

JOBS Act, “Super Speeder” Law Passes Senate on Busy Day 36

By Matt Colvin

CHAMBER (March 25, 2009) - A bill designed to stimulate Georgia’s economy with tax incentives and credits passed the Senate during Legislative Day 36 at the Capitol. The Jobs, Opportunity, and Business Success (JOBS) Act of 2009 was overwhelmingly approved by Senate members by a vote of 43 to 7 on House Bill 481 and 46 to 6 on House Bill 482 which are the two bills that make up the legislative package. The Senate also joined the House in passing Governor Sonny Perdue’s Super Speeder legislation which would institute a \$200 fine on excessive

speeding. The new fine system’s proceeds would go directly to help fund a statewide trauma network. These two bills headlined a very busy day in the Upper Chamber which saw 19 bills pass from the floor to the House for final approval or to the Governor’s office to be signed into law.

Senate Majority Leader Chip Rogers (R-Woodstock) carried the JOBS Act in the Senate and praised the measure as the most pro-business legislation the General Assembly has ever

considered and believes its focus on protecting the small business will be the key to bringing Georgia through the current recession. Sen. Nan Orrock (D-Atlanta) rose in opposition to the bill as she referenced a study noting the fiscal impact the JOBS Act could have on the state’s revenue.



Sen. Rogers presents JOBS Act

Continued on pg 2



Upper Chamber Report

MARCH 26, 2009

Raegan Weber, Press Director
Kallarin Richards, Editor in Chief

Key Bills and Resolutions Introduced in the Senate

- **House Bill 706** authorizes the governing authority of the City of Lawrenceville to levy an excise tax.

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- **House Bill 710** changes certain provisions relating to powers of the South Georgia Regional Information Technology Authority.
- **House Bill 756** provides for a Board of Commissioners of Lowndes County.
- **House Bill 763** gives to the chairperson of the Board of Commissioners of Bacon County a vote only in the event of a tie vote.
- **House Bill 765** dissolves the Lamar County Livestock and Agricultural Exposition Authority.
- **House Bill 766** abolishes the office of elected county surveyor of Lamar County.
- **House Bill 769** provides for corporate boundaries for the City of Franklin Springs.
- **House Bill 770** establishes the compensation of the mayor and council members of the City of Franklin for a period of time.
- **Senate Bill 278** provides for graduation from high school in three years and to provide for grants for graduate postsecondary education for a high school student who graduates in three years.
- **Senate Bill 279** authorizes the City of Decatur to exercise all redevelopment and other powers.

TOP STORY, cont'd

Rogers closed the debate by pointing out several state and national economic policy groups and media outlets who have endorsed this measure before an overwhelming majority passed both HB 481 and 482 with the Senate committee substitute.

House Bill 481 and 482 comprise the JOBS Act with HB 481 providing a one-year filing fee holiday for new businesses, a \$500 credit towards the unemployment insurance tax for each newly hired employee that was receiving unemployment benefits, a \$2,400 income tax credit for each eligible employee hired, the refund of \$186 million in state held sales tax deposits, and the gradual elimination of the Business income tax for Georgia-based corporations. HB 482 is a referendum to eliminate the state inventory tax on all Georgia businesses.

Sen. Bill Heath (R-Bremen), one of Governor Perdue's administration floor leaders in the Senate presented the Super Speeder Bill (House Bill 160) stating the measure if passed will make a strong statement from the legislative body that they are committed to making Georgia's roads safer and provide additional funding for the statewide trauma network. HB 160 is comprised of two funding mechanisms: Part I of the legislation would increase certain driver's license reinstatement fees and would become effective in July of this year. Part II would take effect in January 2010

which would impose a \$200 fine on any motorist driving over 85 miles per hour on any road or highway and any driver traveling above 75 mph on any two-lane road or highway. The driver will be classified as a "super speeder" upon conviction. All fees collected under Part II would go into the state's general fund and be designated to help fund a statewide trauma network. HB 160 passed 42 to 10 and will now head to Governor Perdue's desk for a signature.

