ACCG Policy Council's 2025 Legislative Agenda Items

Truck Weight Increase/LMIG
ACCG opposes legislation that increases allowable weight limits on local roads and bridges, as current limits are at maximum capacity. The increase in truck weight limits contributes to the rapid deterioration of local road and bridge infrastructure and increases the severity of accidents, which negatively affect the movement of freight and people throughout Georgia. ACCG opposes the removal of the sunset date. However, should the General Assembly choose to extend the sunset date, ACCG will continue to work closely with the General Assembly to ensure additional funding is allocated to LMIG, LRA, public safety, and other state programs, with no match requirement, to help support local government roads and bridges. This funding should ensure equivalent levels of paving as state roads and provide appropriate signage to assist with driver safety on roads traveled by these trucks.

Increase Public Works Bidding Threshold
Currently, Georgia law requires local governments to bid out public works projects that have an estimated value of $100,000 or more. As this amount has not been changed in more than two decades, inflation and material costs have increased substantially, and many vendors elect not to go through the time and effort to submit bids for small projects, ACCG asks the General Assembly to raise this bid threshold from $100,000 to $250,000. This will save counties time and money by not having to bid out smaller projects and should increase competition among vendors who otherwise may not be willing to go through the bid process.

Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank
ACCG supports the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank (GTIB), a revolving loan and grant fund, and urges the Georgia General Assembly to increase funding for this program through appropriations so it remains a viable financing tool to meet the transportation needs of local governments.

Implementation of Next Generation 911 System
A well-functioning 911 system is a critical piece of helping to ensure the public safety of all Georgia's citizens. According to the Georgia Emergency Communication Authority (GECA), 911 was originally developed to enable voice calls from traditional landline telephone networks, which were tied to specific address points. They believe that since more than 85% of all 911 calls now originate from wireless devices, there is a need to update the 911 network to an IP-based network. The system change is referred to as Next Generation 911. ACCG supports GECA's effort to study what infrastructure, personnel, training, and funding is needed to move Georgia to a statewide Next Generation 911 system.

ACCG encourages the Governor and General Assembly to appropriate funds to build the infrastructure for a statewide Next-Generation 911 system. Further, we encourage the Governor and General Assembly to grant GECA the proper regulatory authority to administer and implement Next-Generation 911 in Georgia.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

The EMS community provides the first hands-on response to Georgians in need, whether provided by a fire or EMS department, a hospital-based service, or private providers who are the EMS zone holder. In some locations, a hospital-based service or private provider provides EMS services under contract with the EMS zone holder. Counties must invest in this service and its personnel in order to provide the highest quality of care. ACCG urges the General Assembly to:

- Reimburse licensed ambulance services at the Medicaid rates, including transportation payment for the first 10 miles, and
- Increase the EMS Medicaid rate to the rural and urban Medicare rate.

Enhance Annexation Dispute Resolution Process

In recent years, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has failed to fulfill its statutory obligation in appointing several annexation arbitration panels to hear annexation disputes. ACCG urges the General Assembly to assist DCA in appointing these panels through changes in statute that may include:

- Raising the per diem of panelists,
- Allowing city/county managers and administrators to serve as panelists,
- Changing the 15-calendar day deadline for DCA to appoint a panel to 15 business days, then allow cities/counties five (5) business days to exercise their respective strikes, and
- Providing that, if a city/county does not exercise its strikes, DCA will randomly select two panelists.

House Bill 581 (2024) Cleanup

House Bill 581 was an omnibus 2024 property tax and sales tax reform bill which creates a floating homestead exemption for all local governments. ACCG seeks possible cleanups in the bill, including:

- **Acreage Limits** – The statutory definition for homestead properties applies the exemption to the house and the immediately surrounding land, although an acreage limit is not defined. Many local homestead exemptions limit the exemption to the home and up to five (5) acres of immediately surrounding land. ACCG asks the General Assembly to provide acreage limits for homestead properties.
- **Estimated Roll-Back Rate** – House Bill 581 introduced the concept of an estimated roll-back rate to be set by the local governments and certified to the tax commissioner. In practice, the tax assessors will need this information first since it needs to be included on the notice of assessment. ACCG asks the General Assembly to require that this information be shared with the tax assessors in addition to the tax commissioners.
- **Transfer of Exemption to Spouse** – Tax assessors throughout the state were surveyed and could interpret what happens in the event of the death of a spouse differently. If there is a floating homestead exemption on a property and one spouse dies, but both are on the property deed, then the surviving spouse should be able to continue the existing floating homestead exemption. ACCG asks the General Assembly to clarify this in statute.

