

# Under the Gold Dome

District 149 Legislative Update – Week 1 — 2018



Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup> brought the first of forty legislative days as we gathered on Capitol Hill to begin the 2018 session. It was great to catch up with my colleagues as we began our week in the House chamber! Session is always exciting as we work non-stop for three months seeking solutions to better our great state. It is also important to note that any bills introduced during the 2017 session are still eligible for a floor vote in 2018. Therefore, I expect hot topic items such as casino gaming and tax reform to make an appearance this session.

## **State of the State**

Wednesday, January 10th, 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. Our district counties unemployment rates are averaging around 7%. While that number needs to go down, it is an improvement from years past. 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. Our recognition as a business-friendly state is good news and I feel confident that more employers will be coming to rural Georgia as a result. 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. I expect education, healthcare, public safety and transportation to remain at the top of our budget allocations. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I will be working hard to get funding for our area of the state. I am grateful to be serving on these committees that I requested as they cover issues that are very important to our district. The budget is a living document that will change many times before final passage in the last days of session. I will keep you updated on budget happenings as they occur. You can also view the House in action with live and archived committee meeting coverage available on the Georgia General Assembly website.

## **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, state leadership appointed House and Senate Study Committees focusing on Rural Georgia in 2017. Based off committee report findings, the legislature will continue to focus on improving issues such as expanded broadband, 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!

## **Committee Meetings**

I am humbled to continue my service as Chairman of the State Planning and Community Affairs Committee. Knowing the importance of the budget process, economic development and Georgia's healthcare issues, I will also serve on the following committees: Appropriations, Economic Development & Tourism, Health and Human Services, Industry & Labor, MARTOC and as Secretary of the Games, Fish & Parks Committee.

### **House Resolution 867**

This session started off a bit differently in celebration of UGA playing in the National Championship. Day one, the House adopted House Resolution 867 recognizing Dan Corso and commanding the Atlanta Football Host Committee for organizing this great event for our state! How fitting that the first time in history our state hosts the National Championship, that the Dawgs were there to play their game. And what a game it was! Regardless of the outcome, I am a proud Georgia Bulldawg and I have no doubt that we will be back sooner than later.

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. Casey and I enjoy every minute! May God bless and keep you.