

# Under the Gold Dome



District 149 Legislative Update – Week 2 — 2018



Tuesday, January 16th marked the beginning of what we refer to as, “budget week.” The only thing that we are constitutionally required to do during our 40-day session is pass a balanced budget. While balancing, a budget seems simple enough, when dealing with billions of dollars, it can be a real challenge. House and Senate Appropriations Committees held a series of joint budget hearings throughout the week, which gave us the chance to closely examine Governor Deal’s recommendations. We also heard testimony from various state agencies in need of funding. As our state’s fiscal year begins July 1, we are in the first stages of crafting two budget bills: The full 2019 Fiscal Year budget and the 2018 Amended Fiscal Year budget.

## 2018 Fiscal Year- Spending Changes

The 2018 budget will be amended to reflect a more accurate estimate of state revenue, accounting for any discrepancies between the projected estimate we passed last year, and actual revenue obtained. Highlighted below are a few of the Governor’s recommendations concerning the 2018 amended budget, which will end June 30 of this year:

- \$102 million in the midterm adjustment to fund k-12 enrollment growth
- \$10.7 million for growth in the Dual Enrollment program
- \$43.6 million for the Indigent Care Trust Fund and Medicaid
- \$25 million to expand runways at 11 airports in Georgia, including rural communities
- \$10 million addition attract jobs and tourism across the state
- \$32.5 million to Safe Georgia initiatives

## 2019 Full FY Budget

During our first week of session, following his State of the State address, Governor Deal presented us with his thousand plus page budget recommendations. We are all responsible for reading this on our own, prior to budget week. In keeping with tradition, education remains a top priority for 2019, receiving approximately 54% of the state’s overall budget. Healthcare, public safety and transportation round out the top four spends as they collectively make up 37% of remaining allocation recommendations. Below is a highlight of Governor Deal’s 2019 FY 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
- \$13.9 billion to Education systems- Pre-K through Higher Ed
- \$361.7 million for the Teachers Retirement System
- \$2 billion towards Public Safety and law enforcement initiatives
- \$5.6 billion allocated to Healthcare initiatives, which includes \$23 million towards the Veterans Service Department

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### **What's Next?**

Although budget week has technically come to an end, our work is far from over. House Appropriation subcommittees will further study budget proposals, eventually passing 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. Soon after, the budget will receive a full vote on the House floor. If passed by the House, it then moves over to the Senate, where the process begins all over again. During Senate budget hearings, they will either approve or change House Budget recommendations. If both Chambers agree on the budget, it goes to the Governor's desk for his approval and signature. I will keep you updated as to what portion of the budget is allocated to our district, however, nothing is final until it is signed into law by Governor Deal.

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. On top of my Appropriation duties, I also spend 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.

### **House Bill 159**

Last week, the Senate took up House Bill 159. HB 159 would modernize Georgia adoption laws for the first time in 30 years. There were amendments made through the committee process, so it is now up to the House to determine if we agree with their changes. If we do not, a conference Committee will be appointed to work out differences between the House and Senate chambers. As a foster grandfather over the years, I know firsthand how difficult the foster care and adoption process can be. Adoption reform is badly needed, and I feel confident that we will reach a compromise before the end of our 40-day session.

As always, I will continue to update you on all that is happening under the Gold Dome through the remainder of our legislative session and beyond. Representing our district is such an honor and I am grateful that you have given me the opportunity to do so. If you need anything at all, do not hesitate to contact me anytime! May God bless each one of you and may he continue to bless the great state of Georgia.