

# Legislative Update

## Georgia State Capitol News

*Issue V*

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The General Assembly was in session Monday through Thursday of this week. Thursday's session was cut short in order to allow those desiring to attend Congressman Norwood's funeral services to do so. Nevertheless, they were officially in session and **Thursday was the Twenty-first Legislative Day**. They are now in recess until next Tuesday and plan to be in session next week Tuesday through Thursday.

### **Bills Identified for Tracking**

**Five new bills were identified for tracking this week: House Bills 353 and 361 introduced by Representative Larry O'Neal from Bonaire, HB 398 introduced by Representative Mary Margaret Oliver from Decatur, HB 420 introduced by Representative Earl Ehrhart from Powder Springs and HB 441 introduced by Representative Johnny Floyd from Cordele.**

**HB 353** contains a number of provisions designed to assist the State Revenue Commissioner to collect delinquent taxes owed to the state. It includes certain additional methods for the service of subpoenas and garnishments by the tax commissioner, a new requirement on financial institutions for reporting account information to the tax commissioner and a new method for attaching a person's account at a financial institution to pay a state tax lien. **Basically, while other provisions are included, this is the bill we mentioned as a possibility at the Fall Group Meetings that requires something similar to the data match program relating to delinquent child support payments in connection with delinquent state taxes. We have a number of concerns with the bill at this point and we are continuing to review it to determine other possible concerns. We will keep you informed.**

**HB 361** basically revamps the state's current retraining tax credit program. Currently, "any employer" potentially can be eligible for these state tax credits provided certain criteria are met. I know that many community banks have taken advantage of these state tax credits in the past. **Among other things this bill narrows the field of employers that are eligible for such tax credits and limits the amount of tax credits annually to \$1,000 per employee. Since community banks do not fall within the definition of the newly-defined term in this bill, "business enterprises," effectively this bill would eliminate such tax credits for community banks.** Even if community banks were included in the definition of a business enterprise, another provision in the bill seems to eliminate such tax credits unless the retraining is necessary in connection with "new technology." **The bill seems to exclude "routine upgrades" or "a change in vendor or service provider" from "new technology". Obviously, this bill is of concern to us. We will continue to monitor it and keep you informed.**

**HB 398** proposes to make a number of changes in regard to **title pawn transactions**, including **decreasing the interest and fees which may be charged** for such transactions. **We will continue to monitor the discussion surrounding this legislation due to the interest and usury implications.**

**HB 420** proposes to make a number of revisions to the Industrial Loan Act. The bill would move the supervision of industrial loan company licensees under the Commissioner of the Department of Banking and Finance. Other changes include the addition of a corporate surety bond requirement for licensees, the elimination of the ability of licensees to sell credit life insurance on loans made under the act, plus a number of other consumer friendly changes. **Obviously we will continue to monitor this legislation due to its interest and usury implications and due to its potential impact on the banking department.**

**HB 441** is the corrections bill relating to state income tax liability in connection with the holding of U. S. Government Securities Obligations. As introduced, the bill would simply reverse the changes that were made in the statute two years ago, which has resulted in an increased state income tax liability for many

community banks. Discussions are continuing regarding the exact method for correcting this situation. **We will keep you informed as things progress on this legislation. We want to thank Representative Johnny Floyd from Cordele for introducing this bill.**

### **Activity on Bills Previously Identified for Tracking**

Again this week the only bill on which further official action was taken was **SB 70, the DBF's Housekeeping Bill introduced by Chairman of the Senate Banking and Financial Institutions Committee Senator Bill Hamrick** from Carrollton. **The bill passed the Senate on Monday and was transmitted to the House. The bill was assigned to the House Banks and Banking Committee where is currently resides.**

