

Senate Sends TSPLOST and DHR Measures to House for Agreement

By Kallarin Richards

CHAMBER (March 23, 2009) - The Senate's original Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) bill is back in play after the Senate replaced the House's statewide penny sales tax measure with its regional approach to transportation funding. Sen. Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga) gave an overview of the Senate's version of House Resolution 206, noting that the Senate's position on transportation funding represents local control at its best. This voter-approved transportation funding enhancement will allow counties the option to band together to levy a one cent sales tax to fund trans-

portation projects in their district. The bill creates only one defined region for Metro Atlanta, which includes Cherokee, Douglas, Fulton, Fayette, Clayton, Henry, Rockdale, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Cobb counties. Other counties around the state have the option to be individual regions or come together as larger regions with local approval. They may also opt to not be

a TSPLOST region at all. Should the governor sign the TSPLOST bill, voters will have the opportunity to vote on it in November 2010.

The measure garnered wide bipartisan support from senators on both sides of the aisle, each expressing the need to put a transportation solution into action after dealing with this issue for two years.



Sen. Mullis outlines Senate's transportation funding bill

Sen. Steve Thompson (D-Marietta) attempted to add

Continued on pg 2



Upper Chamber Report

MARCH 24, 2009

Raegan Weber, Press Director
Kallarin Richards, Editor in Chief

Key Bills and Resolutions Introduced in the Senate

Inside this issue:	
Senate Sends TSPLOST and DHR Measures to House for Agreement	1-2
Key Bills and Resolutions	1,5
Sen. Butler's Legislation Encouraging Teen Dating Education Passes Committee	2
Sen. Seay Encourages High School Seniors to Register to Vote in April	3
In Committee News	3-4
Legislative Process Dates	6

- **House Bill 646** is an Act to authorize the Magistrate Court of Dooly County to establish and charge a law library fee and to provide that funds shall be used for the maintenance of the Dooly County law library.
- **House Bill 714** changes the terms of the mayor and city council members for the City of Norcross.
- **House Bill 715** authorizes the governing authority of the City of Norcross to levy an excise tax.
- **House Bill 730** repeals a certain provision requiring board members to resign if standing for election to other public office for the board of commissioners of Henry County.
- **House Bill 734** provides that citizens of the City of Waycross shall have the right to address or speak to the city commissioners on official actions or other topics relating to the business of the city commission at meetings of the city commission by expressing their

desire to speak no later than the beginning of the meeting at which such citizens desire to address or speak to the city commissioners.

- **House Bill 748** authorizes the governing authority of the City of Cartersville to levy an excise tax.
- **House Bill 749** provides that the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners shall meet at a certain time and date monthly.

Continued on pg 5

TOP STORY, cont'd

an amendment that would have imposed a statewide one percent tax and mandated annual funding of the homeowner's tax relief grant, but the amendment never made it to a vote. The bill substitute by Sen. Mullis passed easily with a 54 to 1 vote. The enabling legislation under House Bill 277 followed with a passing vote of 52 to 3. Both measures were immediately transmitted to the House for consideration, where a conference committee will be appointed including members of the both the Senate and House to work out the differences between chambers.

The Senate also passed an agreed upon version of the Department of Human Resources restructuring bill, which was sent immediately to the House for review. Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford) explained that House Bill 228 is the House's version that incorporates the Senate's substitute, which includes five technical changes. Any major differences will also be worked out in conference committee. The bill passed the Senate 52 to 0.

Sen. Robert Brown (D-Macon) took the well to voice his displeasure with the House's action last week on a resolution making President Obama

an honorary member of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus. After the House voted it down, the resolution was brought up for reconsideration and immediately transmitted to the Rules Committee, where changes can be made. Sen. Brown noted that by comparison, there is a resolution that recognizes March 17 as China Day and expressed his disappointment that the legislature would choose to unduly honor a communist country but not the leader of the United States.

The Senate welcomed U.S. Congressman Phil Gingrey to the chamber,



Congressman Gingrey addresses the Senate

who talked about needed changes that are shaping up for the future of Congress. Gingrey called Washington spending "a recipe for bankruptcy," vowing to personally uphold fiscally conservative principles throughout his congressional term.

