

**Science for Georgia's  
Georgia General Assembly  
Legislative Scorecard**

**2019-2020 Regular Session**

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# About this Scorecard

During each legislative session, there are thousands of bills that Georgia's General Assembly members deliberate on before making potentially life-changing decisions for their constituents. With a myriad of policy areas to choose from, it can be difficult to hold one's legislators accountable for decisions they make. Of course, nothing can hold them more accountable about their decisions than their vote.

On the following pages, please find a selection of Georgia's most popular bills from the 2019-2020 Legislative Session. Use this scorecard to learn how your elected officials voted on science related topics.

All bills that are included on the following pages have been divided into distinct, science-related categories that can be found on the left borders of each page. Divided between bills initiated by the House of Representatives (HB) and Senate (SB), each has an itemized number sequentially placed to represent its public bill number, as noted by the Georgia General Assembly. Bill information, rubric analysis, and voting history are the sections subject to analysis in Science for Georgia's Legislative Scorecard. Look for the bill-passed or bill-failed symbol in the top right-hand corner of the descriptions.

[Click to Find Your GA State Representative and Senator](#)

[Click to View Spreadsheet of Individual Votes](#)

## Legislative Rubric

As a nonprofit organization, our motives for this type of information gathering is to disseminate scientific knowledge to public. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of each bill with the policy rubric found on the following pages, we aspire to de-codify the extensiveness of these bills and layout a fact-based score.

To reiterate, we analyze these bills from a “scientific scope,” and not based on political motives. There are many factors to consider when evaluating proposed legislation, the following ratings outline the impact on Georgians, the reach to the intended audience, the scientific merit, the financial and political feasibility, and the long-term science potential.

## IMPACT OF LEGISLATION

*Is the procedure prescribed in this bill fair and reasonable?*

**Think: Does this bill affect the lives of Georgians in a positive way? Would the lives of constituents really change for the better once this piece of legislation is implemented, or does this limit their freedom of choice?**

### POSITIVE

Yes, this bill is fair and reasonable. Here's why...

### NEGATIVE

No, this is not fair and reasonable. Here's why...

## REACH OF LEGISLATION

*Is this legislation reaching its targeted audience?*

**Think: What group of Georgians is this legislation supposed to impact? Does it reach this entire group? For example: telehealth is supposed to reach all Georgians, but those without reliable connectivity will not have access. That would be a 2 on this scale.**

**0**

No impact on target audience.

**1**

Impacts a narrow segment of target audience.

**2**

Impacts majority of Georgians; some exceptions.

**3**

Affects all targeted Georgians equally.

## SCIENTIFIC MERIT

*Does this bill utilize scientific research accurately?*

**Think: Is this bill backed by research and facts?**

### YES

Yes, this bill follows scientific research accurately. Here's why...

### NO

No, this does not present scientific research accurately. Here's why...

## FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

*With budget in mind, is this legislation financially feasible or does it have burdensome economic outcomes (higher taxes, etc.)?*

**Think: Does this bill introduce costs? If so, how are they paid for? Are there unaddressed financial obstacles for this bill to actively help society?**

**0**

Extremely high costs.

**1**

Expensive but can be done.

**2**

Quite inexpensive; not an issue.

**3**

No financial burden whatsoever.

## POLITICAL FEASIBILITY

*Is there a lot of opposition to this bill or is there a general degree of consensus within the Georgia General Assembly?*

**Think: What was the consensus between the House and Senate votes during the most recent readings? Are there any patterns that can be found between upvotes and downvotes?**

**0**

Significant opposition (mainly along party lines).

**1**

Considerate opposition.

**2**

Minimal opposition (few dissenting votes).

**3**

Complete consensus (zero "Nays").

## FUTURE OUTCOMES

*Will this disseminate proper understandings about the science topic to the general public?*

**Think: From a scientific perspective, are people going to follow science-backed perspective for upcoming years or continue to have misinformed conclusions about this topic?**

### POSITIVE

Yes, this will disseminate proper scientific understandings amongst the public. Here's why...

### NEGATIVE

No, this will not disseminate proper scientific understandings amongst the public. Here's why...



