



March 14, 2015

The General Assembly recessed Friday after completing 30 legislative days and passing the deadline for bills to clear their House of origin. The legislature will remain in recess until next Wednesday when they convene for legislative days 31 - 33. They will meet Monday through Friday the following week, with sine die adjournment set for April 2.

Presumption bill moves -- but does not crossover.

The House Industry and Labor Committee passed a substitute version of the bill create a presumption that certain diseases in fire-fighters are work related, but the bill remained on the House General Calendar at the crossover deadline. HB 216 will carry over to the 2016 legislative session.

HB 216 originally provided for a rebuttable presumption that high blood pressure, heart disease, respiratory disease, and some cancers in fire fighters are compensable under workers compensation. The substitute deletes high blood pressure and heart disease, but adds AIDS and hepatitis to the list of diseases presumed to be work-related.

Meanwhile, the Senate held SB 29, a companion bill to the original HB 216, but passed a joint resolution to create a study committee on peace officer and fire fighter occupational disease. SR 282 now goes to the House where it will likely be referred to House Industry and Labor Committee. The resolution proposes a nine person study committee -- three from the House of Representatives, three from the Senate, and three from the State Board of Workers Compensation.

Regardless of whether the study committee resolution is approved by the House, SB 29 and HB 216 will be eligible for consideration next year. GWCA will be working over the interim to oppose any legislation creating a presumption that diseases of life are work-related.

Bill Status Report

HB 412, the State Board's bill addressing the exclusive remedy decision in *Pitts v. City of Atlanta*, passed the House without dissent last week. Senate Insurance and Labor Chairman Charlie Bethel of Dalton says his committee will consider the measure soon. GWCA is working for passage of this legislation to correct the troublesome exception to exclusive remedy created by the court decision.

HB 536 was introduced too late in the session to pass this year, but will carry over to 2016. Introduced by Rep. Chad Nimmer, vice Chairman of the House Industry and Labor Committee, HB 536 would require dismissal of stale workers compensation claims after two years, instead of the current five-year statute.

HB 212 passed the House and was referred to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. It would clarify that pain clinics cannot prescribe or dispense controlled substances unless there is a physician, an authorized physician assistant, or an authorized advanced practice registered nurse on site.

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Notice -- *GWCA is sponsoring an employer roundtable in Carnesville on April 9 to give employers in northeast Georgia a chance to ask questions of workers comp professionals. Information is available at gwca.info. You can also register to attend by calling Sharon Dunn at 770-720-4087 or John Poole at 706-356-2267. Or if you would like to be one of the expert professionals, let us know that as well. The event is co-sponsored by three local chambers of commerce, and **it's free**.*



Save the dates April 29 - May 1 for the GWCA Spring Conference at Callaway Gardens. Go to gwca.info for conference information and registration materials.