House bills passed on the Senate Floor that will head back over to the House for approval on Senate substitutes and/or amendments were: House Bill 126 which would enact the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act; House Bill 170 which would change the annual rental fees for state-owned marshland and water bottoms; House Bill 308 which makes several corrections to the Georgia Limited Liability Act; House Bill 312 incorporates new provisions to the S.A.F.E. Mortgage Licensing Act of 2008; House Bill 441 which



Sen. Heath points to a driving record, explaining how the Super Speeder bill will affect drivers and their records.

authorizes a taxpayer to request an expedited payment of sales tax claims for refund from the DOR Commissioner and House Bill 550 which allows for a mutual life insurer to become a stockholding insurance company.

House bills that passed without any changes and now await consideration by Governor Perdue include: House Bill 60 which provides licensing requirements for the fields of professional counseling, social work, or

marriage and family therapy; House Bill 116 would provide an exemption for sales and use tax on repair parts for aircrafts in Georgia; House Bill 149 is the Move on When Ready Act which would provide a program for upper class high school students to attend a post-secondary college for high school credit; House Bill 227 would allow persons who have a protective or restraining order or who are bona fide residents of a domestic abuse shelter to keep their residencies confidential for elections; House Bill 237 would revise the current financial assistance levels for adoptive parents; House Bill 300 would require local schools to educate parents on meningitis along with other school health issues; House Bill 302 would allow customers the option to block third party charges from telecommunications companies; House Bill 306 would allow a defendant to be released from custody pending the trial of his or her case on the condition that the defendant complies with the terms and conditions of an electronic pretrial release and monitoring program; House Bill 484 would allow for a dependent child of an active duty member in the armed forces to meet the residency requirements to receive HOPE Scholarship funds and House Bill 607 which would allow a Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs member to serve on the Georgia Department of Public Safety Board.

Senate members spent the first part of the day honoring several famous Georgians including Monica Kaufman Pearson, longtime WSB anchor (more information on pg 3), and NFL star Fernando Bryant, who also starred at Riverdale High School and the University Alabama. □

Sen. Seay Honors Notable Atlantan, Monica Pearson

By Hayley Howell

ATLANTA (March 25, 2009)—A resolution honoring Atlanta’s own distinguished fixture, Monica Pearson, has been introduced by Sen. Valencia Seay (D-Riverdale). Seay’s Senate Resolution 143 commends the famous WSB-TV anchor and model community citizen.

“Monica Pearson is an exemplary Atlantan for all of us, but especially women,” Seay praises. “She combines her efforts in the workforce and the community, simultaneously breaking ground in the journalism field and devoting significant time volunteering.”



Monica Pearson accepts honorary resolution at the Senate rostrum

A native of Louisville, Kentucky

and graduate of the University of Louisville, Pearson came to Atlanta and WSB-TV in 1975. She has won 28 local and regional Emmy Awards and in 1989 joined previous recipients such as Barbara Walters when she was awarded the Distinguished Service to Broadcasting Award, presented by DiGamma Kappa Honorary Society at the University of Georgia. Most recently, she was nominated as the Atlanta Woman’s 2009 Power

Woman of the Year and was on the cover of the magazine as well as the feature story.

The beloved face of Atlanta’s news, Pearson puts an incredible amount of time back

into the city she loves. She maintains a heavy schedule of volunteering including roles with Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, the Girl Scouts of Northwest Georgia, Exodus, the American Cancer Society, the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, and Senior Citizens Services. She takes the time to read to elementary school children and is a devoted volunteer for the Meals on Wheels program.

In 2000, she was named the first woman president of the Atlanta Tipoff Clubs Awards for High School Basketball Players. She was also the first African-American and the second woman to serve as chairman of the Metropolitan United Way.

“Pearson is someone we all should look up to and take notes from,” says Seay. “She is a respected symbol of strength and diligence, and that is the key to success.” □

Sen. Johnson’s Home School Honors Program Bill Passes through the General Assembly

By Jennifer Kitt

ATLANTA (March 25, 2009) – Sen. Eric Johnson’s (R-Savannah) Senate Bill 210 passed today in the House and is now ready for the Governor’s signature. The measure allows home school program students to be eligible for the Governor’s Honors Program, now only open to public and private high school students.