## PSYPACT (HB 26)

Enters Georgia into the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT) alongside seven other states. This enables psychologists to practice in any of the member states, providing greater access to mental health services.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	This bill increases access to psychological care by allowing telehealth communication.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	More people will have access to mental health care via telepsychology services. Individuals without internet connection or proper devices will not have access.	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	This bill reduces regulatory barriers and increases access to mental healthcare. Mental health has been shown to be an intricate part of <a href="#">overall wellbeing</a> .	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	The cost of implementing the bill are divided by the 8 states that have passed legislation to be a part of <a href="#">PSYPACT</a> . According to their budget analysis, the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPBB) will cover costs to implement this program for the upcoming fiscal year.	2
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	In both the House and Senate, only one individual within each chamber voted no.	2
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	<a href="#">Mental health is a prevalent issue for society</a> . Instead of being burdened by physical locations of facilities, patients can seek services online. This is particularly useful during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will encourage physical distancing and adhere to CDC guidelines This bill will promote emphasis on taking care of one's mental well-being.	Positive



## Heartbeat Bill (HB 481)

Prevents practicing physicians in Georgia from performing abortions beyond six weeks, when fetal cells begin to expand and contract (non-scientifically termed “a human heartbeat”). It redefines an unborn fetus as “natural person” and enables the criminal investigation of miscarriages, with potential criminal prosecution of naturally occurring pregnancy losses.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	This bill places healthcare decisions in the hands of state officials and removes the pregnant woman and her doctor from the decision. It places an undue burden on pregnant women who need to make health decisions. It authorizes investigations of miscarriages. Women will seek off-grid medical care when they need healthcare the most.	Negative
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	All Georgians are impacted by this rule. Abortions must now only be performed by specifically licensed hospitals or health facilities.	3
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	This bill is not based on scientific facts or knowledge. What this legislation considers a “heartbeat” is actually the development of a <a href="#">premature cardiovascular system</a> , contracting during the earlier weeks of pregnancy. All four chambers of the heart do not reach full development until later weeks. Laws that enable investigation of miscarriages have been shown to force women out of the healthcare system as they fear going to prison for natural pregnancy complications. This bill will negatively affect the mental and physical health of women.	No
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	This law does not provide any financial support for parents and babies. This bill will force women to keep unwanted pregnancies without providing any social or financial support, further trapping many in a cycle of poverty.	0
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	This vote was on party lines. Nearly all Democrats voted ‘Nay’; nearly all Republicans voted ‘Yes’.	0
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	Delivering incorrect information to the public about the number of weeks it takes to develop a human heartbeat furthers misconceptions. This bill <a href="#">hinders economic and social development</a> for Georgia’s women especially low-income and minority women.	Negative



## Patients First Act (SB 106)

Authorizes the state's Department of Community Health to submit Section 1115 Medicaid Waivers to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. This expands Medicaid access for all individuals below the federal poverty line. Allows the governor to initiate thorough research into more robust health insurance coverage for underserved individuals with inadequate access.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	This bill expands access to Medicaid. With the 1115 and 1332 Medicaid demonstration waivers approximately 200,000 more Georgians will be eligible for Medicaid (~2 million currently are).	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	The waiver is not a full Medicaid expansion. Before expansion only children, seniors, people with disabilities, and pregnant women were covered. This bill <a href="#">expands coverage</a> to single adults that make less than \$12,500 a year. This is not a full Medicaid expansion.	1
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	The data on insurance coverage clearly shows that a significant number of the population still doesn't have access to health insurance. Lack of access to healthcare has been linked to a higher incidence of chronic conditions and overall worse mental and physical health than the population at large. <a href="#">Covid-19 deaths</a> are disproportionately higher among low-income individuals.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	By leaving out individuals above the poverty line, Medicaid expansion will be quite costly, since Georgia will not reach the Affordable Care Act's "enhanced match rate," which helps states cushion the cost of expansion with federal support. With partial expansion, the 1115 waiver will allow for temporary federal funding. <a href="#">Emergency Departments are typically the care choice for uninsured, which creates a heavy taxpayer burden.</a>	1
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	This vote was on party lines. <a href="#">Republicans supported this measure due to expansion efforts in other states. Democrat representatives felt that waivers were not a permanent solution to address the coverage gap.</a>	1
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	It expands health coverage to low-income individuals, reducing the number of people who do not have access to health-care.	Positive



