

Georgia insight

Sue Ella Deadwyler
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“She hath done what she could.”
Mark 14:8a
“...and having done all ... stand.”
Ephesians 6:13c

Work to be done before Session ends *Sine Die* April 4th

H.B. 1013 Mental Health Reform Innovation Commission, Recommendations, by House Speaker David Ralston passed the House 169-3 on March 8th. Its 77 pages authorize local and state health officials to screen the mental health of pupils and students. Certain disorders would be reported to and controlled by the World Health Organization.

Medicaid services and private health insurance companies would be expanded and adjusted to comply with government standards that expect “politically correct” answers to mental health screening questions. Job descriptions of law enforcement officers would include on-the-job, in-the-field diagnosis of mental illness and incarceration of individuals they deem to be at risk of future psychiatric problems, whether or not they commit a crime. The bill words it this way:

H.B. 1013, lines 25-28: “to authorize inpatient civil commitment for mental illness to aid a person at risk of significant psychiatric deterioration in the near future; a peace officer to take custody of a person in apparent mental health crisis and transport the person to an evaluation facility notwithstanding the absence of evidence that the person has committed a criminal offense.”

During its debate on the House floor, a concerned Representative asked two questions: (a) How much will the insurance cost, i.e. Medicaid, Medicare or private policies? (b) What are the dangers of medical bureaucrats’ making mental health decisions about gender dysphoria? After reminding his peers that (c) conservatism is already viewed as a mental condition, he ended his remarks with these words, (d) “This bill does not make us more free.”

H.B. 1013 requires the following massive new network to control mental health for Georgians: (a) a Behavioral Health Care Workforce Data Base, (b) an assisted outpatient treatment unit, (c) an advisory council, (d) a grant program for accountability courts, (e) a task force to keep people with serious¹ mental illness out of jail and detention facilities, (f) a state network of local co-response teams, and (g) a task force to improve Medicaid function and adequacy.

Further requirements: (1) compliance with federal mental health parity² law and annual reviews; (2) information repositories; (3) Medicaid plan changes; (4) service cancelable loans for participant professionals; (5) rules and regulations; (6) inpatient civil commitment for persons deemed at risk of significant psychiatric decline in the near future³; (7) powers and duties of a Health Strategy and Coordination Office; (8) direct to mental health money that now goes into the County Drug Abuse Treatment and Education Fund; (9) the Behavioral Health Reform & Innovation Commission sunset date would be extended; and (10) for other purposes.

ACTION – OPPOSE. The Senate H & HS subcommittee has had a series of hearings on this bill, but it was still in that committee as of Friday, March 25th. If it comes out of committee in the next few days and goes to the Rules Committee, it has three options. The Senate could vote on it or have it recommitted or tabled. At this point, you may ask your senator to call for it to be tabled or reconsidered, if there is a full-Senate vote. Tabling or reconsideration could stop it.

¹ How serious? How is “serious” defined?

² Treat mental health and physical health alike, although they are not alike.

³ How long would the individual’s mental health be under surveillance? Would a second opinion be allowed?

Because the “Cash for Purchases” bill is dead

H.B. 1152 Fair Business Practices Act, introduced February 2nd by Representative Mesha Mainor, would have accomplished two things. It would have (a) protected consumers’ right to pay cash for purchases and (b) required merchants to accept legal tender (money) as payment.

The bill was assigned to the House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs committee which favorably reported it out of committee on March 9th. There has been no further action and, since it didn’t pass the House before March 15th, it died. However, it’s ironic that it came out of committee on the same day President Biden revealed his plan for digital currency and the future of money.

.... You need to know about President Biden’s Digital Money EO

On March 9th President Biden issued a twelve-page document entitled, “Executive Order on Ensuring Responsible Development of Digital Assets” that outlined executive actions needed to develop, implement and adopt international central bank digital currencies (CBDCs).

President Biden’s National Security Affairs Assistant and his Economic Policy Assistant will coordinate implementation via specific tasks assigned to his Cabinet members. Task report due-dates are staggered as follows: June 7, July 7, September 29, October 29, and a year later. A meeting will convene October 29 and strategy conclusions are due November 4 – all in 2022.

