



LEVY  
SIBLEY  
FOREMAN  
& SPEIR, LLC

ATLANTA - ALBANY - AUGUSTA  
COLUMBUS - MACON - SAVANNAH

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Nathan C. Levy  
[nlevy@lsfslaw.com](mailto:nlevy@lsfslaw.com)  
229-854-4399

Phillip A. Sibley  
[psibley@lsfslaw.com](mailto:psibley@lsfslaw.com)  
478-742-8300

Casey B. Foreman  
[cforeman@lsfslaw.com](mailto:cforeman@lsfslaw.com)  
229-449-7419

Kelly R. Speir  
[kspeir@lsfslaw.com](mailto:kspeir@lsfslaw.com)  
706-728-0896

John D. Blair  
[jblair@lsfslaw.com](mailto:jblair@lsfslaw.com)  
229-854-7141

Brett C. Tyler  
[btyler@lsfslaw.com](mailto:btyler@lsfslaw.com)  
706-987-2487

William R. Merchant  
[bmerchant@lsfslaw.com](mailto:bmerchant@lsfslaw.com)  
706-442-0505

Austin M. Hammock  
[ahammock@lsfslaw.com](mailto:ahammock@lsfslaw.com)  
706-527-0901

Karen J. Gibson  
[kgibson@lsfslaw.com](mailto:kgibson@lsfslaw.com)  
478-960-5178

Paula F. Smith  
[psmith@lsfslaw.com](mailto:psmith@lsfslaw.com)  
770-906-4630

Of Counsel  
R. Napier Murphy  
[nmurphy@lsfslaw.com](mailto:nmurphy@lsfslaw.com)  
478-742-8300

James M. Elliott, Jr.  
[jelliott@lsfslaw.com](mailto:jelliott@lsfslaw.com)  
478-747-3399

## 2019 Legislative Changes Taking Shape

Friends,

Just a very quick note regarding anticipated changes in WC Legislation for 2019. The Legislative Session is in full swing and we are already hearing of some items that will be addressed from the slate of changes provided by the Chairman's Advisory Council. A reminder that all changes would, if passed, go into effect on July 1, 2019.

First, we can anticipate an increase in the maximum rate for TTD from \$575.00 to \$675.00. There is no definitive word on a TPD increase but that would be presumed as well based upon past legislative changes of this type and would approach a cap of \$450.00 anticipated. The last Legislative increase raised the maximum to \$575.00 from \$550.00 in 2016.

Second, we can anticipate there being some manner of legislation to extend the 400 week cap on medical benefits in limited circumstances. This expansion would presumably be provided for certain medical devices and equipment that were provided prior to the expiration of the 400 week cap but that maintain a life span extended outside of the cap. Of course, specifics on the devices and instances where this would apply will become clearer as the session continues.

Finally, it appears that Georgia's Workers' Compensation system is going to be receiving some much needed overhaul in the area of opioids. We are all aware of the opioid crisis that grips the country and the deaths that have occurred as a result of both legal and illegal use of these substances. Georgia certainly bears a large portion of the problems associated with this epidemic and overuse of opioids has been a hot issue from the Board's perspective for greater than three years. This year we can expect some manner of reform in the Workers' Compensation area related to this serious problem which will have a positive impact on both employers and employees alike.

We will certainly do our best to keep you posted as information becomes available on these proposed changes.