

Raegan Weber, Press Director
Kallarin Richards, Editor in Chief



TOP STORY

Measure to Fund HTRG in 2009 Sails out of Senate Chamber

By Kallarin Richards

After a motion to reconsider the chamber's vote on funding the Homeowner Tax Relief Grant (HTRG) in 2009 failed in the Senate, House Bill 143 will now go to the Governor for his consideration. The bill represents a commitment throughout the legislature to fund the \$428 million grants this year and also stipulates that funding will be provided in future years in the event of a budget surplus.

Before addressing a few pieces of upcoming legislation, Senate Minority Leader Robert Brown (D-Macon) raised concerns that the bill unconstitutionally binds future legislatures by outlining requirements for how the grant program is to be funded in subsequent years. He then went on to highlight a legislative package designed to provide aid to Georgia veterans, which Sen. Emanuel Jones (D-Decatur) later

addressed in more detail. Included in the package are measures to provide tax relief for combat veterans, marriage counseling for families struggling with post traumatic stress syndrome and those facing home foreclosures, and a measure to ensure that veterans have adequate housing. This last bill comes in response to the December closing of a domiciliary unit in Milledgeville that forced 81 veterans to find alternative housing.

Continued on page 2

Other Key Bills and Resolutions Introduced in the Senate

- **Senate Bill 122** covers employee insurance and benefit plans, repeals and divides the Georgia Retiree Health Benefit Fund, and creates the Georgia State Retiree Health Benefit Fund and the Georgia School Retiree Health Benefit Fund.
- **Senate Bill 123** regulates and permits licenses to pharmacy benefits managers by the Commissioner of Insurance including license requirements and filing fees.
- **Senate Bill 124** states that when public disclosure is not required then social security numbers in public documents shall not be disclosed.
- **Senate Bill 125** requires insurance companies to indicate on their premium statements to consumers the amount of the premium attributable to premium taxes paid by the insurer.
- **Senate Bill 126** provides certain requirements in elections and primaries to qualify for a party's nomination or to run for public office.

Inside this issue:

Measure to Fund HTRG in 2009 Sails out of Senate Chamber	1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Bill 127 adds a penalty, late fees, and interest for failure to remit certain funds and reports to the Georgia Superior Court Clerk's Cooperative Authority.
Senate Science and Technology Committee Recommends Tougher Internet Fraud Legislation	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Bill 128 provides for the insurances, at the option of the owner, permanent license plates for boat trailers, utility trailers, and noncommercial cattle trailers when registering and licensing motor vehicles.
Beavers, Hunting Lights Focus of Natural Resources	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Bill 129 is the "Public Retirement Systems Investment Authority Law" which expands the definition of the term "large retirement" in which such investments may be made up to a certain amount and shields the information from such an investment from public scrutiny.
Public Safety Committee Passes Key Legislation to Further Protect Georgians	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Bill 130 covers selling and other trade practices to establish procedures and requirements for the electronic and lease-purchase of goods to provide that anyone entering into electronic lease-protection agreements will receive certain information and have certain rights with regard to the goods that are subject to the agreement.
Legislative Process Dates	4	

TOP STORY, cont'd

The Senate voted on three additional bills today, each which passed overwhelmingly. Under a measure authored by Sen. John Douglas (R-Social Circle), anyone on the national or state sexual offender registry is restricted from running for or being elected to a local school board. Sen. Johnny Grant (R-Milledgeville) also saw the passage of his bills, the first which reinstates the Probation Options Management Program under the Department of Corrections. The second urges the Board of Regents to designate Georgia Military College as the military junior college of Georgia, as well as to maintain current programs, such as the military science program.

Among the many special guests recognized in the Senate today, former Atlanta Braves player Ryan Klesko was honored for his outstanding career in baseball and for his contributions to the community. After playing 10 years with the Braves and for the San Diego Padres and San Francisco Giants, Klesko returned to Georgia to raise his family where he has been active in land conservation efforts. He successfully developed



Former Braves player Ryan Klesko is honored at the Senate Rostrum

the first forestry carbon offset project to be accepted on the Georgia Carbon Registry. Also dedicating his time to children, he is the founder of the Blue Ryno Foundation, which helps children affected by cancer and their families.

The Senate adjourned until 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, February 11.

□

Other Key Bills, cont'd

- **Senate Bill 131** having to do with wills, trusts, and estates, revises provisions relating to trusts, charitable trusts, trustees, and trust investments.
- **Senate Resolution 173** urges the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia to establish and offer a teacher education program at each of its universities offering four-year degree programs.
- **Senate Resolution 174** authorizes the General Assembly to enact legislation and appropriate funds necessary to provide for retirement credit for retired members of the Peace Officers' Annuity and Benefit Fund for service rendered prior to January 1, 1976.
- **Senate Resolution 179** requires mandatory funding of homeowner tax relief grants.

