

## 2009 Legislative Session Begins

By Raegan Weber

The 2009 Legislative Session began with the ceremonial call to order by Lt. Governor Casey Cagle, the Pledge of Allegiance, the traditional Devotion given this year by Dr. Benny Tate, and the swearing in of new Senate members. In addition, State Senator Tommie Williams was elected by unanimous vote of the Senate to the leadership position of President Pro Tempore.

Cagle welcomed Pastor Benny Tate, Senior Pastor of Rock Springs Church in Milner to serve as the Chaplain of the Day for the first day of session in the State Senate. Pastor Tate gave an inspirational Devotion and opened with his remarks for a "Fine 2009." He provided his guidance by encouraging our State leaders to "settle on the past, set priorities, stop the pressure and secure a purpose" in serving a greater calling and the people of Georgia.

things that matter as we make important policy decisions that affect the lives of Georgians," Lt. Governor Casey Cagle said.

Pastor Benny Tate is currently the Senior Pastor of Rock Springs Church, which holds multiple worship services each Sunday and offers an extensive variety of ministries. Some of the outreach ministries include a prison ministry, a nursing home ministry and even a church sponsored medical clinic for the uninsured. Pastor Tate is the host of the "Apples of Gold" radio program, currently broadcasting on nine middle-Georgia radio stations delivering a simple yet profound message.

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"It was an honor to welcome Pastor Tate to the Senate today. His message both encouraged senators and inspired each of us to lead our state in the right direction. The tradition of the Senate to begin each day with a devotional and prayer sets our mind and heart toward

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## Sen. Tommie Williams Elected Senate President Pro Tempore

By Kallarin Richards

State Sen. Tommie Williams (R-Lyons) was elected Senate president pro tempore today on the first day of the 2009 session of the Georgia General Assembly.

"My Senate colleagues have shown me great support today by electing me to serve as their president pro

tempore, and I am humbled by their vote of confidence," said Sen. Williams. "I have the greatest respect for every member of the Senate, and am proud of the bipartisan spirit that our chamber embodies. This year it will be crucial to put party politics aside and work together in the best interest of all Georgians."

After serving 11 years in the Senate, Sen. Williams was nominated for pro tem by his peers during the Republican caucus elections in November. Sen. Williams becomes the 67<sup>th</sup> president pro tem in the history of Georgia, the Senate's second-highest ranking position after the lieutenant governor.

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# Upper Chamber Report

JANUARY 13, 2009 — DAY 2

Raegan Weber, Press Director

Kallarin Richards, Editor in Chief

## 2009 Session (continued)

He is a graduate of Covington Theological Seminary in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and has been an active community leader in Milner.

Cagle welcomed the Honorable Arch McGarity, Chief Judge of the Henry County Superior Court, to the State Senate today to swear in Georgia's State Senators for the 2009 Legislative Session.

"We were proud to choose Judge McGarity to swear in our Senators and participate in one of our most valued traditions. Judge McGarity is a man of integrity who has worked diligently for justice in the state of Georgia and is someone I am honored to call a friend," Lt. Governor Casey Cagle said.

Born in Henry County, Georgia,

Judge McGarity has been a lifelong resident of McDonough. He graduated from the University of Georgia and Mercer Law School. While in private practice, Judge McGarity served as City Attorney for McDonough, Assistant County Attorney for Henry County and Judge of the McDonough Recorders Court. McGarity was appointed Superior Court Judge in the Flint Circuit by Governor Zell Miller in 1996. He and his wife, Sandra, have three children and attend Wesley Way United Methodist Church.

Senator Tommie Williams was unanimously elected as President Pro Tempore of the Senate. Sen. Williams has served the Senate as majority leader since 2005, working with the former President Pro Tempore Eric Johnson and Lt. Governor Cagle to develop successful policy decisions and serving as the primary spokesperson for the majority party. Among his numerous committee assignments, Sen. Williams

served as chairman of the Senate Committee on Assignments and as vice chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. He has served in the Senate for 11 years.

Secretary of the Senate Bob Ewing was unanimously elected to serve another term as Secretary. He has held this post for nearly 30 years.