“All Georgia’s students deserve recognition for their academic achievements. Now talented home school students will be eligible for this pres-

tigious honor, providing them greater opportunities for scholarships and easier acceptance to colleges,” said Sen. Johnson.

The Governor’s Honors Program is a six-week summer instructional program open to rising juniors and seniors and is designed to provide gifted and talented high school students challenging and enriching educational opportunities that may not be available during the regular school year. The Georgia Governor’s Honors Program is fully-funded by the Georgia General Assembly, and operates at no cost to the participant.



Johnson has been a champion for education in the State of Georgia. As a member of the Senate Education and Youth Committee, Sen. Johnson has worked to improve the quality of education for Georgia students. In addition to his work for home school students, Johnson has also created legislation promoting school vouchers, improving school safety and promoting school choice.

For questions regarding Sen. Johnson’s honor program bill, SB 210, please contact his office at 404.656.5109. □

Sen. Smith's Life without Parole Bill Passes House

Judicial Retirement Measure also Receives Final Passage

By Kallarin Richards

ATLANTA (March 25, 2009) – Sen. Preston Smith (R-Rome) was successful today in his steadfast effort to expand sentencing options in murder cases, as the House passed his Senate Bill 13 that allows prosecutors to seek sentences of life imprisonment without parole. Under current law, in a non-death penalty case, the only available sentencing option for a court is life with parole upon conviction. A prosecutor must first seek the death penalty in a murder case before they can ask for a life without parole sentence.

“For too long, families of murder victims have been unable to ensure that convicted murders will not be

returned to the streets. Now courts will have the option to sentence a convicted murderer to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole,” said Smith. “Death penalty cases will now be given the focused attention they deserve as prosecutors will have the discretion to seek a more suitable sentence free from arbitrary processes.”

Sen. Smith has championed the issue over two legislative sessions, each time with the Senate overwhelmingly voting in favor of the bill. This legislation has been a top priority for district attorneys, as it saves them from having to mount an expensive death penalty trial that can drive up costs over the length of the trial. The measure has also re-

ceived wide support from prosecutors and courts across Georgia.

Sen. Smith's judicial retirement bill also saw passage in the House today, and is on its way to the Governor's desk for his signature. Under Senate Bill 109, certain duties of the Department of Administrative Services are transferred to the appropriate judicial agencies, and clarifications are made as to the source of funds used to cover employer contributions.

For more information on the Georgia State Senate or to view Senate Bills 13 and 109, please visit www.senate.ga.gov. □

Sen. Reed Active in the Atlanta Community

Sen. Reed Responds to the Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation Lawsuit

By Kindra Baer

ATLANTA (March 25, 2009) – Sen. Kasim Reed (D-Atlanta) today spoke out against a lawsuit by the Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation that would prevent Atlanta residents from funding additional police and fire officers. In a lawsuit filed on Friday, March 20, 2009, the Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation filed suit in the Superior Court of Fulton County to prevent enactment of Senate Bill 77, Sen. Reed's legislation that would enable the citizens of Atlanta to vote in a referendum to fund public safety by increasing the number of police and fire officers.

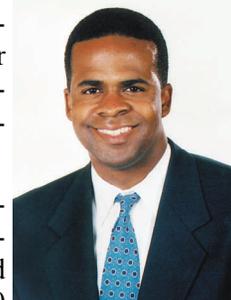
“Let the people decide. SB 77 gives Atlanta voters a solution that adds up

to 200 more police officers and firefighters when we need more, not less public safety,” said Sen. Reed. “Citizens of good conscience can agree or disagree about this solution, but no one should try to stop the people of Atlanta from having the right to decide for themselves. Attempts to deny voters this important opportunity are contrary to the rights of the people to decide for themselves and, in my opinion, contrary to the public safety needs of our city and community.”