## Medical Practice Act (SB 115)

Allows for practicing physicians outside of Georgia to practice telemedicine within the state. Increases healthcare access and sets telemedicine practice standards including licensure for practice, notification of license restrictions, and interstate prescriptions.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	By allowing physicians to practice telemedicine, more patients can get access to medical care, including vaccines, reducing the geographical burden on medical access.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	This bill expands medical access to many. It excludes those without reliable internet connections or connectivity devices.	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	This bill <a href="#">reduces regulatory barriers</a> by increasing access to general healthcare. By overcoming the 'locational' problem of medical access, more individuals can address their health problems and reduce the likelihood of chronic and infectious diseases.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	There is a minimal financial burden on the state and regulatory agencies. The medical board will need to authorize telemedicine licenses to physicians from other states. The Department of Public Health will need to expand their established immunization registry.	2
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	There were only 2 "Nay" votes for this bill.	2
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	This bill expands access to health care.	Positive



## Marriage Age Bill (HB 228)

This bill increases the minimum marriage age from 16 to 17 years of age and requires the minor to be emancipated from their parents to get married before 18. This bill requires mandatory six-hour educational workshops and testing on comprehension for all minors intending to get married.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	This bill increases the minimum marriage age to 17, requires the minors to be emancipated (declared legally independent from their parents), and offers premarital information. This should reduce the number of child marriages and make those entering marriage better prepared.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	This bill is applicable to all Georgians and sets a minimum marriage age.	3
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	There are <a href="#">lasting implications of underage marriage</a> , such as limited education access, domestic violence, and more. <a href="#">Furthermore, neuroscientists have shown that the brain remains underdeveloped until a person's mid 20's.</a> A person's worldly beliefs are more likely to be transient during their teenage years compared to beliefs established after the brain has matured. This bill minimizes premature choices that will affect legally-binding contracts.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	The development of a premarital course is the only financial burden on the state. The couple seeking to get married must pay for a filing fee of a marriage license and emancipation.	2
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	There was slight opposition between the House vote (14 'Nays') but complete agreement in the Senate.	2
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	<a href="#">Underage marriage has been shown</a> to result in higher rates of poverty, maternal mortality, domestic violence, or unplanned pregnancies, to name a few. Limiting the times those under 18 can marry is a positive step to reducing these negative outcomes.	Positive



## Georgia's Hope Act (HB 324)

**Bill Passed**

Authorizes the sale and possession of medical marijuana oil up to a maximum of 20 fluid ounces. Allows a limited number of businesses and universities to grow and harvest cannabis. Acts of vaping, non-registration, or other violations continue to be felony offenses.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	Legalizing use of marijuana use has not been linked to increased criminal activity. This bill decriminalizes a subset of marijuana users. However, penalties for recreational marijuana possession continue to be strict.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	This bill affects all Georgians. This will positively affect those who need marijuana for medical use. It does not change legal penalties for recreational use.	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	<a href="#">Low-THC oil can be helpful for patients with epilepsy and other medical conditions.</a> Recreational use remains illegal even though the <a href="#">CDC</a> confirms that marijuana is not a gateway. <a href="#">The bill prohibits vaping which scientific research has shown to be harmful.</a> Provides research opportunities for UGA and Fort Valley State University, adding to the body of knowledge around impacts of marijuana use.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	Several costs will be incurred by this bill. It creates the Georgia Access to Medical Cannabis Commission which will be in charge of amending any offenses to THC possession in Georgia. Licensure and enforcement capabilities will also be provided to agencies, such as the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.	3
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	While an overwhelming amount of the House and Senate voted 'Yea,' more Republicans were against this bill than Democrats.	1
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	Legalizing this variant of medical marijuana provides a safe way for patients to obtain their medication, which will reduce the number of unauthorized possessions, will develop committees that control safe distribution practices, and enables further research into health impacts of marijuana use.	Positive



## Kratom Regulation (HB 551)

**Bill Passed**

Sets limits on kratom distribution and prohibits its sale to those under 18. Kratom is a substance whose medical applicability is under debate, with most studies showing it to have little positive effects.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	There does not seem to be <a href="#">any medical benefits to consumption</a> of this addictive drug.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	This bill makes no exceptions. If rules are followed, there will be no need for consequences that require legal action.	3
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	This bill prevents minors from accessing kratom and regulates access for adults, increasing transparency and safety.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	There is minimal cost to the state. The burden of responsibility only extends as far as developing new labels regarding kratom packaging.	2
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	This legislation had overwhelming support when being passed. There were only 2 'Nays' between both committees.	2
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	Regulating Kratom will keep consumers informed of concentrations and ensure manufacture according to protocols. <a href="#">Harvard</a> explains that there are no medical benefits. Additionally, when there is no robust plan for quality control, contamination becomes more likely.	Positive



### Kratom Regulation (HB 551) Opioid Rider

A rider, a provision not related to the original bill, was attached to HB 551 prevents the state medical board from disciplining physicians who did not register for the opioid database (as part of previous “pill mill” prevention legislation).

