

# Upper Chamber Report

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## House Bills Now Take Center Stage in Senate

By Kallarin Richards

CHAMBER (March 17, 2009) - Crossover Day has passed and the Senate now turns its attention to House bills. Slated for a floor vote today were three measures, the first of which codifies the standard practice in Georgia of not collecting sales taxes on pharmaceutical samples. Presented by Sen. Chip Rogers (R-Woodstock), House Bill

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59 passed with no dissenting votes.

Aimed at creating more jobs in Georgia, House Bill 427 reduces the poverty threshold of enterprise zones to 15 percent, bringing threshold in line with that of opportunity zones. These zones are established in underserved areas across the state to help revitalize impoverished communities. The bill also allows local governments to grant tax credits to businesses in these zones that create five or more jobs. Chairman

Chip Pearson (R-Dawsonville) of the Senate Economic Development Committee presented the bill, encouraging its passage to help job creation in Georgia.

Sen. Robert Brown (D-Macon) raised concerns that decreasing the poverty level will widen the poverty gap too greatly, causing the bill to no longer target impoverished communities most in need of economic assistance.

The bill passed with no further comments by a vote of 39 to 9.

Finally, Sen. Johnny Grant (R-Milledgeville) quickly presented House Resolution 279, explaining that the resolution is an annual measure that authorizes

utility easements throughout the state. The bill passed 49 to 0.

On Tuesday, the chamber began its weekly business by taking time to recognize an array of honorable Georgians. Among the notable guests were the 2009 Georgia Cotton Queens, recognized by Sen. John Crosby (R-Tifton). The annual Miss Georgia Cotton Scholarship Pageant promotes Georgia cotton through local, state, regional, and national activities, educating young Georgians on the importance of cotton as part of the state's economy. The economic impact of cotton in Georgia is over \$3 billion annually, which makes it the leading row crop in the state.

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*This year's Georgia Cotton Queens are honored in the Senate, with Sens. Crosby and John Bulloch (R-Ochlocknee), joined by Lt. Governor Casey Cagle.*

# Sen. Chapman Recognizes Outstanding Student Chosen for U.S. Senate Youth Program

By Ravae Graham

ATLANTA (March 17, 2009) – State Sen. Jeff Chapman (R-Brunswick) recently recognized Wells Ellenberg, a Frederica Academy student, for being chosen to participate in the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual United States Senate Youth Program held March 7-14, 2009 in Washington, D.C. Ellenberg, a senior at the St. Simon's academy, was chosen from hundreds of applicants to be part of the group of student delegates who attended the program's 2009 Washington Week.

“Wells has demonstrated outstanding leadership abilities and a strong commitment to public service,” said Chapman. “He has a bright and promising future and I look forward to seeing great success from this young man.”

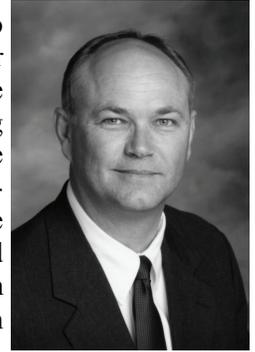
Wells has demonstrated his commitment to leadership by serving as student body president, yearbook business manager and editor-in-chief,

honor council secretary, National Honor Society vice president, and captain of the varsity golf team. His achievement and potential have been recognized with prestigious honors from the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Daughters of the American Revolution, Congressional Youth Leadership Council, and Rotary International. This past year, Wells participated in the American Legion Boys Nation program, where he met President George W. Bush. He plans to earn a degree in political science and attend law school.

“By learning about our democracy, you can become a leader in your community and in government at any age,” added Chapman. “It is the ideas, enthusiasm and motivation of young people such as Wells Ellenberg that will drive this country successfully into the next century.”

Each year this extremely competitive merit-based program brings 104 of the most outstanding high school

students to Washington for an intensive week-long study of the federal government and the people who lead it. In addition to the program week, the foundation grants each of the student delegates a \$5,000 college scholarship with encouragement to continue coursework in government, history and public affairs.



The U.S. Senate Youth program was created in 1962 to increase young Americans' understanding of the interrelationships of the three branches of government, the caliber and responsibilities of federally elected and appointed officials, and the vital importance of democratic decision making for people around the world. □

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## Senate Unanimously Passes Bill to Change Snellville City Council Charter

By Kallarin Richards

ATLANTA (March 17, 2009) — The Senate voted unanimously today to eliminate tie votes of the six-member Snellville City Council that have created a gridlock for issues important to the city. Authored by Sen. Don Balfour (R-Snellville), Senate Bill 258 will change the council's charter this year after the election by allowing the mayor to vote only in the case of a tie.

