



Senate District 15 — Session Update — 2020

It is always an honor to have distinguished guests in the Capitol. Last Tuesday, I had the privilege of introducing Rev. Dr. J.H. Flakes III as the Chaplain of the Day. He is a dear friend of mine and a warrior of God. He presented a message about perseverance, and what it means to overcome all obstacles with the shield of God in front of you.

Last Monday, the Senate Finance Committee heard the Motor Vehicle Title Loan Act. Senate Bill 329 would authorize the Department of Banking and Finance to license and regulate title pawn companies. By using a person's vehicle for collateral, auto-title loans are able to provide small sums of money to needy borrowers quickly, without the need for a credit check. The loans carry high interest rates into the triple digits, costing borrowers their vehicles plus the balance of any unpaid debt in the event of default. This practice traps the most vulnerable populations in a cycle of debt. SB 329 would allow the state to cap interest rates at 36% annually for auto-title loans in Georgia. We want to protect citizens from falling into a hole of increasing monthly payments because of outrageous interest rates.

The Senate Insurance and Labor Committee passed Senate Bill 412 last Thursday. This legislation will streamline the cancellation process of service contracts for extended warranty. There are only two states left that prohibit a deduction of claims paid from a refund amount when a customer cancels a service contract early: Georgia and Nevada. Additionally, SB 412 would eliminate fraud when claims are made and refunds are provided. It would also permit contracts for the replacement of lost, stolen or inoperable vehicle key fobs and agreements to cover excess damages at the end of a lease. It's inevitable that automobiles will be damaged by potholes, harsh weather conditions and other road conditions. This legislation would protect consumers against unwarranted charges.

Additionally, I am proud that Senate Bill 371 was passed in Chamber on Friday. SB 371, which I had the privilege of cosponsoring, would create the Georgia Freight Railroad Program under the Georgia Department of Transportation. This program would finance rail enhancement projects, including the acquisition or leading of rail tracks. SB 371 aims to reduce some of the traffic congestion on our roads, while also improving the process of moving goods throughout the state.

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As we work through week eight, we will be in Chamber for five days. While these next few weeks will be busy, I believe it is important we take all the time that is necessary to completely vet and debate any legislation voted on. I will continue to keep you updated. If you have any questions, concerns or feedback as we work through this week, please do not hesitate to reach out. I am here to help.