**CRITERIA**

**ASSESSMENT**

**SCORE**

**Impact**

This bill has [weakened a regulatory provision](#) to identify which doctors are overprescribing opioids to their patients. It provided amnesty for all doctors who did not register for the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program. The argument for amnesty was that the original legislation did not provide discretionary authority to the medical board for enforcement. Doctors who forgot to register were punished the same as doctors who deliberately do not register. Instead of providing discretionary authority, there is now blanket amnesty.

Negative

**Reach of Legislation**

This provision impacts all doctors and individuals in Georgia. Prescription opioids [are used to treat pain](#), which may be necessary after a surgery, injury, or chronic illness. Opioid abuse is possible by all individuals.

3

**Scientific Merit**

Passing this bill will exacerbate the circumstances of the opioid epidemic, and there is no scientific reasoning behind blanket amnesty for doctors.

No

**Financial Feasibility**

There is no immediate financial obligation placed on any regulatory agencies. Weakening opioid controls has the potential to increase the opioid crisis, however, which has a high cost to the Georgia taxpayer.

1

**Political Feasibility**

This legislation had overwhelming support when being passed. There were only 2 ‘Nays’ between both committees.

2

**Future Outcomes**

The original “pill mill” bill was a [positive step](#) toward controlling the opioid epidemic and [passed the Georgia General Assembly](#) with overwhelming support. This bill has the potential of exacerbating the opioid epidemic and decreasing transparency.

Negative



**Pregnant Inmates Bill (HB 345)**

Prohibits strip searches, restraints, solitary confinement, and other practices on all pregnant inmates. Prohibits shackling of female inmates while in the hospital during and after labor and childbirth.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	Providing humane treatment to pregnant inmates is a positive step towards ensuring the well-being of a mother and newborn child. Amnesty International has condemned the use of restraints and deemed it cruel and inhumane.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	This bill applies to all pregnant inmates (and those in the immediate postpartum period) and prohibits strip searches, examinations, solitary confinement, and more. A mother in the immediate postpartum period is only allowed to be placed in handcuffs if she poses an immediate flight risk or is deemed potentially harmful to herself and/or others. Such incidents must be documented within 48 hours.	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	By alleviating extenuating stressors on pregnant inmates, <a href="#">state legislation is following recommended medical care guidelines</a> . Pregnant women are already a vulnerable group in the prison system. <a href="#">Doctors and physicians have cited poor health due to many factors, such as sexual violence, STI's, multiple partners, etc.</a>	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	The consequences of this bill involve law personnel and what they are forbidden to do. There is no financial obligation or impact.	3
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	The entire House of Representatives voted 'Yea' on this bill. The Senate had 1 'Nay'.	2
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	This bill <a href="#">reduces stress on pregnant inmates</a> and follows recommended medical guidelines. <a href="#">Practices like these</a> can prevent induced stress and complications during childbirth and should continue to be implemented in coming decades.	Positive



**Sexual Extortion Bill (SB 9)**

Closes a loophole around prosecution for sexual extortion of minors. Prosecution for inappropriate sexual conduct had been hindered because ‘consent for care’ had been given to supervisory or disciplinary personnel, practitioner psychotherapists, correctional facility officers, school faculty, and others.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	Senate Bill 9 protects all underage minors from sexual extortion and inappropriate sexual contact by those in a position of power over them. This extends protections and increases the ability to prosecute wrongdoing.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	This legislation extends the legal protections of minors. By outlining more specific situations that are considered sexual extortion this legislation can protect more minors from improper sexual conduct by adults. It eliminates “consent or coercion” as defenses for people in a position of power over minors.	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Sexual abuse and predatory relationships are detrimental to all age groups. For adolescents and minors it can lead to <a href="#">depression, shame, eating disorders, anxiety, relationship problems</a> , all which affect quality of life and fulfilling full potential.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	There is no financial burden aside from the potential for an increased number of court cases. Fines and conviction of misdemeanors and felonies may be collected in disciplinary proceedings.	3
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	The full Senate voted ‘Yea’ and 2 voters in the House voted ‘Nay’.	2
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	<a href="#">Closing the ‘loopholes’</a> of statutory rape laws allows for more convictions in these cases. By <a href="#">establishing harsher punishments</a> , predators may be discouraged, minors can have safer relationships, and more cases of psychological and sexual abuse can be addressed.	Positive