The only other official activity this week on bills previously identified for tracking was a joint subcommittee hearing on Wednesday on both the **Payday Lending Bill, HB 163** introduced by **Representative Steve "Thunder" Tumlin(R)** from Marietta, and on the three **credit file freeze bills, HB 35** introduced by **Representative Tommy Benton (R)** from Jefferson, **HB 38** introduced by **Representative Rob Teilhet (D)** from Smyrna and **HB 130** introduced by **Representative Calvin Hill (R)**, Vice Chairman of the House Banks and Banking Committee from Canton. Testimony on the Payday Lending Bill lasted for slightly over an hour, while the issue of credit file freezes was discussed for approximately 45 minutes. Both **Representative Mike Coan, who chairs the Banks and Banking Subcommittee hearing testimony on Payday Lending,** and **Representative Calvin Hill, who chairs the Banks and Banking Subcommittee hearing testimony on the credit file freeze issue,** emphasized that this was the first of perhaps a number of hearings on these bills and all parties would have a chance to be heard before any action is taken on the bills.

**The General Assembly is in recess until Tuesday, February 20, 2007.**

**The *Legislative Update* is your guide to legislation affecting the community banking industry in Georgia. Summaries of the bills we are tracking were prepared by Susie Siken of Miller, Hamilton, Snider & Odom, LLC with the assistance of the CBA staff. Miller, Hamilton, Snider & Odom, LLC is a CBA Associate Member Company.**

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**Any status changes of bills during the course of a legislative week will be reflected in italics.**  
**\*\*A COPY OF THE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE CAN ALSO BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE AT [www.cbaofga.com](http://www.cbaofga.com).\*\***  
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### **SENATE BILLS**

#### **SB 24-Computer Security; persons provide identifying information by falsely representing themselves to be a business; definitions; penalties (Senator Staton, 18<sup>th</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** Senate Bill 24 amends the Code by the addition of a new Part 4 to 16-9 of the Code to provide both criminal (imprisonment and fines) and civil penalties (for the ISP provider, individual affected, web page owner) against persons utilizing the internet or electronic mail to induce another to provide identifying information by falsely representing themselves to be a business without the authority or approval of the business.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** Passed Senate on 1/26/07; Pending – House Judiciary Non-Civil.

This is basically an “anti-phishing bill”. Clearly in concept we are supportive of this legislation. However, the bill contains safe-harbor provisions for employers if their employees solicit through company computers and internet connections a person’s personal identifying information without the authority or approval of the employing business. **It is our understanding that there will be efforts to strengthen the safe-harbor provisions in the House and we are supportive of those efforts. We will continue to carefully monitor the progress of this bill.**

#### **SB 70 - Financial Institutions; update banking laws to reflect changes in federal law (Sen. Hamrick, 30<sup>th</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** The bill makes technical and clarifying changes to the banking code, the credit union code, the licensing law for residential mortgage lenders and brokers and the laws dealing with money transmitters. A section by section summary of the bill prepared by the DBF can be found at the following link .

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** *Passed – Senate by a vote of 52-1 on 2/12/07; Pending House Banks & Banking Committee.*

CBA supports this bill.

### **HOUSE BILLS**

#### **HB 35-Credit report agency; person request security freeze; provisions (Rep. Benton, 31<sup>st</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** House Bill 35 amends the Georgia Code by the addition of a new Article 35 to 10-1 to the Georgia Code which establishes procedures permitting an individual to have a security freeze placed on his credit report at a credit reporting agency and to have the security freeze temporarily lifted. The credit reporting agency must disclose the process of placing and temporarily lifting a security freeze and the legislation also sets forth the duties of the credit reporting agency with respect to the security freeze. A consumer fee of \$5.00 may be charged by the credit reporting agency for any security freeze, or removal or temporary lifting of the freeze, however, there may be no charge against an individual who is a victim of identify theft. The bill also excludes the application of such provisions to certain entities.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** Pending – House Banks & Banking Committee.

Bill was heard by the Committee on Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup> and assigned to a subcommittee for further study. The subcommittee is chaired by **Representative Calvin Hill, Vice Chairman of the House Banks and Banking Committee**, from Canton. We will continue to monitor the progress of the various “credit file freeze” bills.

