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To: Bob Schwartz
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2017 Final Gold Dome Update

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2017 Legislative Session Comes to an End

The 2017 Legislative Session came to an end just after 1:00 a.m. this morning. GMA achieved a number of legislative victories this year and would like to thank city officials for their engagement in the legislative process. Your calls, emails, faxes and letters to your House and Senate members makes a difference when GMA staff is at the Capitol advocating on your behalf.

GMA staff would also like to express appreciation to Chairman Dorothy Hubbard and all the members of the Legislative Policy Council for advising on legislation as well as advocating for cities during the session.

City officials are encouraged to contact the Governor on any local legislation that passed that affects their city.

Firefighter Cancer Bill: What it Does and Next Steps

On Thursday, March 16, the House voted 166-1 to approve the Senate version to [HB 146, Firefighter Cancer Insurance](#), by Rep. Micah Gravley (R-Douglasville). HB 146 has been sent to Governor Deal. *GMA supports this legislation.*

What HB 146 Does

HB 146 would require fire departments to maintain insurance benefits that would provide a lump sum payment to any firefighter diagnosed with certain types of cancers and up to 3 years of disability payments to firefighters who, because of injury or illness, cannot work as a firefighter. In the case of any firefighter who is employed by one department and volunteers at another, only the department which employs the firefighter would be required to provide coverage. To be eligible, a firefighter must have served 12 consecutive months as a firefighter with a fire department. HB 146

would become effective beginning January 1, 2018. Please [review the online write-up](#) for detailed information on the eligibility, supplemental medical payments, and income replacement provisions of the bill.

Next Steps

In anticipation of HB 146 being signed into law by Governor Deal, GMA has been working with industry consultants for several months to identify the most appropriate solution for cities to provide cancer insurance benefits for their firefighters. Most cities will find it necessary to provide this benefit through the purchase of an insurance product rather than self-insuring. All Georgia cities will have access, through GMA, to an insurance product that will meet the requirements of the legislation. The field of insurance providers has been narrowed and a final selection process will be completed in the near future.

Additional information will be provided to cities in the coming weeks. Also, a website will be established to provide information to firefighters and their employers about the coverage requirements required by this bill. If you have any questions in the interim, please contact [Stan Deese](#) at (678) 686-6221 or [Cal Wray](#) at (678) 686-6215.

GMA Priority Bills Pass

Three of GMA's priority bills passed to incentivize investment in rural downtowns, remediate blight, and improve the economic vitality for breweries and distilleries to locate in downtowns. They will be sent to Governor Deal.

[HB 73, Rural Downtown Tax Credit](#), by Rep. Penny Houston (R-Nashville). HB 73 would allow the creation of revitalization zones in communities with less than 15,000 in population that can prove economic distress based on poverty rate, building vacancy or blight. Once these conditions are met, businesses in these zones would be eligible for tax credits for property redevelopment and job creation. *GMA supports this legislation.*

[HB 434, Condemnation of Blighted Properties](#), by Rep. Wendell Willard (R-Sandy Springs). HB 434 would allow local governments to immediately sell property it condemned as blighted as long as the land use on the property remains at its last legal use for five years after the condemnation. Current law requires the property to be held for 20 years before it can be sold. *GMA supports this legislation.*

[SB 85, Breweries and Distilleries: Retail Package Sales](#), by Sen. Rick Jeffares (R-McDonough). SB 85 would allow breweries and distilleries to sell a limited amount of their product directly to customers on-site. *GMA supports this legislation.*

Sent to Governor Deal

The following bills passed the House and Senate this legislative session and will be sent to Governor Deal.

[HB 76, Recording Maps, Plats, and Plans](#), by Rep. Rick Jasperse (R-Jasper). HB 76 would require maps, plats, plans, and condominium plans to be submitted electronically to the clerk of the superior court. This bill specifically requires that when a local government has enacted subdivision regulations or land use regulations, or both, approval of any plat must be obtained by the local government before the plat can be presented for filing with the clerk of court. *GMA supports this legislation.*

[HB 134, Single County T-SPLOST Modifications](#), by Rep. Bubber Epps (R-Dry Branch). HB 134 would allow T-SPLOST funds to be used on state projects. This bill would also allow multiple fractional T-SPLOSTs to be in place at the same time in increments of .05% so long as the combined rate of all T-SPLOST levies does not exceed 1%. *GMA supports this legislation.*

[HB 243, Wage & Employment Benefits: Payment for Schedule Changes](#), by Rep. Bill Werkheiser (R-Glenncville). HB 243 would prohibit local governments from requiring private employers to pay employees when shifts are canceled or schedules are changed. *GMA opposes this legislation.*