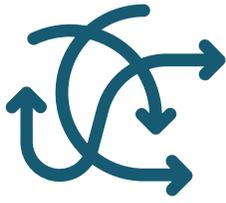


**Trauma Scene Cleanup (SB 153)**

**Bill Failed**

Regulates a comprehensive cleanup of crime scenes by law enforcement officers, agencies, and cleanup crews. Violations and penalties are given to unlawful handling of pathogens, infectious material, biomedical waste, pathological waste, and improper crime scene preservation.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	This bill provided more regulation and accountability for crime scene officials and cleanup companies at a trauma scene. <a href="#">Forensic science has received negative press and its use and regulation in law enforcement needs to be updated to prevent wrongful convictions.</a>	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	All Georgians are potential victims of a traumatic crime that results in a crime scene. Passing this legislation impacts all constituents equally.	3
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Crime scene investigators at the site of a crime scene must be thorough and careful with their collection and preservation of evidence that will be forwarded to a forensic scientist to investigate. Unprofessional conduct can compromise this evidence, cause further trauma to victims, and result in wrongful convictions. The current lack of forensic science regulation leads to confusing and unscientific evidence being used in criminal prosecutions.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	According to the governor, this legislation did not provide a proper financial evaluation and would be unrealistically costly.	0
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	A number of Senators and Representatives opposed this bill. With 13 ‘Nays’ from the House and 4 ‘Nays’ from the Senate, opposition was mainly from Republicans. <a href="#">Governor Kemp vetoed this bill on the grounds of inadequate monetary policy review.</a>	1
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	If this legislation had been implemented, this would have promoted forensic professionalism, trustworthiness, and biosafety. This is beneficial to both victims of crimes and those accused of the crime.	Positive



**Dyslexia Bill (SB 48)**

Supports a revitalized learning environment to support students in pre-kindergarten through second grade with dyslexia. Georgia’s Department of Education will handle oversight.

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
<b>Impact</b>	Dyslexia interventions for children, especially those just learning to read, are important to ensure that children do not fall behind their classmates.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	This bill reaches children with dyslexia who are in kindergarten through grade two. While <a href="#">reaching children during formative educational years</a> , it does not provide support after grade two, and only reaches those in public schools.	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	<a href="#">While there are no cures for learning disabilities, their effects can often be mitigated by early interventions.</a> Reaching children while they are learning to read prevents those with dyslexia from falling behind their peers.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	The State Board of Education and Department of Education are responsible for implementing programs to support children with dyslexia. This includes informational handbooks and assistance programs. There is no mention of financial support in this bill. Local school boards will have to figure out how to pay for this program, which may decrease its implementation and efficacy.	1
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	There has been minimal opposition (2 ‘Nays’) between the House and Senate.	2
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	<a href="#">Early intervention for children with learning disabilities</a> has been shown to be effective in starting kids out on a positive learning trajectory.	Positive



**Cardiac Arrest Prevention Bill (SB 60)**

Named for two student athletes who died of cardiac arrest, this bill mandates twice-a-year informational meetings at each public, private, and charter middle- and high-school to train student athletes, parents/guardians, and official school personnel in recognizing the early warning signs for cardiac arrest and learning hands-only CPR.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	This bill relates to educating students, especially <a href="#">student athletes</a> , about cardiac arrest warning signs and provides information on appropriate steps to take in a medical emergency.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	This bill reaches student athletes in public, private, and charter schools. It does not reach those that are homeschooled.	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	<a href="#">Incorporating cardiac arrest awareness and CPR training</a> has been recommended by the American Heart Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	The Department of Education is responsible for developing guidelines and other relevant materials for students. Educational videos are available at no cost to the state. There is no mention of who will financially support this program. Local school boards will have to figure out how to pay for this program.	1
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	All members of the General Assembly unanimously supported this bill.	3
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	Students will learn CPR and health awareness – promoting positive application of science.	Positive



**Computer Science Curriculum (SB 108)**

Requires computer science courses to be a part of middle and high school curriculum for all schools in Georgia. These courses include virtual e-learning environments. This curriculum will be introduced in phases every school year. Grants will pay for teacher's educational development skills.