“The citizens of Snellville over-

whelmingly believe that the city is in gridlock,” said Balfour. “Issues critical to the progress of this city are being left in a stalemate with no resolution. City government should be solving problems, not creating them.”

A professional poll of Snellville's registered voters who voted in the last two Snellville City Council elections yielded results showing that 79 percent believe the city has a problem with gridlocked votes. Balfour also sent a mailer to every Snellville resident inside Snellville city limits inviting them to a town hall meeting, in which the 200 at-

tendees agreed that the city has a problem.

The bill now sits in the House to be taken up for a vote. Everyone who is interested in the bill is encouraged to contact Rep. Melvin Everson (R-Snellville), the city's representative in the Georgia House. Anyone wishing to voice their concerns or opinions may contact Rep. Everson at his Capitol office at 404.656.0188 or by email at [melvin.everson@house.ga.gov](mailto:melvin.everson@house.ga.gov).

For more information on the Georgia State Senate or to view SB 258, please visit [www.senate.ga.gov](http://www.senate.ga.gov). □

# In Committee News...

## “J.O.B.S.” Act Clears Senate Finance Committee

By Matt Colvin

CLOB 310 (March 17, 2009) – A bill designed to stimulate Georgia’s small business climate with tax incentives and credits has passed the Senate Finance Committee and will soon be heard on the Senate floor. The Jobs, Opportunity, and Business Success Act of 2009 (J.O.B.S.) was favorably reported out of committee Tuesday at the Capitol along with several other tax exemptions for Georgia businesses.

House Bill 481 and 482 comprise the J.O.B.S. Act with HB 481 providing a new business filing fee holiday, a \$500 credit towards the unemployment insurance tax for each eligible employee hired, a \$2,400 income tax credit for each eligible em-

ployee hired, and the elimination of the sales tax deposit. HB 482 would eliminate the state inventory tax on all Georgia businesses. The original House version of HB 481 included the gradual elimination of the corporate income tax and a Senate committee substitute that was passed has placed that measure back into the legislation. Several senators praised the bills as the most pro-business legislation the General Assembly has ever considered and targeting the protection of small business will be the key to bringing Georgia through the current recession.

Other bills passed out the Senate Finance Committee Tuesday included: House Bill 121 which ratifies an executive order from last year that suspended the collection of motor fuel prepaid taxes; House Bill 116 which exempts sales taxes on aircraft

parts used on planes not registered in Georgia; and House Bill 46 which puts into Georgia code the suspension of sales tax collected on fuel used for off-road, agricultural purposes.

All bills passed now head to the Senate Rules Committee before being considered on the Senate floor.



## Health Committee Seeks Efficient Delivery of Georgia Health Care

By Ravae Graham

CAP 450 (March 17, 2009) – The Senate Health and Human Services convened today and passed two resolutions to improve the efficiencies of healthcare for the people of Georgia.

Federal law currently mandates a 24 month waiting period from the time a disabled person first receives disability insurance benefits to the time Medicare coverage

begins. Sen. David Adelman (D-Decatur) presented Senate Resolution 505, which urges Congress to eliminate the 24 month waiting period for participants in the Social Security Disability Insurance Program. Adelman believes eliminating the waiting period will help prevent the deterioration of disability and illness for beneficiaries, which significantly reduces public health, Medicaid and Medicare costs. Sen. Preston Smith (R-Rome) offered an amendment stating that the waiting period be reduced rather than eliminated. The resolution passed

as amended by a 9-1 vote.

The committee wrapped unanimously passing Sen. Nan Orrock’s (D-Atlanta) Senate Resolution 476 creating the Senate Study Committee for Advance Directives Assessment, Planning and Oversight. The Committee will study the development and administration of a state-maintained database for advance directives to ensure the health care community is aware of a patient’s wishes regarding end-of-life decisions.

## Senate State Institutions and Property Committee Considers DOC funding measures

By Matt Colvin

CLOB 310 (March 17, 2009) – A bill that would authorize the Georgia Department of Corrections (DOC) to establish and collect additional fees for services provided to a felony defendant sentenced to a day reporting center was considered before the Senate State Institutions & Property Committee Tuesday at the Capitol. House Bill 344 would impose a \$10 fee for felons out on probation for each visit to a

day reporting center to help facilitate maintenance and operations of the reporting center. The committee discussed the need for a fee and wanted to explore any other options for funding, so committee Chairman Sen. Johnny Grant (R-Milledgeville) decided to hold off on a vote until the committee had time to consider alternate means.

