

Senators Take Stance on Issues Vital to Georgians

By Raegan Weber and Ravae Graham

The seventh day of the legislative session began with spirited speeches from the well on the proposed transportation bill, an alternative to transportation funding and homeowner relief grants, a passionate urge to protect workers' privacy and maintain the manufacturing industry's integrity, and a plea to Georgia's U.S. Senators and Congressmen to support the reauthorization for SCHIP and fully fund PeachCare health programs for the children of Georgia.

Senator Steve Thompson took the well and proposed SR 90 – a Constitutional Amendment for tax reform that would levy a one per cent state-wide sales tax to provide \$2 billion annually

for transportation projects and homeowner relief. According to Thompson, SR 90 would cover the \$428 billion for the Homestead Tax Relief Grants (HTRG) each year and provide an extra \$1.6 billion annually for transportation projects. The amendment also does away with the current HTRG program to ensure that homeowners receive permanent relief each year without waiting to see if the State Legislature will provide funding the program.

“Young people need to be able to afford to buy homes and older people need to be able to afford to stay in their homes,” said Thompson. He does not support the local-option tax as proposed by legislators earlier this week, stating that Georgia needs long-term, permanent solutions to transportation and helping homeowners remain in their homes. “This will be a permanent fix not temporary and is a combination of both incentives and revenues,” said Thompson. If the amendment passes in the legislature, it will then go on the November 2010 ballot for voters to decide its fate.

The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) is on the verge of moving quickly through the U.S. Legislature. The Act, which would be the most significant overhaul of federal labor law in six decades, would give workers who want a union two op-

tions: a card check or an election overseen by the National Labor Relations Board. EFCA replaces secret ballot elections—the method by which most workers join unions—with publicly signed union cards. The so-called "card-check" legislation would allow a union to form when a majority of workers publicly affix their names to a document stating their desire for representation. “Workers should have the right to secret ballots as well. It protects all workers from coercion by employers or coercion from union members should somebody exercise their right not to participate in a union,” said Tolleson. “This Act could greatly impact the manufacturing industry by not protecting the employees from unnecessary discriminations in the workplace. I urge my colleagues to contact our national representatives in Washington and tell them to vote against the Employee Free Choice Act.”

The manufacturing industry contributes significantly to the creation of jobs, wealth and growth throughout the state. In December 2007, manufacturing in Georgia provided an estimated 425, 000 jobs and 10.2 percent of non-agriculture jobs. Georgia is one of the most competitive states in the nation in terms of building and operating

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Upper Chamber Report

JANUARY 28, 2009 – DAY 8

Raegan Weber, Press Director
Kallarin Richards, Editor in Chief

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manufacturing buildings. Georgia's best attributes for manufacturing companies are low labor costs, a good business climate, an international airport and a regional hub for businesses. Forbes Magazine also recently ranked Georgia as one of the top states in the nation in terms of economic development. Tolleson reminded the Senate that manufacturing facilities in rural areas are particularly important to local economies. Many times these businesses are the main source of income for the majority of citizens and are the main support for economic health and stability.

Sen. Nan Orrock passionately urged Senators to continue the fight to find support and protect the PeachCare for Kids program through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). "Short cuts to finding budget cuts short circuit health care providers and hospitals," Orrock said. "We need to utilize all the recourses available to us by nurturing a relationship with Washington so that Georgia's children don't suffer the consequences." As Georgia's Federal Senators and Representatives prepare to vote on the SCHIP bill, Senator Orrock called her colleagues to action by asking them to contact Georgia's Federal leaders and tell them to vote for the SCHIP re-authorization.

SCHIP is up for reauthorization in Washington and is facing cuts at the state level with the current budget situation in Georgia. SCHIP is jointly financed by the Federal and State governments and is administered by the States. Within broad Federal guidelines, each State determines the design of its program, eligibility groups, benefit packages, payment levels for coverage, and administrative and operating procedures. SCHIP provides a capped amount of funds to States on a matching basis for Federal fiscal years (FY) 1998 through 2007. Federal payments under title XXI to States are

based on State expenditures under approved plans effective on or after October 1, 1997. SCHIP directly supports the PeachCare for Kids program. □

State Leaders Highlight Tourism as a Leading Economic Revenue Source

By Laura Hale

ATLANTA (January 27, 2009) – Governor Sonny Perdue was joined by the Chairman of the Senate Economic Development Committee Chip Pearson and other state leaders as he proclaimed Tuesday as Tourism Day in Georgia.

"I'm excited that Governor Perdue has declared today Tourism Day," Sen. Pearson said. "It's good to know that this industry in Georgia is continuing to make a positive impact."

Promoters gathered at the Capitol to put the spotlight on the state's second largest industry. Delicious smells filled the air as tourism promoters passed out samples and other items that encompass the numerous attractions in the state. Members of the tourism industry presented a check for \$8.45 million, the amount of state tax revenue generated by tourism-related expenditures.