[HB 340, TAVT Changes to State and Local Distributions](#), by Rep. Shaw Blackmon (R-Bonaire). All language regarding how TAVT is distributed between the state and local governments, and between cities, counties and schools, has been removed from HB 340. This bill is now limited only to determining the taxable value of a vehicle lease. *GMA is evaluating this legislation.*

[HB 370, Municipal Court Judges Savings Plan](#), by Rep. Scott Hilton (R-Peachtree Corners), would allow the Council of Municipal Court Judges to create and oversee savings plans and deferred compensation plans for its members. Contributions to these plans would be made by the individual and would not be funded by cities. *GMA is neutral on this legislation.*

[HB 470, Grants for Military Communities](#), by Rep. Shaw Blackmon (R-Bonaire). HB 470 would create the Governor's Defense Initiative. This program would be administered by the Department of Economic Development and would provide goal-based grants to communities impacted by the presence of military installations. *GMA supports this legislation.*

[SB 222, Local Government 911 Authority: Create](#), by Sen. John Kennedy (R-Macon). SB 222 would create a statewide 911 Authority. The authority would contract with the Department of

Revenue which would receive all 911 fees collected in the state and distribute them back out to each Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) based upon the enhanced zip code of the telecommunications device being charged. Each line, including pre-paid lines, would be charged a \$1.50 monthly charge. The Authority would have the ability to audit service suppliers and impose penalties on service suppliers that fail to comply with the law. Also, in those areas where no city provides this service, SB 222 requires that 1) E-911 services be a county-wide service, 2) dispatchers stay on the line for emergency calls through the end of the call, even when transferring to a different public safety provider, and 3) prevents a county from charging a city for the provision of E-911 service. *GMA supports this legislation.*

Passed, No Action Needed by Governor

The following House Resolution passed and requires no further action.

[HR 389, House Rural Development Council](#), by Rep. Sam Watson (R-Moultrie). HR 389 creates the House Rural Development Council which is tasked to study the conditions, needs, issues and problems relating to rural economic development as a whole with emphasis on education, infrastructure, access to health care, and economic growth incentives. The Speaker of the House will appoint the members of the council. The resolution calls for an initial report to be completed by the end of 2017 and a second report finished by the end of 2018. *GMA supports this legislation.*

Did Not Pass

The following bills did not pass this year but will be eligible for consideration in 2018.

[HB 59, Historic Preservation Tax Credit](#), by Rep. Ron Stephens (R-Savannah). HB 59 would raise the annual cap on historic preservation tax credits from \$25 million to \$30 million. *GMA supports this legislation.*

[HB 61, Internet Sales Tax](#), by Rep. Jay Powell (R-Camilla). HB 61 would require Internet retailers that have either gross revenue in excess of \$250,000 from retail sales in Georgia, or over 200 retail transactions in Georgia, to remit all state and local sales taxes. The fiscal note for HB 61 estimates that local governments would see an increase in revenues of \$94 million in FY 2019 and \$266 million in FY 2022. *GMA supports this legislation.*

[HB 93, Sales and Use Tax Refunds](#), by Rep. John Corbett (R-Lake Park). HB 93 would codify in state law the Department of Revenue's (DOR) Direct Pay Program. This DOR program allows businesses to defer their sales tax remissions to the state for certain types of purchases. DOR does not allow interest to be paid on overpayments for businesses enrolled in this program. This

bill would allow interest to be paid on sales tax overpayments by a business in the Direct Pay Program. *GMA is neutral on this legislation.*

[HB 160, Georgia Commission on Transit Governance](#), by Rep. Kevin Tanner (R-Dawsonville). HB 160 would create the Georgia Commission on Transit Governance to study and assess the mass transportation facility and funding needs in Georgia's metropolitan areas. No local government officials are required to members of the commission. The bill calls for a report of the commission's findings by December 31, 2017. *GMA is neutral on this legislation.*

[HB 162, Debt Setoff: Administrative Office of the Courts](#), by Rep. Betty Price (R-Roswell). HB 162 would allow the Administrative Office of the Courts to transfer to local government courts debt setoff amounts for unpaid court fines pending a final determination of the amount of debt due and appeal time period has been complete. *GMA supports this legislation.*

[HB 204, Property Tax Bills: Remove Fees](#), by Rep. Brett Harrell (R-Snellville). As introduced, HB 204 would prohibit the listing of any non-tax related fees or assessments on a property tax bill. The Senate Finance Committee amended the bill and removed all references to the collection of fees on property tax bills. *GMA is evaluating this legislation.*

[HB 181, Sales Tax Accountability](#), by Rep. Jodi Lott (R-Evans), is pending in the Senate Rules Committee. HB 181 would allow local governments to request from the Department of Revenue (DOR) information submitted to it on vendor sales tax certificates. The "designated finance officer" of the local government requesting the information would be allowed to use this information to research sales and use tax errors, the underreporting of sales and use taxes, the misuse of sales and use tax exemptions, sales and use tax avoidance, and/or any fluctuation in the distribution amounts of proceeds of sales and use tax. *GMA supports this legislation.*