State Water and Drought Management

With water quality and quantity issues affecting all 159 Georgia counties, ACCG supports the continued development and implementation of Georgia's comprehensive statewide water management plan (Water Plan). Notwithstanding this, ACCG recognizes that each county has unique economic and environmental circumstances, and there can be no "one size fits all" solution to these complex water quality and quantity issues.

To equitably ensure the long-term success of the Water Plan, ACCG urges the Governor and General Assembly to establish a constitutionally dedicated source of funding to successfully implement statewide water planning; assess planning performance; and conduct ongoing water quantity and quality assessments, data compilation, and regional planning development and administration for future rounds of statewide water planning. Until such time, ACCG urges the Governor to recommend and General Assembly to appropriate adequate funding to implement the plan, utilizing the existing Regional Water Planning Council structure.

Title Ad Valorem Tax (TAVT) -- **Valuation of Used and Trade-In Vehicles**

TAVT is calculated on a vehicle's taxable value, which is determined by establishing the vehicle's fair market value, subtracting the value of any trade-in vehicle from that amount, and then multiplying that difference by the applicable tax rate. For new vehicles, the fair market value is the actual sale price of the vehicle. Based on changes in 2019, the fair market value for most used cars sold by dealers is the actual sales price; however, the fair market value of a seller-financed used vehicle is the value listed in the Department of Revenue (DOR) assessment manual. Under current statute, "trade-in value" is the value of the traded-in vehicle as stated in the bill of sale. For seller-financed used vehicles, the statute's failure to consider the actual sale price of the vehicle caps the fair market value at the amount listed in the assessment manual (even if the negotiated sale price is higher, which is likely the case in many circumstances). The current system invites dealers to inflate the reported value of trade-ins associated with sales of seller-financed used vehicles to eliminate most or all the taxable value of the purchased vehicle.

In addition, there are multiple ways to abuse the existing system for temporary operating permits (TOPs) and dealer plates. Frequently, these abuses include out-of-state companies printing Georgia TOPs and Georgia companies falsely registering as automobile dealers to get two dealer tags, which can be used to avoid TAVT. ACCG supports curbing these abuses through legislation, so everyone pays their fair share.

Annual Audit Compliance

Local governments are required to complete and submit an annual audit to the Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA) to maintain qualified local government status and eligibility to receive state grants. Dozens of counties have been out of compliance in recent years, largely due to factors outside of the county's control. Examples include noncompliance from constitutional officers, auditor backlog, and auditor turnover. ACCG asks the General Assembly to allow counties an extension on maintaining their qualified local government status and completing their audits if the auditor signs and submits an affidavit stating that the delay is due to no fault of the county government.

Environmental Program Financing

Effective environmental programs require three key elements: an appropriate legislative base, a solid implementation plan, and a stable funding mechanism. In this regard, ACCG:

- Urges the Governor and General Assembly to continue to increase and support stable funding levels for state agencies responsible for regulatory enforcement and for those agencies that provide valuable technical assistance to local governments, and
- Urges the Governor and the General Assembly to continue to support stable funding levels for Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) programs, which are invaluable for assisting local governments with building environmental infrastructure and funding for maintaining and mitigating emerging contaminants.

Court Reporters

Court reporters are currently regulated by the Judicial Council of Georgia and are compensated in accordance with a fee schedule that is approved by the Judicial Council. The fee schedule was developed and implemented at a time when all court reporters were considered contract employees. Over the last 15 to 20 years, many court reporters have become full-time county employees with benefits and salary, but they continue to charge the county the per page fee for transcripts. At ACCG's urging, the Judicial Council created a committee to study the practice of court reporting to make recommendations as to needed changes within the system to better align with current practice and provide transparency, accountability, and predictability in budgeting for court reporting services. Recommendations were adopted and ACCG strongly urges the Judicial Council of Georgia to enforce those new rules governing court reporting.

ACCG also supports legislation that authorizes the use of digital court reporting in courts, and for the Judicial Council to establish rules and regulations for the use of such systems. This proposal is aimed at lowering the personnel cost of courts by offering digital transcription and recording services. ACCG encourages the General Assembly to provide funding for digital recording systems.