

Under the Gold Dome...A Message from Rep. Jimmy Pruett

It is hard to believe that summer has come to an end and a new school year has begun! While many of us enjoyed vacations and a relaxing summer, Georgia government was in full swing. While the rest of the world celebrates the New Year on January 1st, the state of Georgia celebrates beginning anew on July 1st. The first day of July is not only the start of our state's fiscal year; it is also the day when most laws passed in the previous session go into effect. Below you will find a quick review of major bills passed, now officially set in Georgia code.

Education is always a top priority for the General Assembly as we continue to allocate over half of the state's 2017 fiscal year budget towards education initiatives.

House Bill 801: Rewards Georgia college students for taking academically rigorous STEM classes that ultimately lead to employment in a high-demand Science, Technology, Engineering & Math fields.

Senate Bill 364: Revises annual evaluation for public school teachers and administrators. Lowers the test component for administrator evaluations from 70% to 40%. Reduces the number of state mandated tests to 24 by removing social studies and science milestone tests in grades 3, 4, 6, and 7.

House Bill 348: Expands educational opportunities in Georgia by easing the process for the creation of college and career academies. A college and career academy operates as a partnership and collaboration between businesses, high schools and post-secondary institutions to advance work force development and work based learning programs.

Public Safety is also a concern as we work to protect our Georgia citizens.

House Bill 767: Adds utility service vehicles and workers in the fields of electric, natural gas, water, waste-water, cable, telephone, or telecommunication services to the list of those covered under Georgia's "Spencer Pass Law." The law requires drivers to make a lane change when approaching any stationary towing, recovery or highway maintenance vehicle parked on the shoulder of the highway.

Senate Bill 331: Allows the termination of a father's parental rights when, by unquestionable evidence, the father caused his child to be conceived as a result of non-consensual sexual contact.

Senate Bill 416: Creates the Georgia Information Sharing and Analysis Center within the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Development, maintenance, and operations of the center are vested in the director of the GBI.

House Bill 588: Requires an electronic logging system by pharmacies to monitor consumer purchases of over-the-counter medicines containing pseudoephedrine. This system will generate a "stop sale" alert to notify a pharmacy that a purchase of pseudoephedrine has exceeded the legal limit already in place. Customers will be required to present a valid government ID when purchasing these drugs.

Improving the quality of our healthcare systems has been a focus over the last several years and the 2016 session was no exception.

House Bill 965: Provides that no health plan issued in Georgia will deny coverage for an FDA-approved prescription drug for Stage 4 metastatic cancer. Doctors gain flexibility to recommend the treatment they feel will yield the best results.

Senate Bill 258: Provides tax credits to individuals who donate to rural "health care organizations," which are located in rural counties and participate in both Medicaid and Medicare. Further, at least 10 percent of the facilities' gross net revenues must come from the treatment of indigent patients.

Senate Bill 34: Allows terminally-ill patients faster access to experimental drugs and procedures that have passed the first of three phases in the FDA drug approval process. Also, gives patients the option of trying experimental treatments that have passed the FDA's Phase 1, meaning treatments have met required safety precautions.

House Bill 710: Creates the Georgia ABLE Program ('Georgia Achieving a Better Life Experience'), modeled after education savings plans whereby disabled individuals can save private funds in tax-exempt accounts to pay for qualified disability expenses.

If you are interested in learning more about legislation that took effect in July, please visit the Georgia General Assembly website. As summer break officially comes to a close, I will continue to work with study committees and attend listening sessions to brief myself on upcoming session issues. In the meantime, please contact me with questions or concerns. I can only represent you, if I hear from you! As always, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your voice under the Gold Dome. It is an honor to work on your behalf for the betterment of our district and the great state of Georgia!