



Senate District 15 – Session Update – 2017

As we head into the final week of the legislative session, the pace has picked up tremendously as we all work to ensure our bills receive final floor votes prior to the day 40 deadlines. The last day is scheduled for Thursday, March 30th. The last couple of weeks in the Senate have been eventful as we have passed a number of measures that now head to Governor Deal for his final signature.

Senate Action

House Bill 260 would recognize Georgia electric utility linemen by creating a license plate in their honor which would read- “Thank a Lineman.” Plate proceeds would benefit the Southeastern Firefighters Burn Foundation, which provides assistance to families of burn patients.

House Bill 265 will provide a tax credit to employers who create quality jobs. In order to qualify employers are required to create 50 new quality jobs within two years.

House Bill 83 will authorize up to 10 percent of the Georgia Firefighters’ Pension Fund to go toward real estate and up to 10 percent to go toward alternative investments.

House Bill 359 would allow parents the option to delegate temporary caregiving authority for a child, through power of attorney to certain individuals. In addition to eliminating the Care of a Minor Child Act, parents would not have to involve the Department of Family and Children Services or go through probate court.

House Bill 49 would update licensing requirements of livestock dealers and market operators. The bill also allows the Georgia Department of Agriculture to charge triennial fees of no more than \$25 dollars. Under this bill, the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture must publish the names and locations of duly licensed livestock dealers and market operators.

House Bill 268 updates the rules within the election laws to provide training for poll workers, clear up registration issues and provide absentee ballots for senior voters during the primary elections.

House Bill 14 would require sheriffs to send any fees collected from criminal and civil court cases to the county treasurer or fiscal officer within 30 days of receipt.

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House Bill 320 bans the sale of counterfeit and non-functioning airbags. This bill also forbids the installation of any device that would cause a vehicle's diagnostic system to falsely indicate the vehicle is equipped with a functioning airbag when it is not. Safe Place for Newborns Act, House Bill 391, expands locations where newborn babies up to 30 days old can be left to include police and fire stations. Under HB 391, mothers may decline to provide personal information when newborns are left at these facilities.

House Bill 425 encourages school systems to administer paper and pencil format assessments upon the request of a parent or guardian of a student.

House Bill 238 updates the list of activities allowed under the Conservation Use Valuation Assessment Program to include solar generation of energy and farm labor housing.

House Bill 245 grants spouses of military personnel who hold a teaching license the ability to qualify for temporary education certification if they relocate to Georgia due to their spouse's military transfer.

House Bill 249 transfers responsibility of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program from the Georgia Drugs and Narcotics Agency to the Department of Public Health. This bill also removes naloxone off the list of dangerous drugs. Naloxone is a drug used to prevent an opioid overdose.

House Bill 262 requires stand-alone dental plans to identify which healthcare professionals are in-network.

House Bill 134 revises existing laws to include updated language related to T-SPLOST collections in certain counties. Under HB 134, counties who meet certain requirements would be allowed to impose a T-SPLOST, even if there is already a regional one in place.

House Bill 205 grants permission to a state oil and gas board as long as the Department of Natural Resources receives more than 12 applications to drill for either oil or natural gas during a calendar year. This bill also increases the permit fee to any entity wishing to drill for oil and natural gas from \$25 to \$500 and would require counties to impose a surcharge of \$3 per ton on solid waste disposal facilities.

House Bill 222 allows children of members of the Georgia National Guard and Reserve to meet the residency requirements to be eligible for HOPE Scholarship. HB 222 would also require the Georgia Lottery to increase the funding amount for the Lottery for Education Account by one percent each year for three years starting at 26.5 percent in Fiscal Year 2018.

House Bill 290 adds agricultural equipment to the list of farm products that are able to qualify for an ad valorem property tax exemption.

House Bill 338 creates a system to improve Georgia's lowest performing schools. Under HB 338, the State Board of Education would appoint a Chief Turnaround Officer who would be responsible for managing the system of supports.

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House Bill 340 updates the state's process for determining the appropriate Title Ad Valorem Tax (TAVT) per customer. The bill changes the TAVT calculation formula for used vehicles to be uniform with the formula for new vehicles. This bill would also update the TAVT for leased vehicles so the TAVT is based on what is paid over the life of the lease not the value of the vehicle.

House Bill 341 creates stronger penalties for those convicted of certain sexual offenses and expands the scope of human trafficking to include anyone involved in solicitation on behalf of another person. The bill also requires those convicted of a sexual offense to serve a split sentence with a minimum period of incarceration.

2018 FY Budget

After compromising with the House, we successfully passed our most important legislation in any session, a balanced budget for the upcoming fiscal year which begins July 1st. This year, we prioritized funding for child welfare, military communities and rural communities. Other highlights of the final version of HB 44 include:

- \$162 million for a 2 percent adjustment to the state teacher, bus drivers and school nutrition personnel salaries.
- \$1,000,000 to improve academic achievement of lowest performing schools
- \$1.5 million for the Public-School Employees Retirement System
- \$38.9 million in lottery funds to increase HOPE Scholarship award amounts
- \$4.1 million for Georgia Alzheimer's Project promoting early detection and treatment
- \$358,996 for the Department of Veterans Service for four veteran benefits training officers; \$137,650 for one coordinator position to work with female veterans
- \$55.5 million to annualize the 20 percent pay raise for state-level law enforcement officers and salary adjustment for criminal investigators and canine officers
- \$1.2 million to increase funds for cyber insurance premiums for the Department of Administrative services to purchase private market insurance

While this version of the budget passed both the Senate and the House, nothing is final until Governor Deal makes his line-item vetoes and signs the dotted line.

As always, it is a pleasure to work for the betterment of our district and I am honored that you have chosen me to be your voice under the Gold Dome. With session ending in less than a week, I look forward to returning home to continue work with constituents in our district. Until then, please let me know if you need anything at all.