



## Senate District 15 — Legislative Update — Agriculture - 2016

It is no secret that Georgia's Agricultural industry is key to our state's economic wellbeing. Here in Senate District 15 we have some of the largest, top producing farms in the state! In fact, Agriculture is Georgia's largest and oldest industry and contributes over \$70 billion annually to our state economy. In fact, one in seven Georgians work in agriculture, forestry or related fields. According to USDA Georgia farmers currently operate over 40,000 farms, which encompass approximately 9.3 million acres of land. Although nicknamed, "The Peach State", Georgia is also ranked as top producers in chicken, blueberries, peanuts and pecans. In order to protect the well being of our AG Industry, we make sure that legislation and sound policy on the state level is passed each year to benefit our Georgia farms.

The Georgia General Assembly passed numerous pieces of legislation and budget items to ensure our farm communities have the tools they need to succeed. Below are a few items that we passed last session for the benefit of our states agriculture industry.

### **Agriculture Legislation**

**HB 579-** Allows the use of farm vehicles (including four-wheelers, golf carts, etc.) on the public roadways when used for agricultural pursuits and adorned with appropriate "slow moving vehicle" emblem. This bill will help aide our farmers when driving from farm to farm.

**HB 1030-** Known as The Georgia Seed Commission bill was passed with support from the Georgia Department of Agriculture. This proposal amends the eligibility requirements of those appointed to the Georgia Seed Development Commission to include those involved in production, conditioning, or marketing of crops, seed, turf grass, or horticultural plants. This measure will help increase participation on the Commission and bring additional perspective of other experts within the industry.

**HB 840-** Last year we passed legislation making great strides to control feral hogs. However, we found a gap in the law dealing with the restriction of feral hog transportation. The new law provides an updated definition of 'feral hog' to close this gap and achieve the original intent of the feral hog transportation provision.

**HB 779-** Drones will continue to be up for discussion as this technology continues to become more popular. This bill provides regulations governing drone use supplementing the federal regulations enforced by the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA), and provides protections for private property and privacy. The bill focuses on regulations of drones used by law enforcement and state agencies. The bill also establishes the Georgia Unmanned Aircraft Systems Commission, intended to provide support, guidance, and assistance in developing rules of use while fostering an environment conducive to business and promoting the advancement of the technology.

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As a huge supporter of the Ag community, I am proud of all we do to support the farmers in our state. You can learn more about additional agricultural bills by visiting the Georgia Farm Bureau website. Our farm communities do so much for Georgia and I will do everything in my power to ensure they have the support they need in order to be successful. As always, it is a true pleasure to serve you and if you ever need anything at all, please let me know. Thank you for allowing me to represent your needs in Atlanta and I look forward to seeing you as I continue to make my way around our district. God bless you and may God continue to bless the great state of Georgia!