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
<b>Impact</b>	Computer science is a life skill for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century. This bill provides choices for multiple different high school and middle school courses and mandates their availability to all Georgia students.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	Currently, less than 0.5% of high school graduates take a computer science course. <a href="#">Thousands of computer science jobs are unfulfilled</a> . This bill <a href="#">provides education access to children in grades 6 through 12</a> in Georgia public and virtual schools. It does not address private school curriculum.	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	This bill has the <a href="#">support of the Computer Science community and education community</a> . <a href="#">The Georgia Department of Education and Computer Science for Georgia are jointly working on the curriculum</a> .	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	Implementing new curriculum is expensive. This legislation provides grants to help teachers receive comprehensive training for computer science instruction, removing the burden from local school districts.	2
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	There were 3 'Nays' between the House and Senate.	2
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	<a href="#">Learning computer science fundamentals</a> is an important life skill, may open doors to technical professions, and creates a greater understanding of how technology works. <a href="#">By 2026 there will be 3.5 Million computing-related jobs available</a> .	Positive



**Waste Management (HB 220)**

This bill extended the sunset for the Hazardous Waste and Solid Waste Trust Funds from 2019 to 2022; however, it reduced fees from \$0.75 to \$0.51 per ton of hazardous waste disposal and \$1 to \$0.37 per tire. These fees fuel the Trust Funds which are used to clean up contaminated sites and tire dumps. [Many of these fees have been diverted in the past five years and there is no specifics about fee redirection in this bill.](#)

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	Positive impact if implemented properly. This bill is part of efforts <a href="#">to limit hazardous waste</a> across Georgia. Fines and fees for hazardous waste and tires enable clean-up, remediation and proper disposal. Reducing the fees and not properly allocating funds hinders this mission.	Positive or Negative
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	This bill applies broadly to personnel in waste management professions and tire distributors within the state of Georgia. It indirectly affects marginalized communities that often live near polluting industries and sites. <a href="#">Poor environment quality has a detrimental impact on health, trapping people in cycle of poverty.</a>	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Restrictions and fines discourage harmful disposal practices. Prohibiting poor disposal and removal of hazardous waste has positive effects on the environment and the communities around these sites.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	With the collection of monies by fining violators of hazardous waste, solid waste, and tires disposal, the Hazardous Waste Trust Fund is self-sustaining. Therefore, the ‘parent’ division, Georgia Environmental Protection Division, does not need to collect directly from the state. However, these funds are being diverted to other uses, and thus, the funds are not being spent as intended.	2
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	The Senate had full support while the House presented 3 ‘Nays’.	2
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	By <a href="#">regulating disposal through surcharges</a> and collecting fines, this bill should lead to reduced waste and benefit the health and future of communities living near these areas. However, by reducing fees and fines, and by diverting funds, there is low potential for long-term positive impact.	Negative



**Conservation Bill (HB 445)**

The Shore Protection Act's aims to protect the sand sharing system (which includes dunes, beaches, shoals, and sandbars) from human activity. This bill updates Georgia's Shore Protection Act by creating a uniform 25-ft regulated zone along all of Georgia's shoreline. The previous distance was a patchwork of confusing regulations.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	<a href="#">Positive and Negative</a> . The bill clarifies that no development can occur within 25 ft of the shore-line, making the law easier to interpret. There was no period for public comment, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources was not consulted.	Positive and Negative
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	This legislation will impact Georgia residents in barrier islands, and those who use the beach. Infrastructure along the shorefront directly affects the impact of and resiliency to severe storms.	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Providing a barrier between development and the ocean <a href="#">protects from erosion and storm loss</a> . The Shore Protection Act protects residents in barrier islands from the damaging effects of storms and erosion. There is no scientific evidence that shows that the 25-ft protected zone is sufficient to prevent the impacts from human and natural activities. No information about <a href="#">current shore erosion</a> was used.	No
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	The threat of increased hurricane activity may end up costing Georgia resources both now and after future natural disasters.	0
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	House bill 445 was hotly contested between the House and Senate committees. The House had 75 'Nays' and the Senate had 21 'Nays,' with Democrats primarily discouraging the passage of this legislation.	0
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	By not basing the zoning on scientific study, Georgia is basing legislation on past-performance. This update to the Shore Protection Act does little to protect our future needs that arise from the changing weather patterns, such as rising sea levels and increased hurricane activity.	Negative