Definitions of Terms in the EO

- *Blockchain** _____ distributed ledger technologies of data shared across a network, creating a digital ledger of verified transactions or information among network participants.
- *Central bank digital currency (CBDC)* _____ digital money or monetary value that is a direct liability of the central bank.
- *Cryptocurrencies* _____ digital assets or medium of exchange supported through a distributed ledger technology that relies on cryptography, such as a blockchain*.
- *Digital assets* _____ cryptocurrencies, stablecoins, and CBDCs, of any label. They may be exchanged across centralized, decentralized or peer-to-peer digital asset trading platforms.
- *Stablecoins* _____ cryptocurrencies with mechanisms to maintain a stable value, by pegging the coin-value to specific currency or assets or by algorithmic control of supply.

Fast-track Reporting begins in June

Reports due June 7, 2022

- “Actions to Limit Illicit Finance and Associated National Security Risks” must be submitted.
- Attorney General submits ways to strengthen international law enforcement cooperation.

Reports due July 7, 2022

- Four Cabinet members and other agency heads will have established a framework for interagency international engagement with foreign counterparts to adapt/update/enhance adoption of global principles and standards for how digital assets are used and transacted.

Reports due September 29, 2022

- Seven Cabinet members and other agency heads report to the president about *the future of money and payment systems* and implications for the U.S. financial system, such as:
 - a. Implications of a U.S. Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC);
 - b. Relationship between CBDC and private sector-administered digital assets;
 - c. Future of sovereign and privately produced money globally;
 - d. Implications for our financial system and democracy; and
 - e. How foreign CBDC could displace currencies and undermine U.S. financial centrality.

Reports due September 29, 2022 (continued)

- The Federal Reserve Chairman will continue to assess the optimal form of a U.S. CBDC.
- Three Cabinet members shall establish a framework for enhancing U.S. economic competitiveness in, and leveraging of, digital asset technologies.
- Attorney General, Secretary of the Treasury and Federal Reserve Chairman report to the president an assessment of legislative changes necessary for issuance of a U.S. CBDC.
- Report to the president about what would drive mass adoption of different types of digital assets, risks and opportunities for consumers in the U.S.
- Submit a technical evaluation of the technological infrastructure, capacity, and expertise needed to facilitate and support a CBDC system, including future and quantum computing.
- Report potential impacts of such technologies on climate change, greenhouse emissions, etc.

Reports due September 29, 2022

- Provide to the president a corresponding legislative proposal.
- Report to the president implications of developing and adopting digital assets and changes in financial market and payment system infrastructures for U.S. consumers, businesses, investors, and equitable economic growth.

Report due November 4, 2022

- Six specific Cabinet¹ members and other agency heads will develop and report a coordinated action plan based on the Strategy report conclusions of June 7th.

Reports due March 9, 2023 (Next year)

- The 12-month impact of technological effect on climate change, greenhouse emissions, etc.
- Secretary of the Treasury will report the results of actions taken under the framework.

Reports due July 7, 2023 (Next year)

- Report to the president priority actions taken under the framework and its effectiveness.

Policy Statements from President Biden's EO

“My Administration places the highest urgency on research and development efforts into the potential design and deployment options of a U.S. central bank² digital currency (CBDC).”

“My Administration sees merit in showcasing U.S. leadership and participation in international fora related to CBDCs and in multi-country conversations and pilot projects involving CBDCs.”

“A U.S. CBDC may have the potential to support efficient and low-cost transactions³, particularly for cross-border funds transfers and payments and to foster greater access to the financial system, with fewer of the risks posed by private-sector-administered digital assets.”

“We should prioritize timely assessments of potential benefits and risks under various designs to ensure that the U.S. remains a leader in the international financial system.”

“**The U.S. dollar could go digital. Here's what you need to know,**” CNN Business, 3-11-22. This article quotes the Federal Reserve definition of CBDCs as “a digital form of central bank money that is widely available to the general public.” Then, described it as an actual U.S. dollar in digital form, which would be held by the government in a controlled central bank.

