



Senate District 15 – Session Update – 2019

Monday, January 14, brought the first of forty legislative days as we gathered on Capitol Hill to begin the 2019-2020 legislative term. It was great to catch up with my colleagues as we began our first week in the senate chamber. Each New Year brings promise, hope and excitement. It also brings a new session, new issues and new debate. This year also brings the beginning of a brand-new term. Meaning, all elected officers are required to take the solemn oath of office before proceeding with any legislative business. 2019 also brings a slate of newly elected Constitutional officers, including Governor Brian Kemp, who was inaugurated Monday, following our first day of session.

State of the State

Thursday, January 17, Governor Kemp made his first State of the State address before a joint session in the House chamber. The Governor highlighted all we have accomplished for the good of our state in recent years, while setting forth goals for the future. Governor Kemp remarked that Georgia has become the epicenter of job growth, the Hollywood of the South and will soon become the Cyber Capital of the World. Among his initiatives, Gov. Kemp announced plans for the Georgians First Commission, which will be tasked with reviewing regulations that make it difficult for companies to hire, expand and invest in our state. Kemp also discussed his budget priorities for improvement within the education, public safety and healthcare sectors.

State Budget

Tuesday, January 22, marks the beginning of “budget week.” As always, before addressing any legislative action, the state budget will be our primary focus. We are constitutionally required to pass a balanced budget before adjourning any session. As our state’s population continues to grow, so does the need for improved infrastructure. We expect education, healthcare, public safety and transportation to remain at the top of our budget allocations. In the coming days we will work with the Appropriations Committee to determine how state funding should be spent. I will keep you up to date on the funding projects we have planned for our region as we make our way through budget hearings.

Issue Watch

While I look forward to working in all areas to improve our state, I particularly look forward to our ongoing discussions regarding rural revitalization efforts. As many of you know, we continued our Senate Study Committee focusing on Rural Georgia in 2018. Based off our committee report findings, the legislature will continue to focus on improving issues such as expanded broadband access, as well as, quality healthcare access. Other notable debate topics include education funding, Medicaid expansion, healthcare and public safety, particularly in our schools.

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Senate Committee Meetings

Senate and House committee hearings will be available in real time through the general assembly website. This will help tremendously in our effort to keep citizens informed of legislative happenings. I will continue my role as Chairman of the Senate State Institutions and Property Committee. In addition, I have 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.

As we make our way through the remainder of the legislative session, there will be no shortage of debate. Please make sure to contact me with questions, concerns or ideas regarding proposed bills. Also, be on the lookout for future columns as I work to keep you informed on all that's happening under the gold dome. Thank you for allowing me the honor in serving our state and more importantly, our district. I enjoy every minute! May God bless and keep you my friends.