If approved by voters, SB 77 would fund approximately 200 more police officers and firefighters with a 1 mill property tax. In the City of Atlanta, this legislation would eliminate current furloughs for police and firefighters and allow the city to hire additional officers at an average cost to taxpayers of approximately \$6 per month. This bill requires voter ap-

proval and is subject to a four year sunset unless reauthorized by citizens.

SB 77 offers Atlanta voters a solution that could place up to 200 additional police officers and firefighters in communities at a time when the city needs more, not less public safety. The injunctive relief sought by the Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation would prevent the citizens of Atlanta from having the right to decide this matter for themselves. Moreover, by asking the court to enjoin SB 77, the organization is requesting judicial intervention into the legislative affairs of the Georgia Legislature that is unprecedented, not well grounded in Georgia law and will fail. □



Sen. Reed Participates in Limmud Conference

By Kindra Baer

ATLANTA (March 25, 2009) – This past Saturday, March 21, Sen. Kasim Reed (D-Atlanta) participated in Limmud Atlanta+Southeast, a conference dedicated to important issues in the Jewish Community.

Limmud's mission is to celebrate Jewish life and learning in all of its diversity and is driven by the belief

that diversity of prospective dedication to learning in its broadest sense, and a strong sense of volunteerism are keys to mobilizing and inspiring Jewish individuals and community.

Sen. Reed, along with Sherry Frank, led a discussion at the Limmud conference titled, "Black-Jewish Relations and the Obama Election: New Opportunities to Build on Old Relationships."

"I am grateful to have participated

in this important conference and appreciated the opportunity to discuss how we can strengthen the ties between our two communities," said Reed. Sen. Reed has been a leader in the Atlanta Black Jewish Coalition and traveled to Israel with members of the Georgia General Assembly in 2007 on a trip sponsored by the American Jewish Committee's Project Interchange.

For more information on Limmud Atlanta+Southeast, visit www.limmudatl.org. □

In Committee News...

MARTA Would Receive Much-Needed Monetary Help with Senate Bill 120

By Hayley Howell

450 CAP (March 23, 2009)—Dr. Beverly Scott, CEO of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), gave an enlightening presentation to the Senate Transportation Committee this week. Scott explained to the committee the crucial purpose MARTA plays for Georgia and the necessary direction the state would need to go to keep it maintained.

Scott informed the committee of the key roles MARTA plays in assuring mobility and reliability of travel for Georgians. It travels 755 million passenger miles annually, has about 479,000 weekday riders, and 54 percent of weekday riders use it for commute to work. It is the equivalent of a nine-lane freeway during peak hours.

The economic value MARTA brings to the state is substantial with at least 20,000 related jobs in the metro area and a \$2.1 billion impact

on state economy. Development for Georgia's future is also dependent on the transit. Over 41,454 housing units, 7.5 million square feet of commercial space, and 9,000 hotel rooms are completed, under construction, or planned in station areas.

Even with significant increases in ridership over the past year, MARTA, the 9th largest transit system in the nation, is facing a financial crisis of historic proportions. This crisis was set in motion even during strong economic times, but has become significantly worse by the nation's current economic recession. In June 2007, MARTA projected the use of all of its available operating reserves by the end of Fiscal Year 2010.

MARTA has come to a financial conundrum. It splits its revenues from its 1 percent sales tax into two equal but separate halves—"Operating" which funds current needs and "Capital" which funds future expansion. Money from one side of the budget cannot be used for the other.

This has placed MARTA into a stalemate in which current problems with the transit continue while the Operating funds decline and the Capital funds are inaccessible.

Scott took on this issue by presenting a 2009 MARTA legislative agenda which outlines required legislation for the company to flourish. Sen. Doug Stoner's (D-Smyrna) "Self-Help Bill" (SB 120) would eliminate the 50 percent Capital and 50 percent Operations sales tax split requirement. By doing this, it permits interest income from Capital reserves to be used for Operations, and the Capital budget would be replaced with incoming Federal Stimulus funds. Current repair needs come before future development needs, and the Self-Help Bill will improve MARTA by focusing on its most pertinent problems. □



Education Continues to Ensure Needs of Students are Met

By Ravae Graham

310 CLOB (March 25-26, 2009) – The Senate Education and Youth Committee, chaired by Sen. Dan Weber (R-Dunwoody), convened over a two day period to consider five bills.