#### **HB 38-Credit report; place security freeze provisions (Rep. Teilhet, 40<sup>th</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** House Bill 38 amends the Code by the addition of a new Code Section 10-1-913 which establishes procedures permitting an individual to have a security freeze placed on his consumer credit agency credit report utilized to determine insurance premiums, eligibility for coverage or tier placement and to have the security freeze temporarily lifted. The credit reporting agency must disclose the process of placing and temporarily lifting a security freeze and the legislation also sets forth the duties of the credit reporting agency with respect to the security freeze. No fee may be charged by the credit reporting agency for any security freeze, or removal or temporary lifting of the freeze.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** Pending – House Banks & Banking Committee.

Bill was heard by the Committee on Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup> and assigned to a subcommittee for further study. The subcommittee is chaired by **Representative Calvin Hill, Vice Chairman of the House Banks and Banking Committee**, from Canton. We will continue to monitor the progress of the various “credit file freeze” bills.

#### **HB 96 - State depositories; Federal Home Loan Bank; secure state funds (Rep. Mills, 25<sup>th</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** HB 96 amends Georgia Code Section 50-17-59 to provide that Federal Home Loan Bank letters of credit may be accepted to secure state funds on deposit in state depositories.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** Passed House by a vote of 167-0 on 1/30/07; Pending-Senate Banking & Financial Institutions Committee.

There seems to be no controversy associated with this legislation this year. Hopefully, it will pass and **provide community banks with additional flexibility in securing public deposits. CBA supports this bill and we want to thank Representative James Mills (R), Chairman of the House Banks and Banking Committee, from Gainesville for introducing and handling this bill.**

**HB 121 - Corporations; summons of garnishment; change provisions (Rep. Willard, 49<sup>th</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** HB 121 amends Code Section 18-4-23 to provide that summons of non-continuing garnishments must be served upon the agent in charge of either the registered office or the principal place of business of a corporation.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** Pending – House Judiciary Committee.

The clarification provided by this bill should assist community banks with multiple locations to implement a timely freeze on any funds on deposit upon being served with a garnishment. **It should eliminate problems, which sometimes have occurred, when a garnishment is filed at a branch location resulting in a lag time before a freeze can be implemented.** The bill was heard by the House Judiciary Committee on Thursday, February 1st. After much discussion, it was decided that no vote would be taken on the bill. The bill was tabled and may be discussed later.

**CBA is in support of this bill.**

**HB 130 - Identity theft; security freezes; definitions; provisions (Rep. Hill, 21<sup>st</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** House Bill 130 amends the Georgia Code to provide for procedures permitting an individual to have a security freeze placed on his credit report or credit score at a credit reporting agency and to have the security freeze temporarily lifted. The credit reporting agency must provide a means of temporarily lifting a security freeze and the legislation also sets forth the duties of the credit reporting agency with respect to the security freeze, including specific timing for the placement of the security freeze and the temporary lifting of the freeze. Fees which the consumer reporting agency may charge are established for any security freeze, or removal or temporary lifting of the freeze, however, there may no charge against an individual who is a victim of identify theft. The bill also excludes the application of such provisions to certain entities.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** Pending – House Banks & Banking Committee.

Basically, this is the model bill developed by Equifax and it **contains exemptions from any “credit file freeze” placed by a consumer for any community bank with a previously existing deposit or loan account. We will continue to monitor the progress of the various “credit file freeze” bills but this bill would appear to be acceptable to community banks.** Bill was heard by the Committee on Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup> and assigned to a subcommittee for further study. The subcommittee is chaired by **Representative Calvin Hill, Vice Chairman of the House Banks and Banking Committee and author of this bill,** from Canton. We will continue to monitor the progress of the various “credit file freeze” bills.