Senate Majority Leader Chip Rogers provided his thoughts and guidance as he and his colleagues dive into budget negotiations and balance Georgia's budget. He reminded the Chamber on-lookers and leaders to "recognize individual sovereignty" and "not advance our own political interests; rather remember that we work for the individual citizens and we are here to represent their best interests." □

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## Sen. Williams Elected Pro Tem, (cont'd)

The president pro tem assumes responsibilities in the absence of the lieutenant governor, and speaks on behalf of the entire Senate and the state of Georgia.

Sen. Williams has served the Senate as majority leader since 2005, working with the president pro tem and lieutenant governor to develop successful policy decisions and serving as the primary spokesperson for the majority party. Among his numerous committee assignments, Sen. Williams served as chairman of the Sen-

ate Committee on Assignments and as vice chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

During the 2008 session, Sen. Williams passed two pieces of important legislation for Georgia. The first made significant reforms to the state's Certificate of Need (CON) laws, giving patients a chance to maximize the full potential of health-care providers, increasing competition and innovation, as well as allowing for an innovative cancer treatment center to come to Georgia. He also passed a measure to help failing colleges and universities across the state regain accreditation status.

Sen. Williams was also named to several influential committees, including Finance, where he will serve



as vice chairman, Appropriations, Regulated Industries and Utilities, Rules, Reapportionment and Redistricting, Education and Youth, and State Institutions and Property. □

# Senate Welcomes New Members

By Ravae Graham

The State Senate welcomed five new members today: Lester Jackson (D-Savannah), Freddie Powell Sims (D-Albany), John Crosby (R-Tifton), Gail Buckner (D-Morrow) and Jim Butterworth (R-Turnerville). Incoming senators took the Oath of Office and were officially sworn in as the Senate convened for the first day of the 2009 Legislative Session.

“It was an honor to welcome each new senator today,” said Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle. “We look forward to working together as we focus on the priorities set before us this session. With a looming budget shortfall, I’m confident the Senate will produce well constructed legislation that will put the most important needs of Georgians first.”

Sen. Jackson was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1998 where he served as vice chairman of the Health and Human Services Committee and Assistant Majority Whip. Following his service in the House, Jackson was selected by the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus as Legislator of the Year because of his ongoing effort to improve access to health care, support public schools and improve public safety.

Sen. Crosby is a Republican representing the 13<sup>th</sup> District. Prior to his election to the Senate, Crosby practiced law from 1963 until he was elected to the Tift Superior Court bench in 1980. Most recently, Crosby continued to serve as a senior judge in various courtrooms around the state until his election to the state Senate.

Sen. Sims has previously represented



the citizens of Albany through her service in the House of Representatives. In addition to her Legislative Service, Sims’ community, civic and professional involvement has been extensive. Her involvement in organizations such as Kiwanis International, Fort Valley State University Foundation Board and service as Deputy Registrar for Dougherty County has made her the recipient of several awards and certificates, including the 2004 Outstanding Financial Contributions to Capital Campaign for Fort Valley State University.

Sen. Buckner of Jonesboro is a 16 year veteran of the Georgia General Assembly, having served in the House of Representatives from 1990 to 2006 when she left office to run for Secretary of State. During her service in the House, Sen. Buckner championed education issues to provide for safe schools and worked hard to improve the research, prevention and treatment of cancer available in Georgia.

Sen. Butterworth will represent the 50<sup>th</sup> District. Prior to his election to the Senate, Butterworth served as

chairman of the Habersham County Board of Commissioners. To further his goal in bringing local governments together and improving infrastructure across Habersham County, Butterworth served as an executive board member of several local organizations, including the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs All hazard Council and the Georgia DCA Regional Advisory Committee.

“I want to welcome and congratulate the new members of the Senate. It’s an honor to serve with them in the Senate and together we can accomplish great things for all Georgians,” said Senate President Pro Tempore Tommie Williams (R-Lyons).

Newly elected senators and their colleagues face many important issues going into the 2009 session, including the state budget, transportation, education and healthcare. Constituents can keep abreast of the news from the state Capitol by visiting the Senate website at [www.senate.ga.gov](http://www.senate.ga.gov).

□

Tuesday, January 13

## DAILY NEWS CLIPS

### Economy/Budget

*Cash-strapped states anxiously await federal government funds*

By [Judy Keen](#),

USA Today

Some states are counting on the federal economic stimulus plan being developed by President-elect Barack Obama and Congress to help them avoid deep spending cuts.

