

2015 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA



Support the Solar Power Free-Market Financing and Property Rights Act

In other states, American homes, businesses, churches, schools and military bases are given the freedom to save money through financing options that reduce the upfront cost of solar installations. Private investment in rooftop solar reduces the need for Georgia Power to build expensive traditional power plants and transmission infrastructure, thereby helping keep rates low for all Georgians. **We support this bill because it would clear the way for Georgians to choose solar energy and to choose the financing option that makes that energy investment the most affordable.**

Oppose legislation that would permit abusive debt settlement practices

In 2013, a bill put forth by the Debt Settlement industry was voted down overwhelmingly in Committee, but a new version (HB 1154) was introduced at the end of last session. Specifically, the bill would remove the current fee cap on debt adjustment services, which is currently set at 7.5% of the amount paid to creditors. We will continue to work against passage of a bill that puts consumers at risk. **Georgia Watch opposes the debt settlement model contained in this legislation because it would permit UNLIMITED debt settlement fees. This model exploits the desperation of financially strained families, typically leaving them even deeper in debt.**

Support closing the coverage gap through Medicaid expansion

Georgia Watch believes that accepting the federal tax dollars available for Medicaid expansion is critical for Georgia's most vulnerable healthcare consumers, and we call on Governor Nathan Deal and our Legislature to accept this funding and close the coverage gap. **Nearly half a million Georgians would benefit from Medicaid expansion, and Georgia stands to lose billions of dollars in federal funding and economic activity if the state does not expand.**

Oppose nursing home binding arbitration bill

We understand a form of legislation we opposed in 2013 (SB 202) might be introduced in 2015. The proposed legislation would further strengthen the power of nursing home arbitration agreements and explicitly bind residents to these agreements in cases of medical malpractice; it would also allow for a wide array of individuals other than the nursing home resident to enter into such agreements on the resident's behalf. **This bill could deny Georgia's most vulnerable citizens, our parents and grandparents, their most basic constitutional rights with proposed wholesale changes to the adjudication of claims against nursing homes and the constitutional rights of Georgians who reside in long-term care facilities.**

Support a bill to protect our seniors

Senior citizens are increasingly becoming victims of financial fraud and abuse. **Georgia Watch supports protecting seniors by making needed improvements to existing law, including allowing fraud cases to be tried in the jurisdiction where the elderly victim resides and permitting the prosecution of criminal enterprises that prey on the elderly under the RICO statute.**