



HEADLINES

with *Senator Ed Harbison*



Senate District 15 – Session Update – 2020

State of the State

Thursday, January 16th, Governor Kemp gave his second State of the State address covering accomplishments from last year while highlighting hopes for the next. Over the last year we have experienced the lowest unemployment rate in our state's history at 3.3 percent; created 64,000 new private sector jobs and been named the number one state in which to do business for the seventh year running.

While we are pleased with this progress, there is still much to do. Education, healthcare and public safety are top agenda items for the upcoming year. The governor announced his plans to fully fund our educational system which includes an additional \$2,000 a year pay raise for our hardworking Georgia public school teachers.

Governor Kemp went on to outline his healthcare policies which included newly developed programs such as Georgia Access and Georgia Pathways, aimed at lowering health care costs and expanding access to health insurance. Further, Gov. Kemp shared his plans to address surprise medical billing, which has been a huge issue for Georgia patients.

Rounding off the top three policy agenda items is that of Public Safety. Governor Kemp has vowed to tackle the issue of gang violence as well as human trafficking by empowering law enforcement officers and prosecutors to act swiftly in driving out gang activity and drug cartels which have spread to every Georgia county in recent years.

The Governor also discussed his plans to continue the modernization of our foster care and adoption systems, specifically by creating the Families First Commission. Kemp plans to increase the adoption tax credit from \$2,000 to \$6,000 and lower the adoption age from 25 years old to 21 years old.

Senate Action

Last week also brought the first of many floor votes which came in the form of House Bill 276. This bill is aimed at protecting our brick and mortar Georgia retailers by leveling the playing field with online retailers. House Bill 276, would require online retailers, facilitating more than \$100,000 annually in sales, to collect and remit sales tax.

State Budget

Following MLK Day, we head back to Capitol Hill for the start of "budget week." Before addressing further legislative action, the state budget will be our primary focus. We are constitutionally required to pass a balanced budget before adjournment. Education, healthcare, public safety and infrastructure will remain top contenders for budget allocations. As always, our local delegation will work hard to ensure we bring home needed funding for various projects in our region of the state. The budget is a living document that will change many times before final passage.