Georgia:

Gov. Sonny Perdue, a Republican, has ordered most state agencies to cut budgets by 8%, furloughed state workers and increased fees at public colleges.

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2009-01-12-stateside\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2009-01-12-stateside_N.htm)

*Legislators to consider cigarette tax*

BY TIM CHITWOOD

Ledger Enquirer

Facing a spiraling economy and a budget shortfall estimated at between \$2 billion and \$2.5 billion, Georgia leaders this year must ponder deep budget cuts and possibly tax increases.

As the state General Assembly convenes in Atlanta today, some Republicans are saying no tax increases will pass, but not all proposals are beyond consideration.

[http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/breaking\\_news/story/575856.html](http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/breaking_news/story/575856.html)

*In metro Atlanta's unfinished subdivisions, quiet reigns*

By [KEVIN DUFFY](#)

Atlanta Journal-Constitution

David Parker's family lives in one of the quietest subdivisions in metro Atlanta, Winchester Farms in Carroll County. No music, no barking dogs, no traffic.

Why? Because the Parkers don't have any neighbors. The rocking chairs on the front porch of their \$399,000 house face empty lots.

[http://www.ajc.com/business/content/business/stories//2009/01/11/atlanta\\_housing\\_crisis.html](http://www.ajc.com/business/content/business/stories//2009/01/11/atlanta_housing_crisis.html)

*Year of doing more with less begins in Georgia Legislature*

By Chris Thomas

WRDW.com

Local lawmakers are back at the state capitol for the start of the legislative session. How will Augusta fair as the state battles a multi-billion dollar budget crisis? News 12's Chris Thomas traveled to Atlanta for a preview of what's to come.

"There's no money," said Rep. Barbara Sims. "That's bottom-line."

The real battle this year will be digging the state out of a \$2 billion hole.

<http://www.wrdw.com/politics/headlines/37471864.html>

*More than 8,400 properties — a record — set for foreclosure sale*

By [KEVIN DUFFY](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

A record number of metro Atlanta properties are scheduled for foreclosure auctions next month, Equity Depot re-

ported Monday.

In the 13 counties Equity Depot tracks, 8,425 properties are scheduled to be auctioned Feb. 3. The previous high was 7,967 properties from last September.

[http://www.ajc.com/business/content/business/stories/2009/01/13/atlanta\\_foreclosure\\_auction.html](http://www.ajc.com/business/content/business/stories/2009/01/13/atlanta_foreclosure_auction.html)

## Session '09

*Ga. lawmakers kick off 2009 promising to cooperate*

By SHANNON McCAFFREY and GREG BLUESTEIN

Associated Press

Georgia's legislative leaders sought to project a unified front as they opened the 2009 session Monday at the Capitol.

Facing a huge budget shortfall that's likely to mean billions of dollars in spending cuts, this year's session opened with none of the animosity that dominated the start of 2008.

<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2009/01/12/ap5910283.html>

*Session Recap*

FOX5 News at 10:00 With Amanda Davis and Russ Spencer

WAGA-ATL (FOX) – Atlanta

<http://mms.tveyes.com/Transcript.asp?StationID=775&DateTime=1/13/2009%201:06:28%20AM&Term=Cagle&PlayClip=TRUE>

*Legislators Return for 40-day Session*

Nelson Mullins

Gold Dome Report

They are BACK! Legislators descended upon the State's Capitol today with the first of 40 Legislative Days now behind them to accomplish the "people's business." Some among the crowd were newly seated and sworn while other faces were seasoned veterans of the legislative process.

While the federal news is the major buzz - including the upcoming inauguration of President-elect Obama and how the Congress and new President will further work on "jump-starting" the nation's economy – here in Georgia, the news is already focusing on the Governor's race in 2010. At the packed Friends of Agriculture-sponsored Wild Hog Supper last evening, lawmakers and political "wannabes" turned out to press the flesh and be seen by those in power and those with large purses who dole out campaign contributions. So far, on the Republican side, there are several who have announced intentions of pursuing the Governor's Office including Lt. Governor Casey Cagle, Insurance Commissioner John Oxendine, and Secretary of State Karen Handle. Democrats presently rumored to be likely candidates for Governor in 2010 are former Governor Roy Barnes and Rep. DuBose Porter (D-Dublin). Of course, many other names have been mentioned so it is presently unclear who will be on the full slate of actual contenders for either party at the moment.