**HB 160 - Republic of Sudan; certain transactions and bids by state agencies; prohibit (Rep. Brooks, 63<sup>rd</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** House Bill 160 adds a new article to the Georgia State Administration Statutes prohibiting business dealings with companies and entities located in the Republic of Sudan. Specifically, House Bill 160 adds a new chapter 36 to Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, prohibiting state agencies from doing business with U.S. domestic companies which do not certify that they are not conducting business with companies or entities located in the Republic of Sudan. The Office of Treasury and Fiscal Services shall not use a financial institution as a depository unless it certifies in writing that the institution has no direct loans and no fore knowledge of any indirect loans outstanding to a government unit or national corporation of the Republic of Sudan; and an external investment manager selected by the Board of Trustees of the Employees Retirement System of Georgia may not invest in any stock, or other obligation of any company doing business with or in the Republic of Sudan.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** Pending – House Governmental Affairs Committee

We will monitor this bill.

**HB 163 - Deferred Presentment Services Act; enact; repeal "payday lending" prohibition (Rep. Tumlin, 38<sup>th</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** HB 163 provides a new chapter 9 to Article 7 of the Georgia Code which would permit payday lending. Such lending would only be permitted by an entity licensed by the commissioner of insurance. The legislation, among other things, specifies the terms which must be included in a written agreement with respect to a payday transaction, limits the fees which may be charged, limits the timing of the transaction, prohibits renewal of the transaction, requires in certain instances the payday lender to provide a mandatory repayment plan in the event the borrower is unable to repay the transaction on the required date, prohibits payday lending transactions to a member of the US military or his or her dependents, and provides the consumer with a one day right of rescission.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** Pending – House Banks & Banking Committee.

We will need to track this bill, which would legalize payday lending in Georgia, primarily in order to monitor the discussion on interest and usury and make sure the discussion does not spill over into bank offered products. Bill was heard by the Committee on Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup> and assigned to a subcommittee for further study. The subcommittee is chaired by **Representative Mike Coan from Lawrenceville**. *The first subcommittee hearing was held on Wednesday, February 14, 2006 and additional hearings are expected.*

**HB 353 - Revenue and taxation; unclaimed property; provisions (Rep. O'Neal, 146<sup>th</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** HB 353 provides for certain additional methods for the service of subpoenas and garnishments by the tax commissioner, the right of the tax commissioner to offset a person's delinquent state tax liability against the person's interest in unclaimed property paid to the state, a new method for the attachment and perfection of a state tax lien against the real property of the taxpayer, a new requirement for reporting account information to the tax commissioner and a new method for attaching a person's account at a financial institution to pay a state tax lien. As to a person whose property is subject to a state tax lien, the tax commissioner may request account balance information and other information about such person from a financial institution no more than 4 times a year. The financial institution must provide the report within 30 days of the request in machine readable form and the tax commissioner must pay a fee not to exceed the actual costs incurred by the financial institution to search its records and provide the report. As to the attaching of accounts at financial institutions for payment of a state tax lien, on the receipt of notice of a tax lien, the financial institution must search its records and seize and attach the funds in any accounts of the person listed in the notice of lien in the amount of the lesser of the total amount in the accounts or amount stated in the notice of tax lien, must report within 15 days of receipt of the notice, the amount of funds that has been seized, and must pay those funds or other funds as specified in a tax commissioner's notice to the financial institution to the tax commissioner after the deduction of a fee by the financial institution. The tax commissioner is required to provide notice to the account holder prior to issuing the notice to the financial institution to pay the funds in order to permit the account holder to challenge the notice of tax lien.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** *Pending – House Ways & Means Committee.*

*This bill contains a number of provisions designed to assist the State Revenue Commissioner to collect delinquent taxes owed to the state. Included in the bill is the legislation we mentioned as a possibility at the Fall Group Meetings that requires something similar to the data match program relating to delinquent child support payments in connection with delinquent state taxes. We have a number of concerns with the bill at this point and we are continuing to review it to determine other possible concerns. We will keep you informed.*

**HB 361 - Income tax; certain state income tax credits; change certain provisions (Rep. O'Neal, 146<sup>th</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** HB 361 relates to state income tax credits for approved retraining programs and qualified research expenses. The bill amends Section 48-7-40.5 relating to the state income tax credits granted to business enterprises in connection with an approved retaining program. The amendment limits this tax credit to "business enterprises", businesses engaged in manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, processing, telecommunications, tourism and research and development industries, limits the amount per employee to \$1,000 per year and requires the employee to be employed for at least 35 hours per week. Under current law, these retraining tax credits are available to "any employer", who meets certain criteria. Under this proposal community banks would no longer be eligible to apply for such credits, since they do not fall within the definition of the a

