



Senate District 15 – Session Update – 2018

Tuesday, January 16th marked the beginning of what we refer to as, “budget week.” The only thing that we are constitutionally required to do during our 40-day session is pass a balanced budget. While balancing, a budget seems simple enough, when dealing with billions of dollars, it can be quite challenging. House and Senate Appropriations Committees held a series of joint budget hearings throughout the week, which gave us the chance to closely examine Governor Deal’s recommendations. We also heard testimony from various state agencies in need of funding. As our state’s fiscal year begins July 1, we are in the first stages of crafting two budget bills: The full 2019 Fiscal Year budget and the 2018 Amended Fiscal Year budget.

2018 Fiscal Year- Spending Changes

The 2018 budget will be amended to reflect a more accurate estimate of state revenue, accounting for any discrepancies between the projected estimate we passed last year, and actual revenue obtained. Highlighted below are a few of the Governor’s recommendations concerning the 2018 amended budget, which will end June 30 of this year:

- \$102 million in the midterm adjustment to fund k-12 enrollment growth
- \$10.7 million for growth in the Dual Enrollment program
- \$43.6 million for the Indigent Care Trust Fund and Medicaid
- \$25 million to expand runways at 11 airports in Georgia, including rural communities
- \$10 million addition attract jobs and tourism across the state
- \$32.5 million to Safe Georgia initiatives

2019 Full FY Budget

As Georgia’s population continues to grow, so does the need for improved infrastructure. In his State of the State Address last week, the governor announced that the 2019 fiscal year budget proposal is an estimated \$26 billion. The governor listed his funding recommendations, and as expected, education remains a top priority for 2019, receiving approximately 54% of the state’s overall budget. Healthcare, public safety and transportation round out the top four spends as they collectively make up 37% of remaining recommended allocations. Below is a highlight of Governor Deal’s 2019 FY budget proposals:

- \$400 million allocated to “Grow Georgia” efforts, which includes the Departments of Agriculture, Community Affairs, Economic Development and Natural Resources.

(continued on next page)

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2019 FY Proposals continued....

- \$1.9 billion to Transportation improvements and infrastructure
- \$13.9 billion to Education systems- Pre-K through Higher Ed
- \$361.7 million for the Teachers Retirement System
- \$2 billion towards Public Safety and law enforcement initiatives
- \$5.6 billion allocated to Healthcare initiatives, which includes \$23 million towards the Veterans Service Department

What's Next?

Although budget week has technically come to an end, our work is far from over. House Appropriation subcommittees will further study budget proposals, eventually passing portions of the suggested budget out of their respective committees. Following this process, those individually passed budgets will then go before the full House Appropriations Committee. Soon after, the budget will receive a full vote on the House floor. If passed by the House, it then moves over to the Senate, where the process begins all over again. During Senate budget hearings, we will either approve or change House Budget recommendations. If both Chambers agree on the budget, it goes to the Governor's desk for his approval and signature. I will keep you updated as to what portion of the budget is allocated to our district, however, nothing is final until it is signed into law by Governor Deal.

House Bill 159

Last week, the Senate passed our first piece of legislation in the form of House Bill 159. HB 159 would modernize Georgia adoption laws for the first time in 30 years. There were amendments made through the committee process, so we will await to see if the House agrees with our changes. If they do not, a conference Committee will be appointed to work out differences between the House and Senate chambers. Adoption reform is badly needed so I feel confident that we will reach a compromise before the end of our 40 day session.

As always, I will continue to update you on all that is happening under the Gold Dome! Representing the people of our district is such an honor and I grateful that you have given me the opportunity to learn from you, to listen to you and most importantly, to serve you. If you need anything at all, please don't hesitate to contact me anytime.