[http://www.nelsonmullins.com/news/nelson-mullins-newsletter\\_detail.cfm?id=CCE98F34-AF29-8A46-6F47526ED77FB8D2&CFID=132190&CFTOKEN=b11d9f88fa33c529-5EEC5DC1-FFCB-10A1-1812949036497A34](http://www.nelsonmullins.com/news/nelson-mullins-newsletter_detail.cfm?id=CCE98F34-AF29-8A46-6F47526ED77FB8D2&CFID=132190&CFTOKEN=b11d9f88fa33c529-5EEC5DC1-FFCB-10A1-1812949036497A34)

*State Legislature comes to order*

By Cal Cannady

WALB.com

How will Georgia lawmakers spend your tax dollars and work out of the current economic crisis? That is the biggest question as they begin their work in Atlanta.

So far so good. Everyone knows they have tough choices as almost everyone program or agency will lose funding -- but who and how much could be where the fireworks start.

<http://www.walb.com/Global/story.asp?S=9659968>

*Lawmakers kick off 2009 promising to compromise*

By Walter C. Jones

Savannah Morning News

Legislators haven't passed any of the bills in recent years that would make it illegal to use cell phones while driving, but on Monday members of the House enacted a rule that prohibits each other from using them while making laws.

That and other minor rule changes and a few new faces were among the developments when the General Assembly opened for a session that will be marked by a deficit that could approach \$2.5 billion and Gov. Sonny Perdue's stimulus plan nearly half that size.

<http://savannahnow.com/node/652050>

## Education

*Morris Brown fights for survival*

By [GAYLE WHITE](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

The call and response rang out like a cheer.

“One-eight,” yelled Stanley Pritchett, Morris Brown College’s acting president.

“Eight-one,” shouted back the 60 or so students in the college auditorium.

The significance? 1881 is the year the college was founded in the basement of Atlanta’s Big Bethel A.M. E. Church.

But now the question is whether it can survive in the midst of a financial crisis and six-year struggle to regain lost accreditation.

[http://www.ajc.com/services/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2009/01/12/morris\\_brown.html?cxtype=rss&xsvc=7&cxcat=13](http://www.ajc.com/services/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2009/01/12/morris_brown.html?cxtype=rss&xsvc=7&cxcat=13)

## Health

*Peanut butter plant in Georgia helping federal investigators*

Atlanta Journal Constitution

Federal investigators have conclusively linked salmonella bacteria that sickened 410 people in 43 states — including five Georgians — to a peanut butter manufacturer with a plant in Blakely in southwest Georgia.

Stewart Parnell, the president of the Virginia-based Peanut Corporation of America, said Monday in a statement the company was working with federal authorities. It’s not known whether the contamination occurred in the Blakely facility.

[http://www.ajc.com/services/content/metro/stories/2009/01/12/peanut\\_butter\\_plant.html?cxtype=rss&cxsvc=7&cxcat=13](http://www.ajc.com/services/content/metro/stories/2009/01/12/peanut_butter_plant.html?cxtype=rss&cxsvc=7&cxcat=13)

## Crime/ Judicial

*Court upholds anti-gang law*

By [Tom Crawford](#)

The Georgia Report

The Georgia Supreme Court unanimously upheld the anti-gang statute as constitutional, ruling that the Street Gang Terrorism and Prevention Act “is not unconstitutionally overbroad” and does not “infringe upon the First Amendment right to freedom of association.”

The law had been challenged by Efrain Rodriguez and Gilberto Rodriguez prior to their trial in DeKalb County on charges that they murdered Jesus Silencio Ramirez and assaulted Claudia Silencio.

[http://www.ciclt.net/garpt/main.asp?Client=garpt&PT=n\\_detail&N\\_ID=402707](http://www.ciclt.net/garpt/main.asp?Client=garpt&PT=n_detail&N_ID=402707)

## Transportation

*Georgia Needs Statewide Solution For Transportation*

By Georgia House Speaker Glenn Richardson

Insider Advantage

If we are to continue Georgia's growth and prosperity, we must solve our transportation issues for the entire state. Adding a lane along a busy interstate, extending a rail line by a couple of miles or simply allowing Metro Atlanta to tax itself won't solve our problems.