**Firefighting Foam Bill (HB 458)**

Prohibits the use of Class B fire-fighting foam that contains fluorinated organic chemicals (PFAS class). There are two exceptions: for use during emergency fire occurrences and for training and testing purposes in a facility that can prevent chemical releases into the environment.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	This bill prohibits use of Class B firefighting foams that contain hazardous chemicals.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	This bill has little immediate effect because it has an exception for use during a fire. As equipment is replaced, it will phase out use of the hazardous foam. All <a href="#">persons or property that require Class B foam</a> including airports, railcars, train stations, tanker trucks, chemical manufacturing plants, and commercials installations and properties are effected equally by this legislation. Residential living requires Class A foam.	3
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	<a href="#">Class B foam containing fluorinated organic chemicals</a> is extremely dangerous and is associated with several different types of cancers. <a href="#">PFAS class chemical are not currently regulated by the EPA, these chemical substances are currently being studied as part of USEPA's PFAS Action Plan.</a>	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	There are no additional costs to individuals. Industries that require Class B foam will have to replace their Class B equipment when it expires. This expense is part of their regular maintenance budget.	3
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	The Senate unanimously passed this legislation while the House committee had one 'Nay'.	3
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	This bill initializes the phasing-out of Class B foam. It will reduce health and environmental impacts from PFAS exposure.	Positive



**Mariculture Development (HB 501)**

Enables cultivated oyster farming by allowing the creation of oyster farms with a valid permit in designated areas. Growing areas must be approved by the National Shellfish Sanitation Program and abide by wildlife research and management rules. Conservation rangers may patrol, enter, and collect environmental samples within the premises of the land. Oysters are currently only wildly harvested in Georgia.

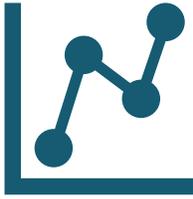
CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	Oyster farms have the potential to positively impact the Georgia economy and environment by allowing local fishman to increase their harvest of oysters, and local businesses to serve local oysters instead of buying them from nearby states. This bill is <a href="#">controversial in that it is not specific in the regulation of equipment, the distribution of licenses, and summer harvest.</a>	Positive or Negative
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	The <a href="#">distribution of farming licenses is by lottery</a> (line 336-337 of the bill gives preference to residents). This has been the source of controversy. Local fishman are worried that out-of-state or large conglomerates will dominate the industry, hurting local farmers	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	<a href="#">Oysters help filter our waters and keep them clean</a> and oyster farming has been proven to be sustainable. <a href="#">Conservation groups are typically in favor of oyster farming</a> and metrics around environmental impact and harvesting are to be set. This bill bans harvest in the summer months, which is when oysters may harbor unsafe bacteria; however, neighboring <a href="#">South Carolina and Florida allow harvest under set food safety guidelines.</a>	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	There is little upfront cost to Georgia and Georgians. The long-term impact on Georgia finances is not clear due to confusion surrounding enforcement.	1
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	This bill was greatly contested in both the House and Senate with Democrats making up most of the ‘Nays’. The House committee had 60 ‘Nays’ and the Senate had 19 ‘Nays.’	0
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	Conservationists and oyster harvesters support oyster farming. It is up to Georgians to keep a watchful eye on enforcement of this legislation.	Positive or Negative



## Streamlining Wireless Facilities and Antennas Act (SB 66)

Creates statewide regulations for all cellphone networks to develop 5G technology towers across Georgia. Companies will pay fees to install wireless transmitters and mobilize increased 5G connectivity all over the state.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	This ruling applies to the wireless communications industry so they can develop 5G Small Cell Wireless Antennas to establish faster cell phone connections. The development of ‘smart cities’ in public spaces, and improved connectivity are in general positive.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	While an <a href="#">overwhelming majority of cell towers</a> are placed all over the state, the placement of 5G within various rural counties may be overlooked if service providers decide not to upgrade services there.	2
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	The implementation of this bill will <a href="#">enable cell phone companies to roll out 5G connectivity</a> for the public. Metro cities can work on further 5G applications such as health sensors, live game guides, or virtual reality improvements that are based on technological improvements in upcoming years. Placing these cells will lead to greater technological innovation in the scientific field.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	There is no explicit burden on Georgia taxpayers; <a href="#">however this bill will have personal costs to consumers</a> when they update their phones for compatibility reasons. It is the responsibility of wireless technology companies to pay additional fees to the state in order to place their wireless cells for 5G.	3
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	The Senate unanimously passed this bill and the House of Representatives presented 3 ‘Nays’.	2
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	Establishing the 5th generation wireless technology system will allow for greater connectivity and increase technical benefits. There is no validity to the claim that 5G is a <a href="#">health hazard</a> .	Positive



