



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

As you already know, early voting is officially underway and this election cycle will soon come to an end. During the 2016 session, the General Assembly passed a number of the proposals that voters are now considering this election cycle. There are four amendments dealing with many issues and our Georgia voters will have the final say on whether or not we will amend our state constitution. Amendment wording can be tricky; to cut down on the confusion and misinformation, I have taken the liberty of explaining each amendment below.

### **Amendment 1: Shall the Georgia Constitution be amended to provide greater flexibility and state accountability to fix failing schools through increasing community involvement?**

In order to turn around struggling schools the General Assembly passed Governor Deal's proposal for the creation of an Opportunity School District (OSD). The OSD is modeled after initiatives in Louisiana and Tennessee, and would authorize the state to temporarily step in take over failing public schools. Supporters of the amendment believe that persistently failing schools should be held accountable, while opponents fear the loss of "local control" in the school system. This issue has spurred heated debate across the state, so I encourage you further study the issue.

### **Amendment 2: Shall the Georgia Constitution be amended to authorize penalties for sexual exploitation and assessments on adult entertainment to fund child victims' services?**

The second amendment pertains to helping those victimized by sex trafficking in our state. Sadly, Georgia has one of the highest "sex trafficking" rates which continues to increase each year. Essentially, if passed this amendment would allow the creation of the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund and the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund Commission. The commission is intended to help increase protection and resources for children who have been sexually exploited. The commission overseeing this fund will have eight members. Funds would come from additional penalties assessed for violations relating to certain sexual crimes and fees on certain businesses. If passed, the amendment would also impose an additional fee for each adult entertainment establishment. This fee would be in addition to any required by the county or municipality where the adult entertainment business is operating.

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### **Amendment 3: Shall the Georgia Constitution be amended to reform and re-establish the Judicial Qualifications Commission and provide for its composition, governance, and powers?**

The Judicial Qualifications Commission is the state's "watch-dog agency" over the judicial system. In essence, this agency is designed to ensure that our judicial system performs appropriately. Under the amendment, the JQC would abolish and remake the seven member commission moving more governing authority of the commission to the state legislature.

### **Amendment 4: Shall the Georgia Constitution be amended to dedicate revenue from existing taxes on fireworks to trauma care, fire services, and public safety?**

If Amendment 4 is passed in November, a portion of the taxes collected from the sale of fireworks in our state will be designated to trauma care, fire services and public safety. This is not a "tax increase." This measure simply says that it is "ok" to allocate funding already collected to the services listed above.

I hope these explanations have helped you muddle through the language and further give you an idea about these proposed amendments. Citizens often think that their vote doesn't count. However, when you have amendments that could possibly effect education, child welfare and public Safety.... Every VOTE counts! I highly encourage you to research each amendment, reach your own conclusion and vote your conscience in November. Of course, if you have further questions regarding amendment questions or anything at all, please feel free to reach out to me anytime. It is a pleasure to serve you and our great state!