Two other bills were heard and passed out of the committee meeting Tuesday. House Bill 170 would change leasing provisions for state owned marshland and water bottoms in relation to

electric membership companies and utility providers from a rate based on fair market value to a

fixed rate. House Bill 226 would allow time served by defendants in probation detention centers to be counted towards their jail sentence. Both bills are now heading to the Senate Rules Committee before being heard on the Senate floor. □



## Senate Public Safety Committee Holds Hearing on Super Speeder Bill

By Jennifer Kitt

CLOB 307 (March 17, 2009)- The Senate Public Safety Committee conducted a hearing on the Super Speeder House Bill 160, which will impose a \$200 fee for drivers that speed over 75

miles per hour on two lane roads and 85 miles per hour on any road with more than two lanes. The fees will be collected by the Department of Drivers Services

(DDS), and used to fund trauma care in the state. Sen. Bill Heath (R-Bremen) testified as a proponent of the bill and emphasized the need to improve trauma funding.



“This bill will help the state fund the trauma care we desperately need without introducing a new tax,” Heath said. There were some concerns from members of the committee. Sen. John Douglas (R-Social Circle) had questions regarding the speeding limitations in the legislation and better enforcing the current laws rather than adding new ones.

There were also questions from the committee regarding increases in insurance rates for drivers labeled as super speeders.

House Bill 258 from Rep. Austin Scott (R-Tifton) that allowed handicapped parents to teach their children how to drive and obtain their Class C drivers license failed with at 4-5 vote. House Bill 57 from Rep. Allen Powell (D-Hartwell), which des-

ignates the Department of Revenue as the state agency for administration of the Federal United Carrier Registration Act of 2005, passed unanimously. The committee also unanimously passed House Bill 607 by Rep. Willie Talton (R-Warner Robins), which specifies that the Governor will appoint a member of the Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs to the Board of Public Safety. Rep. Tom Grave’s (R-Ranger) House Bill 396, which expands the rule making authority of the DDS Commissioner, increases the maximum term that non citizens can retain a temporary driver’s license and increases the application fee to \$5 passed with two amendments and only one nay vote. □

# Legislative Process Dates

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## Important Dates in the Legislative Process

### Introduction - Last day to file and/or 1st Read in Senate.

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - last day to introduce General Senate bills and resolutions (even year). [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - last day to accept General House bills and resolutions. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**39<sup>th</sup> day** - last day to introduce General Senate bills and resolutions (odd year). [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

*\*Note: Senate bills and resolutions must be filed with the Secretary before 4:00 p.m. to be 1st read on the next legislative day.*

## Deadlines for passage in current year

### Committee Report Deadlines - Last day to read report. Report submitted to Secretary by convening.

**28<sup>th</sup> day** - General Senate bills and resolutions.

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - Local Senate bills and resolutions.

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - General House bills and resolutions.

**40<sup>th</sup> day** - Local House bills and resolutions.

### Calendar Management

Calendar in numerical order after 2nd reading of legislation; days 1-5. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]

Rules Committee sets the calendar for days 6 - 40. [Rule 4-2.10 (b)]

### General Senate Bills and Resolutions

**26<sup>th</sup> day** - File with Secretary of the Senate. [Rule 3-1.2 (a)]

**27<sup>th</sup> day** - 1st Reading and referral to committee. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**28<sup>th</sup> day** - Committee report read upon convening. (A recommitted bill already 2nd read - report day 29.)

**29<sup>th</sup> day** - 2nd Reading. [Rule 4-2.6]

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - Passage [Rule 4-2.10 (a)] and immediate transmittal to House. [Rule 4-2.14]

### Local Senate Bills and Resolutions

**35<sup>th</sup> day** - File with Secretary of the Senate. [3-1.2 (a)]

**36<sup>th</sup> day** - 1st Reading and referral to committee. (Cannot pass for 2 days.) [Rule 4-2.4 (c) ]

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - Favorable report by committee, passage and immediate transmittal to the House. [Rule 4-2.14]

**39<sup>th</sup> day** - 2nd Reading in House.

**40<sup>th</sup> day** - Favorable report and passage in House.

### General House Bills and Resolutions

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - Transmitted from House and received by Secretary.

**31<sup>st</sup> day** - 1st Reading and referral to committee. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - Favorable report upon convening and 2nd reading. (Applies to days 36 - 38) [Rule 4-2.6]

**39<sup>th</sup> day** - Passage. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]

**40<sup>th</sup> day** - Passage of bills or resolutions tabled day 39; removed from the table on day 40. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]

### Local House Bills and Resolutions

**39<sup>th</sup> day** - 1<sup>st</sup> Reading and referral to committee.

**40<sup>th</sup> day** - Favorable report by committee and passage.

*\* Note: On the 30th day and on the last three days of session, bills and resolutions needing action from the House are automatically immediately transmitted. [Rule 4-2.14]*