

Under the Gold Dome



District 149 Legislative Update – Session Week 2 — 2017



Tuesday, January 17th marked the beginning of what we refer to as, “budget week.” The only legislation that we are constitutionally required to pass during our 40-day session is a balanced budget. While balancing the budget seems easy in theory, when dealing with billions of dollars, it is not quite the same as balancing ones checkbook. The process can get pretty complicated! We spent last week in a series of joint budget hearings with the Senate and House Appropriations Committees. This gave us the opportunity to closely examine Governor Deal’s recommendations and hear testimony from various state agencies in need of funding. We are in the first stages of drafting two budget bills: The Fiscal Year 2018 budget and the Amended Fiscal Year 2017 budget. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, it is part of my job to ensure that each dollar is spent responsibly on behalf of our tax paying citizens.

2017 Fiscal Year- Spending Changes

The 2017 budget will be amended to reflect a more accurate estimate of state revenue and accounts for any discrepancies between the projected estimate that was passed last year and actual revenue obtained. Due to additional revenue and population growth, we are able to allow for “new” funding to account for adjustments in the 2017 fiscal year budget. Governor Deal has made recommendations to the Appropriations Committees on where additional funding should be allocated. The Governor’s largest amended 2017 proposal includes funding for the development of the Cyber Innovation and Training Center in Augusta. Highlighted below are a few spending increases Governor Deal is proposing for the 2017 amended budget, which will end June 30th of this year:

\$85 million in the midterm adjustment to fund k-12 enrollment growth

\$7 million for Medicaid enrollment growth

\$118 million for Transportation initiatives

\$74 million to Healthcare programs and the various departments within

\$95 million to Safe Georgia initiatives

2018 Full Budget

As Georgia’s economy continues to grow, state revenue and spending have also grown. In his State of the State Address last week, the governor announced that the 2018 fiscal year budget proposal is the largest budget in Georgia’s history at \$25 billion. The governor listed his funding priorities, and as expected, education remains a top priority for 2018 along with public safety, healthcare and transportation. The 2018 proposal also includes pay raises for some state employees, Law Enforcement Officers and teachers. Below is a highlight of Governor Deal’s 2018 budget proposals:

\$400 million allocated to “Grow Georgia” efforts, which includes the Departments of Agriculture, Community Affairs, Economic Development and Natural Resources.

\$1.9 billion to Transportation improvements and infrastructure

\$13.4 billion to education systems- Pre-K through Higher Ed

\$2 billion towards public safety and law enforcement initiatives

\$5.3 billion allocated to healthcare initiatives, which includes \$22 million towards the Veterans Service Department

What's Next?

After a long week of budget hearings, the balancing act continues. House Appropriation subcommittees will continue to study the governor's budget proposals and will eventually pass portions of the suggested budget out of their respective committees. Following this process, those individually passed budgets will then go before the full House Appropriations Committee. After a couple of more checks and balances, the budget will eventually receive a full vote on the House floor. If the House passes the budget, it then moves over to the Senate side and the process begins all over again. If both the Senate and House agree on the budget, it goes to the Governor's desk for his approval and signature.

As we move into the third week of session, my calendar will quickly fill with numerous committee meeting hearings. As the Chairman of the House State Planning and Community Affairs Committee, I look forward to overseeing the many bills that will be up for debate in my committee. While last week was very busy due to my responsibilities on the Appropriations Committee, I also spent many hours preparing for future bill hearings. It is imperative that I do my best in making sure we move good policy out of my committee, for the betterment of Georgia, and especially our district.

As always, I will continue to update you on all that is happening with our state legislature. Representing the people of our district is such an honor and I am more than grateful, that you have given me the opportunity to learn from you, to listen to you and most importantly, to serve you. If you need anything at all, please don't hesitate to contact me anytime.

Jimmy Pruett
GA Representative of the 149th District