Senators also paid special tribute to legislative staffer Mildred Slayton, who is retiring from a 30 plus year career in public service. She has worked for the last three lieutenant governors as a personal assistant after serving as assistant to the chief of staff to Governor Joe Frank Harris. After receiving a standing ovation, Slayton took the rostrum to be recognized by the Senate, noting that she is looking forward to playing tennis and golf, and spending more time with her family. □



Lt. Gov. Cagle gives a warm hug to personal assistant Mildred Slayton, who was honored by the Senate upon her retirement

Sen. Butler's Legislation Encouraging Teen Dating Education Passes Committee

By Ravae Graham

ATLANTA (March 23, 2009) –Sen. Gloria Butler's (D-Stone Mountain) resolution honoring the memory of Brittany Sharnay Wells and encouraging local school boards to adopt a policy addressing dating violence passed in the Senate Education and Youth Committee today. Wells' life ended tragically in an act of teen dating violence in January 2009.

"Teen dating violence has become a prevalent problem in high schools and middle schools across America with one in three teens reporting some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships," said Butler. "Education is the best mechanism to stop teen dating violence and is crucial to creating a culture of intolerance for teen dating abuse."

Recent studies have shown that teen dating violence is starting at an early age, reporting that many 11 to 14 year olds are able to identify aspects of teen dating abuse in their social lives. Girls and women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence, and of the young women murdered each year between the ages of 15 and 19, 30 percent are killed by their boyfriend or husband. □

Sen. Seay Encourages High School Seniors to Register to Vote in April

By Kallarin Richards

ATLANTA (March 24, 2009) — Sen. Valencia Seay (D-Riverdale) is encouraging eligible high school seniors to register to vote at their school during the month of April. Thanks to legislation that she sponsored in the Senate in 2001, public schools now offer students who are at least 18 years old the opportunity to register to vote at their school.

“For every young American, registering to vote marks the pivotal moment when their voice contributes to the achievements of our nation,” said Seay. “I hope the convenience of registering to vote at school will

encourage Georgia students to take just five minutes out of their day and exercise their role in democracy.”

Throughout her political career, Sen. Seay has been an advocate for the youth vote. A champion for education issues in the state, she has kept her focus on the success of the individual student and their transition into adulthood. She believes that voting is one of the key responsibilities of an adult, and hopes that Georgia’s young voters will make their voices heard in the next election.

The youth vote proved to be a significant factor in the outcome of the 2008 election, representing a record turnout over previous years. An

estimated 22 to 24 million young people voted in the 2008 election, an increase of at least 2.2 million in the 2004 election.



The Secretary of State’s Office is launching a campaign to remind schools of the registration program by contacting all school principals.

For more information on the Georgia State Senate or to view HB 372, please visit www.senate.ga.gov. □

In Committee News...

Regulated Industries Committee Votes to Extend PSC Chairmen Terms

By Ravae Graham

450 CAP (March 23, 2009) – The Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee convened today to consider six bills.

Rep. Don Parsons (R-Marietta) presented House Bill 568, which requires each elected chairperson’s term of the Public Service Commission (PSC) to be extended two years, with terms lasting a total of three years. Parsons believes the current one year term limit does not provide enough time to implement new initiatives.

Opponents of the bill, including PSC Commissioner Robert Baker, feel the current process has worked smoothly and effectively for the last 16 years and it is unnecessary to change it

now. Baker additionally noted that the terms of chairman should be no more than two years with no provision for reelection to allow fair and balanced representation at the Commission. The bill passed by a vote of 7 to 3.

On behalf of Rep. Sean Jerguson (R-Holly Springs), Chairman David Shafer (R-Duluth) presented House Bill 115, adding new restrictions and requirements for alcohol licenses. Under the measure, no person or family can obtain or have beneficial interest in more than two retail licenses. The bill passed by a vote of 7 to 1.