“business enterprise”. This legislation also amends the calculation of the income tax credit for qualified research expenses.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** *Pending – House Ways & Means Committee.*

*This legislation basically revamps the state’s current retraining tax credit program. Currently, “any employer” can potentially be eligible for these state tax credits provided certain criteria are met. I know that many community banks have taken advantage of these state tax credits in the past. Among other things this bill narrows the field of employers that are eligible for such tax credits and limits the amount of tax credits annually to \$1,000 per employee. Since community banks do not fall within the definition of the newly defined term in this bill, “business enterprises”, effectively this bill would eliminate such tax credits for community banks. Even if community banks were included in the definition of a business enterprise, another provision in the bill seems to eliminate such tax credits unless the retraining is necessary in connection with “new technology”. The bill seems to exclude “routine upgrades” or “a change in vendor or service provider” from “new technology”. Obviously, this bill is of concern to us. We will continue to monitor it and keep you informed.*

**HB 398 - Pawnbrokers; title pawn transactions; provisions (Rep. Oliver, 83<sup>rd</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** HB 398 amends certain provisions related to pawnbrokers, including establishing different provisions related to motor vehicle title pawn transactions, decreasing the amount of interest and fees that may be charged for title pawn transactions, and providing for the repossession of vehicles subject to title pawn transactions and the subsequent sale of such vehicles.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** *Pending – House Banks & Banking Committee.*

*We will continue to monitor the discussion surrounding this legislation due to the interest and usury implications.*

**HB 420 - Georgia Industrial Loan Act of 2007; enact (Rep. Ehrhart, 36<sup>th</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** HB 420 amends the Georgia Industrial Loan Act to provide that that the commissioner of banking and finance shall act as Industrial Loan Commissioner, to provide that applicants for a license under this Act must post a surety bond with the department of banking and finance for each location, to provide for increased application fee and annual licensing fees, to prohibit the selling of any insurance in connection with making or collecting an Industrial Loan Act loan, to prohibit the collection of late fees and maintenance fees, to prohibit certain terms in loan contracts, e.g. hold harmless clause, arbitration, to provide a one day right of rescission, to prohibit security or guaranties on a loan transaction, to limit the number of loans and certain loan renewals, to prohibit the extension of such loans to members of the US military and dependents, and to require the lender to provide a repayment plan if requested by a consumer that is unable to repay the loan or installment before the due date.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** *Pending – House Banks & Banking Committee.*

*This bill proposes to make a number of revisions to the Industrial Loan Act, including moving the supervision of industrial loan company licensees under the Commissioner of the Department of Banking and Finance. Obviously we will continue to monitor this legislation due to its interest and usury implications and due to its potential impact on the banking department.*

**HB 441 - Income tax; federal obligations; taxable income; revise provisions (Rep. Floyd, 147<sup>th</sup>)**

**SUMMARY:** HB 441 amends Article 2 of Chapter 7 of Title 48 to change the computation of taxable income for corporations and individuals with respect to the reduction of taxable income as a result of interest or dividends on certain obligations of the United States. The amount of reduction from taxable income shall be reduced by any expenses attributable to the production of the interest or dividend income.

**STATUS AND COMMENTARY (AS NEEDED):** *Pending – House Ways & Means Committee.*

*This is the corrections bill relating to state income tax liability in connection with the holding of U. S. Government Securities Obligations. As introduced, the bill would simply reverse the changes that were made*

*in the statute two years ago, which has resulted in an increased state income tax liability for many community banks. Discussions are continuing regarding the exact method for correcting this situation. We will keep you informed as things progress on this legislation. We want to thank Representative Johnny Floyd from Cordele for introducing this bill.*