNERSHIP INTEREST IN ANY RETAIL PHARMACY; PROHIBIT
 SENATOR BLAKE TILLERY (R-VIDALIA)

SB 91 initially proposed banning PBMs from bidding on state contracts if they owned a retail pharmacy. It passed the Senate but was significantly revised in the House Health Committee late in the session. The current version would have required health insurance policies in Georgia to cover annual prostate cancer screenings for high-risk men and expands protections under Medicare supplement insurance for individuals under 65 with disabilities.

The bill did not reach a House floor vote before adjournment but remains alive and will continue in the 2026 legislative session.



MONITORING



FAILED TO PASS

TRANSPORTATION

HB 164 – HIGHWAYS, BRIDGES, AND FERRIES; ALLOWABLE VARIANCE FOR WEIGHT LIMITATIONS UPON A VEHICLE OR LOAD; REPEAL AUTOMATIC REPEAL PROVISIONS
 REPRESENTATIVE STEVEN MEEKS (R-SCREVEN)

This bill updates Georgia's vehicle weight laws by permanently allowing certain trucks—those hauling agricultural products, farm goods, or recovered materials—to exceed standard weight limits by up to 10 percent within a 150-mile radius from their origin, as long as they remain outside designated air quality non-attainment areas. Previously set to expire on July 1, 2025, this exemption will now be permanent.



SUPPORTED



PASSED

ALCOHOL & TOBACCO

HB 577 – GEORGIA NICOTINE VAPOR PRODUCTS DIRECTORY ACT

REPRESENTATIVE HOUSTON GAINES (R-ATHENS)

HB 577 passed the House but did not make it out of the Senate Regulated Industries Committee in time. The bill would have created a regulatory framework for e-cigarettes and related devices, requiring manufacturers to submit product certifications and pay fees for listing in a state-maintained public directory. Dealers and distributors are prohibited from selling unlisted products, with penalties for non-compliance, including fines and potential license revocation. An annual report to the legislature is also mandated. The bill will take effect only if the necessary funds are appropriated.



SUPPORTED



ALIVE FOR SESSION 2026

HB 210– ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES; RETAIL DEALERS; REVISE PROVISIONS

REPRESENTATIVE TYLER PAUL SMITH (R-BREMEN)

HB 210 never made it out of the House Regulated Industries Committee. The bill aimed to update Georgia's alcohol licensing rules, allowing individuals to hold up to seven retail dealer licenses in certain high-revenue counties and enabling gradual increases in licenses from 2026 to 2032. It also allowed retail licensees to transfer their license to a new location within the same county and doubled the number of tasting events a liquor store can hold annually from 52 to 104, with existing restrictions remaining in place. The bill was set to take effect on July 1, 2025.



SUPPORTED



ALIVE FOR SESSION 2026

SB 86– ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES; RETAIL DEALERS TO OFFER DISCOUNTS TO CONSUMERS THROUGH PREMIUMS, COUPONS, OR REBATE

SENATOR JASON ANAVITARTE (R-DALLAS)

SB 86 passed the Senate Regulated Industries Committee and was on the Senate Rules calendar for a floor vote but ran out of time before Crossover Day. This bill would have allowed retail alcohol dealers in Georgia to offer discounts through premiums, coupons, or rebates for off-premises alcohol purchases, with several restrictions. These include non-brand-specific offers and ensuring that discounts are not below the dealer's purchase cost. Additionally, the bill doubles the number of tasting events that retail liquor stores can host annually, from 52 to 104, while maintaining existing rules regarding event duration, alcohol quantities, and local government notification.



SUPPORTED



ALIVE FOR SESSION 2026

ALCOHOL & TOBACCO

HB 83 – REVENUE AND TAXATION; INCREASE TAX RATE ON EACH PACK OF CIGARETTES

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELLE AU (D-JOHNS CREEK)

HB 83 did not advance during the legislative session. The bill proposed increasing Georgia's cigarette excise tax from 37 cents to 57 cents per pack of 20 cigarettes, with a proportional adjustment for other package sizes. It also earmarks 20 cents of the per-pack increase for annual appropriation toward healthcare initiatives benefiting Georgia residents.

 **OPPOSED**  **FAILED TO PASS**

HB 84– REVENUE AND TAXATION; INCREASE TAX RATE ON CONSUMABLE VAPOR PRODUCTS

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELLE AU (D-JOHNS CREEK)

HB 84 did not advance during the session. The bill proposed increasing the tax rate on consumable vapor products in Georgia from 7% to 15% of the wholesale cost price. This bill would have eliminated distinctions between "closed system" and "open system" vapor products by removing their definitions and unifying the tax structure. The additional tax revenue is intended to be appropriated for healthcare-related purposes benefiting Georgia residents.

 **OPPOSED**  **FAILED TO PASS**

HB 96 – REVENUE AND TAXATION; PACK OF CIGARETTES; INCREASE RATE OF TAX

REPRESENTATIVE SAM PARK (D-LAWRENCEVILLE)

HB 96 did not advance this session. This bill would have amended Georgia's tobacco tax law by increasing the excise tax on cigarettes from 37 cents to \$1.37 per pack of 20 cigarettes, with a proportional rate for other package sizes. Starting January 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the cigarette tax will be automatically adjusted to match the national average tax rate on cigarettes, as determined by the state commissioner.

 **OPPOSED**  **FAILED TO PASS**

RESOLUTIONS PASSED CREATING STUDY COMMITTEES

SR 391 - SENATE STUDY COMMITTEE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DIGITAL CURRENCY

SENATOR JOHN ALBERS (R-ROSWELL)

A resolution creating the Senate Study Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Digital Currency

SR 427 - SENATE STUDY COMMITTEE ON INTOXICATING CANNABINOIDS IN CONSUMABLE HEMP PRODUCTS

SENATOR JOHN ALBERS (R-ROSWELL)

A resolution creating the Senate Study Committee on Intoxicating Cannabinoids in Consumable Hemp Products

SR 323 - SENATE STUDY COMMITTEE ON MAKING GEORGIA THE NO. 1 STATE FOR TOURISM

SENATOR DREW ECHOLS (R- GAINESVILLE)

A resolution creating the Senate Study Committee on Making Georgia the No. 1 State for Tourism

SR 431 - SENATE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON CHILDREN AND PLATFORM PRIVACY PROTECTION STUDY COMMITTEE

SENATOR SALLY HARRELL (D-ATLANTA)

A resolution creating the Senate Impact of Social Media and Artificial Intelligence on Children and Platform Privacy Protection Study Committee

HR 304 - HOUSE STUDY COMMITTEE ON THE COSTS AND EFFECTS OF SMOKING REPRESENTATIVE MICHELLE AU (D-JOHNS CREEK)

A resolution creating the House Study Committee on the Costs and Effects of Smoking