Aimed at improving health care quality and effectiveness concerning controlled substances, Rep. Sharon Cooper’s (R-Marietta) House Bill 614 was unanimously passed. The measure allows the Georgia Drugs and Narcotics Agency to establish and maintain a program for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances. Should the gover-

nor sign the bill, then beginning on January 1, 2011, dispensers must electronically submit information regarding each prescription dispensed.

Other bills that were unanimously passed include:

- House Bill 579 authorizes that any entity granted a general or residential contractor license where the qualified agent has died before receipt of the license will remain eligible to receive the license upon submission of a new agent.
- House Bill 158 requires new multi-unit residential structures to be equipped to measure water usage by each tenant or unit, and that the owner of the building charge tenants separately for their water usage.
- House Bill 68 further stipulates that freestanding crematories not attached to funeral homes are not allowed within 1,000 feet of residential subdivisions. □

Education and Youth Offers Incentives to Georgia's Teachers

By Hayley Howell

310 CLOB (March 23, 2009) —The Senate Education and Youth Committee, chaired by Sen. Dan Weber (R-Dunwoody), convened this Monday to discuss key legislation concerning Georgia's teachers.

Math and science teachers could see additional compensation with Rep. Brooks Coleman's (R-Duluth) House Bill 280. Because of Georgia's 14.3 percent shortage of math and science teachers, the bill increases the state salary schedule to six years for a secondary school teacher who is certified by the Professional Standards Commission in math or science until the State Board of Education determines that there are no longer areas where there is an insufficient supply of teachers. After five years, if the teacher no longer meets the student achievement criteria requirement, they will be placed on the salary step applicable to the number of years actually served.

Sen. Weber supported the bill as a recruiting tool for new teachers in areas that are lacking, and Coleman finished by reminding the committee that this is the first step for bettering Georgia's school systems. The bill passed unanimously 9-0.

Georgia's teachers will have greater incentive to become certified under Rep. Jimmy Pruet's (R-Eastman) House Bill 243 that gives teachers with a National Board Certification a salary increase subject to appropriations by the General Assembly.

Concern was raised by Sen. Vincent Fort (D-Atlanta), who asked if there was any preliminary research on the expertise of nationally certified teachers. Pruet stated that national empirical data shows an overall betterment in teachers when they are nationally certi-

fied. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement countered by testifying that they had found research stating there is only a small statistical difference between certified and non-certified teachers. They found that National Board Certified teachers are not by definition any better than other teachers. The bill eventually passed 5-3.

Rep. Jay Neal (R-LaFayette) then presented a measure that allows local boards of education, for the 2009-2010 school year, an extension when offering an employee who is certified by the Professional Standards Commission an employment contract. The current deadline is April 15 and will extend until May 15 under House Bill 455. It passed with 7-2 votes.

The memory of Brittany Sharnay Wells was honored with Sen. Gloria Butler's (D-Stone Mountain) Senate Resolution 444, which encourages local school boards to adopt a policy against teen dating violence. Since education is the best way to stop teen dating violence and is crucial to a culture that does not tolerate teen dating abuse, the Brittany Sharnay Wells Act requires educational and school policies that would teach Georgia students to recognize dating



violence and help protect Georgia parents from losing a child. The act passed unanimously 8-0. (For more information, see pg 2.)

Rep. Tyrone Brooks (D-Atlanta) presented his House Bill 493 which amends current law to allow the Georgia Youth Conservation Corps (Corps) the ability to assist in home weatherization projects that seek to reduce energy consumption for home heating and cooling. The bill authorizes the commissioner of the Corps to contract with a charitable organization for management and supervision of any projects relating to the reduction of

energy consumption for home heating and cooling or weatherization. Under current law, projects can only occur on private residential property and only federal funds that are made available to the state can be used for these projects.

Brooks informed the committee that a bipartisan team of House members came together in a study committee for this bill and all support it. He said that the Corps could use federal stimulus money coming to Georgia to fund the bill. He finished by stating that the bill was a "win-win" because it offers a tax credit to those taking advantage of the project, encourages Georgia's students to learn by finding new ways to save energy, and reduces energy consumption in our state.