Rep. Matt Ramsey's (R-Peachtree City) House Bill 278 waives certain expenditure controls under the Quality Basic Education Act (QBE). Under the measure, local school systems are allowed to waive expenditure control requirements relating to direct institutional costs, media centers, and staff and professional development, without penalty from the system. Additionally, the

bill provides that any QBE funds for dual enrolled students in charter schools will remain at the school. The bill passed by a vote of 6 to 1.

Legislation aimed at mandating school hours was sponsored by Rep. Tom Graves (R-Ranger). The bill (HB 193) allows the State Board of Education to define the length of the school year as 180 days or the equivalent number of hours. Graves assured the committee that the measure is intended to provide flexibility, not four day school weeks. With the support of the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE), the bill passed.

Other bills that were unanimously passed on Wednesday included Senate Resolution 595 creating the Senate Study Committee on Regional

Educational Service Agencies (RESA) and Senate Resolution 649 urging educational agencies, associations, boards, and commissions to make their first priority the education and well being of the students of a school system.

On Thursday, Rep. Alisha Morgan (D-Austell) presented House Bill 251, encouraging public school choice. The bill allows a student the ability to transfer to another school in the resident school system if space is available. Sen. Don Balfour (R-Snellville) supported the bill, but voiced concern with tax money paid to local systems to educate a student not being transferred with the child. The bill passed by a 5 to 1 vote. □

Safety Regulations for Teen Drivers Passes Public Safety Committee

By Hayley Howell

307 CLOB (March 25, 2009)— The Senate Public Safety Committee met this Wednesday, chaired by Sen. Jack Murphy (R-Cumming), and passed safer regulations for teen drivers. After last week's discussion, Rep. Matt Ramsey's (R-Peachtree City) House Bill 23, which prohibits any driver under the age of 18 from operating a motor vehicle while using a wireless telecommunication device, went to a vote. Fines for engaging in this behavior range from \$50 to \$100 along with 2 points being added to the violator's driving record. The bill passed unanimously 7-0.



Georgia's inmates will have to pay for their medication with Rep. Barbara Massey Reece's (D-Menlo) House Bill 464. The bill designates a reasonable price to prescription medication used by inmates, which is usually paid for by the taxpayer. It excludes medication prescribed for conditions related to pregnancy, chronic illnesses, or severe mental health designations as determined by the Department of Corrections. Because inmates receive payment for participating in work detail and there are usually funds with their families, Reece explained most would be able to pay for their prescriptions. Reece stated that the legislation is intended for inmates to be more responsible, and it would cut down on frivolous health visits. Inmates unable to pay, however, would not be denied medical ser-

vices. She believes this could bring about \$1.8 million into Georgia's Treasury. The bill passed with 7-0 votes.

Other pieces of legislation that passed unanimously included House Bill 50 by Rep. Mickey Channell (R-Greensboro) that provides for when a person dies in a hospital as a result of an act that occurred in another county, the hospital must immediately notify the coroner of the medical examiner of the county where the act occurred. Rep. Wendell Willard's (R-Sandy Springs) House Bill 545 creates the profession of a "certified process server," and Rep. Jill Chambers' (R-Atlanta) House Bill 662 requires the Georgia Building Authority to reimburse the Department of Public Safety for the cost of performing police and security duties within Capitol Square. All passed 7-0. □

Key Bills, cont'd

- **Senate Bill 280** changes the procedure for choosing members of the Macon-Bibb County Water and Sewerage Authority.
- **Senate Bill 281** authorizes churches to determine whether to permit persons licensed to carry firearms to carry on church premises or functions.
- **Senate Resolution 664** acknowledges the importance of a comprehensive approach to providing patient centered care and creating the Senate Study Committee on the Patient Centered Medical Home.
- **Senate Resolution 665** creates the Senate Administration of Dental Benefits for Medicaid and PeachCare Study Committee.
- **Senate Resolution 667** creates the Senate Retrofit of Diesel Engines Study Committee.

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]*