



Senate District 15 – Session Update – 2019

2019 AFY Budget- House Version

As we are tasked with passing a balanced budget, we must take into consideration differences between projected revenue and actual revenue. Good news for Georgia, projected revenue for 2019 was less than actual revenue gained. This gives us the opportunity to address areas of concern as well as any unexpected growth. Below is a quick highlight on how we allocated your hard-earned tax payer dollars.

- \$10 million for emergency disaster relief assistance to Georgia farmers in counties impacted by Hurricane Michael.
- \$69.4 million to provide school security grants of \$30,000 each for 2,314 school facilities including charter schools, college and career academies, GNETS facilities, and the three state schools.
- \$8.4 million in additional funding the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to expand the Georgia Apex Program, which provides support counselors in high schools for students suffering from mental health issues.
- \$1 million for the Department of Community Health to craft state flexibility options for Georgia's Medicaid Program under the federal waiver program.

Senate Action

Last week, the senate successfully passed this term's first piece of legislation, Senate Bill 25. This bill clarifies when the driver of a vehicle needs to stop, or not stop, upon encountering a stopped school bus. As public safety is priority for us, it was easy for the senate body to come together on this issue with unanimous, bipartisan support.

I also successfully filed my first bill as the primary sponsor last week. Senate Bill 54, known as the 'Georgia Lottery for Veterans Act,' would require that the Georgia Lottery Corporation offer one or more games to benefit veterans. The bill stipulates that the deposit of proceeds go into the general fund, with the creation of a special account to be appropriated for veterans' programs. Our Veterans have sacrificed a great deal to ensure we are able to enjoy the freedoms and liberties afforded to us as United States citizens. This legislation would assist our efforts in trying to make sure these heroes are provided the services they have more than earned and deserve. The bill has received bipartisan support and has been assigned to the Senate Finance Committee. I will keep you updated on this bills progress.

Adjournment Resolution

Last week, the General Assembly also adopted our final adjournment resolution that sets our schedule for the remainder of the 2019 legislative session. Legislative Day 40 will take place on Tuesday, April 2. Now that we have set our deadline, the hurried pace will continue to increase. We will aggressively work to ensure that we tackle issues of most importance for the betterment of our great state.

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Rural Georgia Jobs and Growth Act

Late Wednesday, legislation was introduced which would allow for pari-mutuel wagering on horse racing. The Rural Georgia Jobs and Growth Act was introduced in hopes of creating jobs in rural Georgia with the state legalization of pari-mutuel horse racing. According to an economic impact study conducted by the Lewis Group and the Georgia Horse Racing Coalition, horse racing could generate \$1.2 billion worth of small businesses, taxes and new revenues for education initiatives for Georgia with 91% of the projected economic value affecting rural communities in Georgia.

Under the bill would be the establishment of the Georgia Horse Racing Commission to regulate facilities where pari-mutuel wagering on horse racing is allowed. Further, the bill limits that only three equestrian facility licenses may be issued in Georgia and that those licensed are located within 50 miles of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Each facility must have a minimum investment of \$250 million and include a minimum investment of \$125 million with any additional equestrian facility. If passed by the General Assembly, Georgia citizens would have the final say on whether to approve the constitutional amendment to allow pari-mutuel wagering during the 2020 election cycle.