Sens. Eric Johnson (R-Savannah) and Ron Ramsey (D-Lithonia) had concerns with the bill. Johnson was wary of where the money would exactly come from to fund these projects. Ramsey believed the Department of Labor should be in charge rather than the Corps, in order to give more jobs to Georgians. Because of the dissension in the committee, Chairman Weber assigned a subcommittee to further examine the bill, which will be taken up later in the week.

Discussion then began for Rep. Fran Millar's (R-Dunwoody) House Bill 400, or the Building Resourceful Individuals to Develop Georgia's Economy Act (BRIDGE). BRIDGE allows the Department of Education (DOE) to develop and the State Board of Education (BOE) to approve of curriculum frameworks for focused programs of study that are in high demand, high skill, and high wage fields. These frameworks should offer flexibility for a student to pursue a focused study at their school, at a technical school or college, a public college or university, at a work site under an apprenticeship cooperative education program, and at other settings approved by the BOE.

The bill will be taken up in a later meeting. □

Key Bills, cont'd

- **House Bill 751** provides for staggered terms for members of the Wilcox County Board of Education, to provide for continuation in office of certain members and to provide for election and terms of office for subsequent members.
- **House Bill 752** reduces the number of council members and to change the manner and method of filling vacancies for the Town of Pulaski.
- **House Bill 753** provides for a homestead exemption from Pike County ad valorem taxes for county purposes in an amount equal to the amount by which the current year assessed value of a homestead exceeds the base year assessed value of such homestead.
- **House Bill 754** provides for the jurisdiction, functions, practices, procedures, duties, and responsibilities of the municipal court of the Town of Oak Park.
- **House Bill 755** provides for commissioner districts, to provide for continuation in office of current members, to provide for election and terms of office of subsequent members, and to provide for the election of the chairperson from the county at large for the Board of Commissioners of Telfair County.
- **House Bill 757** changes the corporate limits for the City of Glennville.
- **House Bill 762** provide that the members of the Dade County board of commissioners elected to represent Commissioner Districts 1 through 4 shall be required to reside in their respective districts but shall be elected by all of the electors of Dade County.
- **House Bill 764** provides a definition for the governing authority of the City of Dunwoody.
- **House Resolution 161** compensates Mr. John Jerome White.
- **Senate Bill 275** creates the Municipal Court Clerks' Retirement Fund of Georgia.
- **Senate Bill 276** relates to air quality, so as to provide collective emissions limitations for facilities emitting pentachlorophenol near primary and secondary schools.
- **Senate Bill 277** is an Act to provide that the chief magistrate of the Magistrate Court of Troup County shall be a full-time position.
- **Senate Resolution 641** creates a Senate Study Committee on Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation.
- **Senate Resolution 642** creates the Senate Study Committee on Consolidation of Services for Crime Victims.
- **Senate Resolution 649** urges educational agencies, associations, boards, and commissions involved in the accreditation process for school systems in grades kindergarten through 12 to adopt policies and procedures that permit an opportunity for school systems to submit necessary documentation.
- **Senate Resolution 654** creates the Senate Study Committee on Legislative Solutions for the Safe Use of Cellular Telephones In Motor Vehicles.

Legislative Process Dates

Important Dates in the Legislative Process

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

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

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

39th 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.

28th day - General Senate bills and resolutions.

38th day - Local Senate bills and resolutions.

38th day - General House bills and resolutions.

40th 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

26th day - File with Secretary of the Senate. [Rule 3-1.2 (a)]

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

28th day - Committee report read upon convening. (A recommitted bill already 2nd read - report day 29.)

29th day - 2nd Reading. [Rule 4-2.6]

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

Local Senate Bills and Resolutions

35th day - File with Secretary of the Senate. [3-1.2 (a)]

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

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

39th day - 2nd Reading in House.

40th day - Favorable report and passage in House.

General House Bills and Resolutions

30th day - Transmitted from House and received by Secretary.

31st day - 1st Reading and referral to committee. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

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

39th day - Passage. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]

40th 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

39th day - 1st Reading and referral to committee.

40th 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]*