[HB 225, Ride Share Service Sales Tax](#), by Rep. Jay Powell (R-Camilla). As originally introduced, HB 225 would have required ride share service providers to pay all state and local sales taxes. It was amended in the Senate Finance Committee to give all ride share service providers (taxis, limousines, Uber, Lyft, etc.) a sales tax exemption. *GMA is evaluating this legislation.*

[HB 257, Annual Registering with DCA](#), by Rep. Jan Tankersley (R-Brooklet). HB 257 would change current law by consolidating the date for registering local government authorities with filing the report of local government authority finances. This bill would clarify that failure to register or file the finance report with the Department of Community Affairs would prevent local government authorities, including city authorities, from being eligible for receipt of state funds or to issue debt. *GMA is neutral on this legislation.*

[HB 336, Broadband Ready Communities](#), by Rep. Don Parsons (R-Marietta). HB 336 would allow the Georgia Department of Economic Development to certify local governments through a voluntary program entitled "broadband ready communities." Local governments that enact a model ordinance developed by the department would be exempt from applying for the certification. *GMA is evaluating this legislation.*

[HB 362, Local Government Officials: Start of Term of Office](#), by Rep. Andrew Welch (R-McDonough). HB 362 would require local officials to take office after a general election the Monday after the election was held if that date is five days after the election results were certified. If there is an issue regarding the election results, the local official would take office on the Monday after a judgment has been entered deciding the election. This bill would also require any vote of a local government body between the election date and when new members of the governing authority take office to be unanimous. Additionally, HB 362 would allow local governments to pass a resolution allowing the terms of office to begin on January 1 following a general election. *GMA opposes this legislation.*

[HB 371, Sovereign Immunity: Equalization](#), by Rep. Barry Fleming (R-Harlem). HB 371 would give cities the same level of sovereign immunity as counties. Currently, cities have a lower level of sovereign immunity than counties which can cause a city to face liabilities that a county does not face, particularly when a city enters into a joint project with a county. *GMA supports this legislation.*

[HB 399, Ethics Filings: Require Filings with State](#), by Rep. Wendell Willard (R-Sandy Springs). HB 399 that would require local elected officials to file their disclosure reports directly with the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission. Currently, local officials file their disclosures with the city or county clerk. This bill would require the filing to be done electronically on the commission's website free of charge, or on paper at a cost of \$40 for each filing. HB 399 would also eliminate the probable cause requirement for the commission to initiate an investigation. *GMA is working with the author on this legislation.*

[HB 419, Fireworks: Increased Local Control](#), by Rep. Deborah Silcox (R-Sandy Springs). HB 419 would allow local governments to regulate the use of fireworks pursuant to a local noise ordinance. The Senate Public Safety committee amended this bill, however, to allow fireworks to be detonated without regard to local noise ordinances on the weekend before a holiday and two days before and after a holiday. Holidays would be defined as all state recognized holidays. *GMA supports this legislation.*

[SB 2, Local Governments: Business Licensing & Permitting Fee Schedules](#), by Sen. Mike Dugan

(R-Carrollton). SB 2 would require cities and counties to create a fee schedule for licenses and permits for businesses. It would also require local governments to create an expedited process for permits and licenses and would allow them to charge an additional fee for businesses that request the expedited process. *GMA opposes this legislation.*

[SB 79, Destination Resort Casinos](#), by Sen. Brandon Beach (R-Alpharetta). SB 79 would allow for the creation of two Destination Resort Casinos in Georgia, one in Fulton County and another in either DeKalb, Chatham, Clayton, Cobb or Gwinnett Counties. *GMA is evaluating this legislation.*

[SB 116, Stormwater Fees: Prohibition](#), by Sen. Frank Ginn (R-Danielsville). SB 116 would create "water-neutral sites" that would be exempt from stormwater fees imposed by a local government. This bill would define a "water-neutral site" as "property designed to achieve control of water runoff from a 25 year, 24 hour storm event in a manner consistent with the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual." SB 116 would allow the property to become eligible for stormwater fees if the local government can prove the property is no longer "water-neutral." *GMA opposes this legislation.*

[SB 285, Municipal Incorporation: Prohibit Using Land from Current City](#), by Sen. Emanuel Jones (D-Decatur). SB 285 would prohibit using land located within the boundaries of an existing city during the incorporation of a new city. *GMA is evaluating this legislation.*

[SR 470, TAVT Study Committee](#), by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler. SR 470 would create a joint House and Senate study committee to review the split of TAVT revenues between the state and local governments. *GMA supports this legislation.*

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