



Senate District 15 – Session Update – 2019

Rural Initiatives

I am pleased to report that during week seven, we passed a number of measures aimed at assisting the rural areas of our state where broadband, healthcare and banking access are concerned. Our progress where Rural Legislation is concerned is very meaningful to me personally, as I have talked to many of you living in our rural district areas about the very issues we worked to address over the last couple of years.

Senate Bill 66 would create an avenue for deployment of small cell and 5G technology in public rights-of-way. The bill would allow wireless service providers to install small-cell wireless towers throughout cities to offer greater wireless coverage. Starting in urban areas, this technology would eventually deploy 5G streaming services across the state using small boxes that are attached to utility poles in public area. Allowing small cell wireless technology on a larger scale will further assist economic development across Georgia, while ensuring all citizens have access to the latest in streaming technology.

Fittingly, we passed two measures on Rural Health Day at the Capitol which will assist the 1.7 million citizens living in less populated areas receive healthcare through “telemedicine.” Telemedicine has become more common in recent years and refers to the practice of caring for patients remotely when the provider and patient are not physically present with each other. Modern technology has enabled doctors to consult patients by using HIPAA compliant video-conferencing tools.

Senate Bill 115 would allow doctors who do not practice in Georgia to be granted a telemedicine license through the Georgia Composite Medical Board. This measure will allow more doctors to service Georgia citizens.

Senate Bill 118 would define “telehealth” and redefine “telemedicine” & requires insurance plans to cover telemedicine and telehealth services. This measure will also ensure treatment by requiring insurers to cover telehealth services.

Senate District 15 – Session Update – 2019

Sadly, the closing of many smaller, family banks throughout the state has caused our rural communities to suffer “Banking Deserts.” A Banking desert is an area with inadequate banking services. Especially vulnerable to the issues associated with banking deserts are low-income residents and the elderly. If basic financial services are unavailable, residents become “vulnerable to predatory lenders and pricey check cashers.” We are hoping to alleviate this through Senate Bill 20.

Senate Bill 20 would establish the creation of banking improvement zones in underserved areas, as authorized by the DCA. This “zone” would allow local governments to store funds in the banks at a fixed interest rate that is at or below its two-year CD rate.

I am also pleased to report that last week the House passed House Resolution 214 which will allow the House Rural Development Committee to continue their work for another two years. This is great news as the House and Senate Rural Development Committees have significantly helped us address issues plaguing the less populated areas of our state. As you can see, we have been busy under the Gold Dome! Next week we will continue to work on your behalf, and I will be back with another report. If you need anything at all, please don’t hesitate to contact me at any time. Thank you for the honor of allowing me to serve you before the Georgia General Assembly! Be blessed my friends.