¹ Executive action is required of the various Executive Branch Cabinet members, who must report to the president their findings as scheduled and specified in the EO.

² N.Y. University's Stern School of Business finance department chairman said, “If you give the central bank this kind of power, the political safeguards would probably need to be much higher than currently in place for the Federal Reserve.”

³ A CBDC experiment dubbed “Project Hamilton” produced a code base that handled 1.7 million transactions per second.

Poised to Pass but still in Committee

Legislation favorably passed by the committee to which it is assigned goes into the Rules Committee, where it is discussed and its fate is determined. Bills must pass the Rules committee in the House and Senate to get a floor vote.

The following bills are poised to pass and may do so if they get a majority vote in the Rules committee that holds them now. Action below provides the appropriate Rules committee chairman to call and ask for passage of each bill. The five house bills are in the Senate Rules committee and the two Senate bills are in the House Rules committee.

S.B. 449 Parents' Bill of Rights, introduced February 2nd by Senator Clint Dixon, defines parent as “a person who has legal authority to act on behalf of a minor child as a natural or adoptive parent or a legal guardian.” It affirms the right of parents to direct the upbringing and moral or religious training of a minor child. It passed the Senate 32-21 February 22nd.

ACTION – Support. Call 404 656-7454 and ask Senator Clint Dixon to contact House Rules Committee Chairman Richard Smith, 656-5141, and ask him to put S.B. 449 on the House Rules calendar for a vote before April 4th.

S.B. 435 Integrity and Safety in Sports, introduced February 2nd by Senator Marty Harbin. It would prohibit biological males from participating in interscholastic or intramural athletics designated for females and vice versa. It passed the Senate 34-22 February 24th.

ACTION – Support. Ask Senator Marty Harbin, 404 656-0078, to contact House Rules Committee Chairman Richard Smith, 656-5141, and ask him to put S.B. 435 on the House Rules calendar for a vote before April 4th.

S.B. 456 Abortion-inducing Drugs in Schools, introduced March 4th by Senator Bruce Thompson, prohibits the providing of RU-486 and other such drugs in schools or on state grounds. It passed the Senate 31-22 March 1st.

ACTION – SUPPORT. Ask Senator Bruce Thompson, 656-0065, to contact House Rules Committee Chairman Richard Smith, 656-5141, and ask him to put S.B. 456 on the House Rules calendar for a vote.

S.B. 316 Offense of Stalking a Minor, introduced January 10th by Senator Jason Anavitarte, increases the penalty for stalking a minor to a high and aggravated misdemeanor.

ACTION – Support. Ask Senator Anavitarte, 656-0085, to contact House Rules Committee Chairman Richard Smith, 656-5141, and ask him to put S.B. 316 on the House Rules calendar for a vote before April 4th.

S.B. 319 Georgia Constitutional Carry Act of 2021, introduced January 10th by Senator Jason Anavitarte, authorizes a “lawful weapons carrier” to carry a weapon in certain places. It passed the Senate 34-22 February 28th.

ACTION – SUPPORT. Ask Senator Anavitarte, 656-0085, to contact House Rules Committee Chairman Richard Smith, 656-5141, and ask him to put S.B. 319 on the House Rules calendar before April 4th.

H.B. 1084 Protect Students First Act, introduced February 1st by Representative Will Wade, prohibits CRT curricula and training in schools. It passed the House 92-63 on March 4th.

ACTION – SUPPORT. Ask Representative Will Wade, 656-0188, to contact Senate Rules Committee Chairman Jeff Mullis, 656-0057, and request that he put H.B. 1084 on the Senate Rules calendar for a vote.

H.B. 1271 Right to Display the U.S. Flag, introduced by Representative James Burchett February 8, 2022, provides for displaying the U.S. flag in covenant-controlled communities.

ACTION – SUPPORT. Ask Representative James Burchett, 656-5105, to contact Senate Rules Committee Chairman Jeff Mullis, 656-0057, and request that he put H.B. 1271 on the Senate Rules calendar before April 4th.

Georgia Insight is a conservative publication financed entirely by its recipients.