## Strategic Integrated Data System

### Bill (HB 197)

Establishes a Strategic Integrated Data System to aggregate health data and summary statistics. This de-identified data would be available to state agencies, lawmakers, academia, and public and private researchers. This enables aggregate reporting on health trends such as opioid deaths, COVID-19 cases, and chronic conditions.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	<a href="#">The goal of this bill</a> is to have data packaged and available for major stakeholders to use in making public health decisions, obtaining health grants and funding, and allocating health resources. This does not provide personal biodata about a constituent; privacy has been accounted for.	Positive
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	By developing a repository of data, the Georgia Data Analytic Center, state agencies can incorporate and analyze data from all Georgians. This will help to more effectively allocate resources to where they are needed.	3
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Aggregate data is very important for studies and to monitor public health crises (including Covid-19). By compiling statistics into one database, Georgia addresses a data 'gap' and prevents weaker limited analyses caused by inconsistent and incomplete sources.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	Establishing the Georgia Data Analytic Center will be expensive and is the responsibility of the Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. According to the bill, this center was supposed to have been made by Sept. 1, 2019, but there has been no mention of development.	0
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	The Senate had no opposition. The House of Representatives had slight opposition (22 'Nays' between Democrats and Republicans).	2
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	As Covid-19 has shown, accurate statistics, and complete data are needed to allow state agencies to focus on rapid and effective policy making. This database will enable transparent, data-based decisions when implementing future policies.	Positive



## Motorized Mobility Act (HB 454)

Regulates the [permitting and use of electric commuter bikes](#) “e-bikes.” Defines classes of e-bikes, outlines operational use and safety rules for different classes of bikes, and enables local governments outline where and how different classes of bikes can be used. The newly-developed Georgia Scenic Trails System will also administer the development of future trails and lanes.

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT	SCORE
<b>Impact</b>	E-bikes and scooters appeared quickly and without regulations. This bill defines what an e-bike is and enables local governments to regulate where and how they are used. Designated spaces and safe operating procedures are needed for motorized bike and scooter traffic to increase public safety. This bill may cause friction between e-bikers and local governments depending on the type of use restrictions imposed.	Depends on Local Regulations
<b>Reach of Legislation</b>	All individuals in Georgia are impacted by this bill.	3
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	The purpose of this bill was to define e-bikes and scooters so they could be regulated. <a href="#">Safe uses of these vehicles</a> as well as protective headgear can lead to further innovation and safety procedures that prevent unnecessary accidents and injuries.	Yes
<b>Financial Feasibility</b>	The budget for local regulations and enforcement will be on a local level. Georgia’s Department of Natural Resources is responsible for enacting Georgia Scenic Trails System. This system will be responsible for developing eight different trail ways across Georgia alongside the Department of Transportation. Funding of this is unclear.	1
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	While the Senate had a nearly unanimous vote (1 ‘Nay’), the House had 20 ‘Nays’ which primarily came from Republicans.	1
<b>Future Outcomes</b>	E-bikes and scooters encourage people forgo cars, reducing carbon emissions. There is public debate as to their safety and use. Use regulations have the potential to continue their use while mitigating backlash. Georgians must keep a watchful eye on local regulations as they are enacted.	Positive or Negative

# Printable Rubric

Below we present a sample rubric to use when evaluating legislation.

Criteria	Variables			
<b>Impact</b> <b>Is the bill fair and reasonable?</b>	Positive Yes, this is fair and reasonable. Here's why....	Negative No, this is not fair and reasonable. Here's why....		
<b>Reach</b> <b>Does it reach its target audience?</b>	0 No impact on target audience.	1 Impacts narrow segment.	2 Impacts majority; exceptions.	3 Affects all target audience equally
<b>Scientific Merit</b> <b>Does it utilize scientific research accurately?</b>	YES Yes, this does follow scientific research accurately. Here's why....		NO No, this does not present scientific research accurately. Here's why....	
<b>Financial Feasibility</b> <b>Is it financially feasible? or does this have burdensome finances (higher taxes, future costs, etc)?</b>	0 Extremely high costs	1 Expensive but can be done	2 Slight financial burden	3 No financial burden
<b>Political Feasibility</b> <b>Level of opposition and partisan disagreement.</b>	0 Significant opposition (hotly contested).	1 Moderate opposition (or split along party lines).	2 Minimal opposition (few dissenting votes).	3 Complete consensus (zero 'Nays').
<b>Future Outcomes</b> <b>Does it disseminate proper science information to the public?</b>	Positive Yes, this will demonstrate proper scientific understandings amongst the public. Here's why....		Negative No, this will not demonstrate proper scientific understandings amongst the public. Here's why....	