



Senate District 15 – Session Update – 2018

State of the State

Thursday, January 11th, Gov. Deal gave his final State of the State address covering accomplishments from last year while highlighting hopes for the next. Governor Deal noted the progress we have made since his time in office where economic development, job growth and education are concerned. Currently, Georgia's unemployment rate is down to 4.3%, which is the lowest it has been in ten years. It is also notable that our state has been recognized as the number one place to do business, nationwide, for the fifth year in a row. Governor Deal also went on to outline his agenda for the upcoming year, including his state budget recommendations which we will work on for the remainder of the session.

State Budget

Tuesday, January 16th 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.

Rural Legislation Reform

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, I had the honor of serving on the Senate Study Committee focusing on Rural Georgia in 2017. 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 discussions will include, small business initiatives and possible tax incentives for certain areas. It is of the upmost importance that we continue to explore options that will best serve our rural communities!

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Senate Committee Meetings

There have been exciting changes this year as we recently allocated funding to update technology in our senate committee rooms. Beginning this session, senate 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 will continue 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.