For the last two years, a group of dedicated stakeholders has been working together to solve these problems. Many of these stakeholders recognize, as do I, that it is time to think bigger and develop a comprehensive statewide transportation improvement plan.

[http://www.insideradvantagegeorgia.com/restricted/2009/January%2009/1-13-09/Guest\\_Column\\_Glenn\\_Richardson11319651.php](http://www.insideradvantagegeorgia.com/restricted/2009/January%2009/1-13-09/Guest_Column_Glenn_Richardson11319651.php)

## **Water**

*Georgia loses round in fight over Lanier water*

By [STACY SHELTON](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Georgia failed in its last-ditch effort to save a 2003 agreement that would have given metro Atlanta more water from Lake Lanier.

On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court denied Georgia's request to review a lower court's decision to invalidate the agreement between Georgia, metro Atlanta governments, federal hydropower customers and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which operates the federal reservoir. The 20-year agreement would have set aside up to 50 percent more water in Lanier for the region.

[http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/stories/2009/01/12/lanier\\_water\\_fight.html](http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/stories/2009/01/12/lanier_water_fight.html)

## **Energy**

*State fines 9 gas stations for price-gouging, probes others*

By [DAN CHAPMAN](#)

Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Nine gas stations, including one along Buford Highway, gouged consumers when Hurricanes Gustav and Ike hit last September, the Governor's Office of Consumer Affairs reported Friday.

The Executive Park Chevron, at 2911 Buford Highway was fined \$5,000 — the greatest amount in Georgia — and ordered to refund the over-charges if customers can prove, by showing a receipt, they were gouged.

[http://www.ajc.com/business/content/business/stories/2009/01/09/gas\\_price\\_gouging.html](http://www.ajc.com/business/content/business/stories/2009/01/09/gas_price_gouging.html)

## **Elections**

*Mills wants birth certificate required for voter registration*

By Harris Blackwood

Gainesville Times

State Rep. James Mills, R-Chestnut Mountain, introduced a bill Monday that would require voters registering for the first time to present their birth certificate.

"This is to protect the integrity of the voting system," Mills said. "If there were situations where people were being registered to vote erroneously, this would certainly help to deter that."

<http://www.gainesvilletimes.com/news/article/13528/>

## **Sunday Alcohol Sales**

*Did Sunday sales of beer and wine just get a green light?*

By Jim Galloway

Atlanta Journal Constitution

Doings in the first few minutes of the 2009 session of the Legislature:

One of the bigger surprises of the day comes from the lobbying field. The GOP team of Clint Austin, Tony Simon and Sam

Choate has been hired to help push through legislation to permit communities to hold referendums on Sunday sales of alcohol.

The Georgia Food Industry Association, which represents grocery stores, is footing the bill.

[http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/shared-blogs/ajc/politicalinsider/entries/2009/01/12/did\\_sunday\\_sales\\_of\\_beer\\_and\\_w.html](http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/shared-blogs/ajc/politicalinsider/entries/2009/01/12/did_sunday_sales_of_beer_and_w.html)

## **Other**

*A New Glenn Richardson Emerges - But Is It Permanent?*

By Dick Pettys

InsiderAdvantage Georgia

One Glenn Richardson got re-elected Speaker of the Georgia House on Monday without a single voice in opposition – not even from minority Democrats. But it wasn't the same Glenn Richardson who led his House this time last year to override 12 of Gov. Sonny Perdue's vetoes, or the same Glenn Richardson who at the close of last year's session taunted Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle to "stand up and be a man."

Maybe the best way to describe it is to say that what we saw from the Speaker's podium was a more patient Richardson. A Richardson who, compared to previous sessions, wasn't in that much of a rush to cut Democrats off on the floor. A Richardson who was willing – whether seriously or not – to publicly entertain the thought of making a Democrat one of his House hawks. A Richardson who has indicated that the small band of hardy GOP souls who voted against him in the Caucus in November won't be punished. At least not all of them.

[http://www.insideradvantagegeorgia.com/restricted/2009/January%2009/1-13-09/On\\_Background\\_New\\_Speaker11319652.php](http://www.insideradvantagegeorgia.com/restricted/2009/January%2009/1-13-09/On_Background_New_Speaker11319652.php)