



Senate District 15 – Session Update – Week Five - 2017

Tuesday, February 7th marked legislative day 13 of 40. Hard to believe that at the end of next week, we will be halfway finished with the 2017 session! We had a productive week in the Senate as we passed a number of bills dealing with healthcare, agriculture and public safety. Most notably we also passed our version of amended Fiscal Year 2017 Budget. The 2017 amended budget includes a state fund revenue estimate of around \$24 billion and was transmitted to the House immediately for review. If the House agrees with our version on the AFY 2017 budget, it will then go to Governor Deal for final approval.

Healthcare Measures

Senate Bill 4

In an effort to ensure that our state provides citizens with access to quality care, we passed a few bills aimed at bettering our healthcare systems. The first was Senate Bill 4, which will enhance Mental Health Treatment options in Georgia. SB 4 would create the Georgia Mental Health Treatment Task Force. The taskforce will ensure that the state's health system is providing proper and essential mental health services. They will assess all aspects of the state's approach toward mental health treatment.

Senate Bill 14

Senate Bill 14 pertains to donations that are made to rural hospital organizations and would expand current rural healthcare tax credits. The bill grants limited liability corporations (LLC), shareholders of "S" corporations or members of partnerships the right to receive an income tax credit equal to 70 percent or \$10,000, whichever is less. Our rural healthcare systems are in dire need of assistance and we are in hopes that initiatives such as this will encourage citizens to donate much needed funding.

Senate Bill 52

Senate Bill 52 would eliminate the sunset date on a provision in current Georgia law authorizing licensed professional counselors (LPCs) to perform emergency examinations and certifications of those who need involuntary treatment.

Senate Bill 12

Scope issues are often brought forth for debate during session. Scope issues occur when a certain segment of a profession would like to perform duties outside of their "designated" practice area. In this case, Senate Bill 12 authorizing licensed dental hygienists to act in the place of a licensed dentist if he or she is absent, is one of those issues. SB 12 does provide that before performing dental duties, the dental hygienist must be given permission to do so by the dentist. Currently, Georgia law states that a dentist must supervise the work of a dental hygienist while performing certain duties. The bill now goes to the House for further review.

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Senate Bill 40

Senate Bill 40 permits emergency medical services (EMS) personnel to decide to transport anyone that may need involuntary treatment to a hospital. Emergency personnel will not be held liable for any civil damages unless those damages are a result of deliberate negligence.

Agriculture Measures

Senate Bill 69

In an effort to cut red tape and overregulation where agriculture is concerned, we passed Senate Bill 69. Under current Georgia law, no product may be labeled “organic” unless the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDOA), or an entity on behalf of GDOA certifies the product. On Wednesday, we passed Senate Bill 69 which would repeal the GDOA registration requirement of those who produce, process, distribute or handle any organic product. These entities will still be required to register with the USDA.

Public Safety

Senate Bill 18

Senate Bill 18 would allow any certified peace officer employed by any state entity, who retired in good standing, to retain their badge and weapon as compensation. SB 18 would also allow a retired Georgia resident who served as a law enforcement officer for at least 10 years, to carry a handgun anywhere in the state.

Sponsored Legislation

Last week I introduced, [Senate Bill 144](#), known as the Georgia Lottery for Veterans Act. This legislation would provide that the GA Lotto put in place one or more games where revenue gained, would be designated for the benefit of our Georgia veterans. The bill has been assigned to the Senate Higher Education Committee and I will keep you posted on how we proceed with this measure in the days to come.

As we make our way through session, I will continue to update you on major developments. Thank you for your support, allowing me the opportunity to work for you. It is humbling to know that you have entrusted me with the responsibility to protect and serve our district. If you need anything at all, please feel free to contact my Capitol office anytime.