



Senate District 15 — Session Update — Week One - 2017

Monday, January 9th was exciting, as legislators from across the state made their way to the Capitol to mark the beginning of 154th Legislative Session of the Georgia General Assembly. It was great to see my legislative colleagues and friends, as we discussed plans to move our state forward. On Monday, all members of the Senate and House were sworn into office and soon after we began preparation for the long legislative days ahead. Issues such as healthcare access, education, medical cannabis, casino gaming and public safety initiatives will be up for debate.

State of the State

On Wednesday, January 11th, Gov. Deal delivered his annual State of the State address covering our accomplishments from last year while highlighting hopes for the next. The Governor's agenda includes a 20 percent pay raise for state-level law enforcement officers and newly developed officer training courses; an expansion of veteran assistance programs and healthcare access; expansion of Medicaid and PeachCare for Georgia youth; strengthening of Georgia's drug monitoring program; two percent pay increases for teachers. The largest proposal in Gov. Deal's agenda includes plans for the development of the Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center, a \$50 million state-owned facility designed to promote innovation in cybersecurity technology. In conjunction with the Department of Defense and the National Security Agency this center will be teaching and preparing students to combat cyber-attacks. The addition of the Cyber Innovation and Training Center will ensure that Georgia is leading the national effort in preventing and fighting cyber-attacks, a major concern in today's world.

Budget Hearings

The only thing the General Assembly is required to do by law is pass a balanced budget. Budget hearings begin Tuesday, January 17th. In the coming days, we will anxiously await as the Appropriations Committee deliberates and makes suggestions as to where state funds should be allocated. The budget is a living document that will change many times before final passage in the last days of session. I will keep you informed on budget news and as always, I will work hard to ensure that our district receives necessary funding and assistance from the state level for future capital investments.

Committee Assignments

At the end of the week, we also received our committee assignments for the 2017-2018 legislative terms. I am humbled that my Senate colleagues have chosen me to serve as Chairman of the Senate State Institutions and Property Committee. In addition, I have also been appointed to serve on the following Committees: Banking and Financial Institutions, Ethics, Insurance and Labor, Interstate Cooperation, Reapportionment and Redistricting, Regulated Industries and Utilities, Veterans, Military and Homeland Security.

In close, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Senator. I will continue to do my best to keep our state and district moving in the right direction. I welcome your ideas and insight and I look forward to hearing from you on how we can move Georgia forward. Thank you for allowing me the honor and privilege to serve you, our district and our great state!