Senate Science and Technology Committee Recommends Tougher Internet Fraud Legislation

By Matt Colvin

ATLANTA (February 10, 2009) – A bill placing stronger restrictions on Internet and electronic mail fraud is on its way to the Senate floor. Senate Bill 59 was unanimously passed from the Senate Science and Technology Committee today at the Capitol. Committee Chairman Senator Cecil Staton (R-Macon) spoke on behalf of the bill as its primary sponsor. Staton

noted the bill would prohibit a person from using computers to send commercial e-mail messages with the intent to deceive or mislead recipients with fraudulent claims in the header message or email body and would give prosecutors the right to enforce criminal or civil charges against the violators. Violations would also include any attempt by the sender to hide the origin location of the fraudulent emails. Staton mentioned his intent as the bill's au-



thor is to allow Georgia laws to catch up with Internet crimes and provide law enforcement and prosecuting attorneys the resources to pursue and punish offenders. A person found guilty of violating the proposed statute may be punishable with a prison sentence ranging from three to five years and fines from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

The bill will now head to the Senate Rules Committee before being taken up on the Senate floor for consideration.

□

Beavers, Hunting Lights Focus of Natural Resources

By Ravae Graham

ATLANTA (February 10, 2009) — State Senator Ross Tolleson (R-Perry) convened the Senate Natural Resources and Environment Committee and took up two bills sponsored by Sen. John Bulloch (R-Ochlocknee).

Senate Bill 110 allows anyone with a commercial trapping license to

trap beavers on state, county or municipal roads. The dam building, feeding and lodging behavior of beavers can flood roadways, collapse reservoir dams, undermine the integrity of roadways causing millions of dollars in damage and threaten public safety on roads and highways. SB 110 unanimously passed.

The committee wrapped up by unanimously passing SB 111, which removes restrictions on light voltage

and requires any light used to hunt these animals be carried on the hunter, affixed to the helmet or hat, or be part of the belt system worn by a hunter. It also specifies that alligators are no longer allowed to be hunted at night with any light. State law currently allows raccoons, opossums, foxes, bobcats and feral hogs to be hunted at night with a light that does not exceed six volts or fuel type lanterns. Additionally, alligators may be hunted at night with a light that does not exceed 12 volts. □

Public Safety Committee Passes Key Legislation to Further Protect Georgians

By Hayley Howell

ATLANTA (February 10, 2009)—The Senate Public Safety Committee convened today under Chairman Jack Murphy (R-Cumming) to discuss five pieces of legislation.

Sen. Gloria Butler (D-Stone Mountain) began by proposing Senate Bill 4 which expands the duties of sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, constables, and marshals to include notifying a protected person by email or telephone that a restraining order, protective order, injunction, or similar court order has been served on the restrained person. The bill passed with unanimous votes among the committee.

Sen. David Shafer (R-Duluth) called attention to an oversight in Georgia law that doesn't protect some emergency workers' private information. Therefore, he proposed SB 26 which amends the current law to also exclude certain

personal information of firefighters from the Open Records Act. There was no opposition to the bill, and it passed unanimously across the committee.

The committee began discussion on Sen. Seth Harp's (R-Midland) bills - SB 52, which requires registration for those involved in metal theft with the local sheriff and SB 53, which subjects for forfeiture all motor vehicles, tools, and weapons used in any manner for a crime. Further discussion on the bills and possible voting will be taken up next week.

Sen. Chip Pearson (R-Dawsonville) proposed SB 20 which prohibits local governments from enacting, adopting, implementing, or enforcing sanctuary policies. A "sanctuary policy" is defined as any regulation, rule, policy, or practice which prevents local officials or employees from reporting a person's immigration status or otherwise providing immigration status information.

Local governments ("sanctuary

cities") that violate this legislation or fail to cooperate with the Federal government with regard to reporting a person's immigration status will be subject to the withholding of state funding or state administered Federal funding.

Sen. Pearson gave examples of cases where illegal immigrants, who had been arrested before and not reported as illegal, had later gone on to cause harm to others. Supporters of the bill explained that there is registered proof that illegal immigration is being allowed in places throughout Georgia. Other supporters explained that illegal immigration brings an increased crime rate while also taking jobs away from Georgians and further hurting the economy. Opposition stated that there was no official proof of illegal immigration being permitted, and that this bill would send the negative message that Georgia is not a welcoming state for immigration.

The bill passed with the majority vote. □

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]*