Georgia ranks eighth in the nation for total economic impact. Georgia generates \$34.1 billion directly, \$1.5 billion in state and local tax revenues and \$6.3 billion in resident wages

through tourism. Tourism is also responsible for 241,800 jobs in Georgia.

Sen. Pearson was joined by Sen. Jeff Mullis, Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), Commissioner Ken Stewart, Chairman of Georgia Convention and Visitors Bureau Lisa Smith, Chairman of Tourism Development Alliance of Georgia Sean McDinnis, GDEcD Deputy Commissioner for Tourism and Marketing Charlie Gatlin, GDEcD Kevin Langston, Chairman of the House Economic Development committee Ron Stephens, Rep. Butch Parris, Rep. Tom Weldon, Rep. Jay Neal, Rep. Barbara Reece and Rep. Michael Hardin.

The GDEcD is the state's sales and



marketing arm, the lead agency for attracting new business investment, encouraging the expansion of existing industry and small businesses, locating new markets for Georgia products, attracting tourist to Georgia and promoting the state as a location for film, video and music projects, as well as planning and mobilizing state resources for economic development. □

Science and Technology Bring Positive Goals for Georgia's Economy

By Hayley Howell

ATLANTA (January 27, 2009)—The Senate Science and Technology Committee, led by Chairman Cecil Staton (R-Macon), convened this Tuesday to discuss the future goals of technology in Georgia. The committee listened on as Tino Mantella, president of the Technology Association of Georgia (TAG), presented their research on Georgia's past development in technology. Improvements to technological education, funding, investments and entrepreneurship will also improve Georgia's economy.

"Georgia ranks as one of the top in the nation for technological schools, jobs, and establishments," said Staton. "We have some of the best technological developments, and we know that our strength and further growth in these areas will coincide with the growth of our economy."

Georgia ranks 10th with high tech employment rates and 17th with current and potential Green jobs in the City of Atlanta. Research has shown that software and IT services make up the majority of high-tech jobs, and focus in that area will increase the number of higher paying jobs. The Georgia Institute of Technology is ranked as the 4th most significant technological school with Undergraduate degrees in the U.S

and has one of the highest percentages of Bachelor's and Graduate degrees in the country. In 2007, high-tech and bioscience jobs employed over 180,000 Georgians.

TAG's goal is to transform Georgia into a Top 5 State for technology and science by improving its technological entrepreneurship and bringing in more outside funding. TAG believes that entrepreneurs with their cutting-edge innovation are the companies that drive the technology industry advancements. Other research shows that a large number of Americans are looking to entrepreneurs to rally the economy, because they believe a healthy economy depends on the success of entrepreneurs. □

Early Child Care Focus of Joint Health and Human Services, Education & Youth Committee Meeting

By Matt Colvin

ATLANTA (January 27, 2009) – Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Don Thomas (R-Dalton) and Senate Education & Youth Committee Chairman Dan Weber (R-Dunwoody) co-chaired a joint legislative panel along with their House counterparts of the two committees today at the State Capitol. Lawmakers convened to meet with the University of Georgia and Georgia State University Child & Family Policy Initiative members as they gave a presentation on the current economic impact of the early care and education industry in Georgia.

GSU Economics Professor Dr. Sally Wallace discussed the early care and education industry's importance to Georgia's economy. Dr. Wallace noted that this industry has a \$4 billion dollar overall impact while caring for over 380,000 children and employed 61,000 individuals. Dr. Wallace stressed that this industry continues to grow and can be a significant short-term contributor to the state economy.

The panel concluded its meeting by hearing from Tulane professor Dr. Geoffrey Nagle, who gave the commit-

tee an overview on Louisiana's tax credit system that distributes refundable credits to early care providers, teachers, businesses, and parents. Dr. Nagle said that the tax credit is utilized to fund wage supplements and improvements to provider services. He noted that Georgia currently has a state tax credit to early care providers that is 30% of the federal rate. □

Senate Natural Resources & Environment Committee Convenes, gets State of GA Forests Report

By Matt Colvin

ATLANTA (January 27, 2009) – Georgia State Senator Ross Tolleson (R – Perry) today called to order the first meeting of the Senate Natural Resources and Environment Committee at the Capitol. Sen. Tolleson took time to welcome new committee members Sen. Bill Cowsert (R-Athens) and Sen. Freddie Powell Sims (D-Dawson) before the committee adopted their rules by unanimous vote.

The Georgia forestry commission presented its annual report to the committee on the forest industry's current status in Georgia. The GRC noted that forestry continues to be a strong point of Georgia's economic makeup, and that the state is continuing to grow more trees than it is exporting, showing

a sustainable market for future years. The CRC report stated that the forest industry contributes almost \$28 billion to Georgia's economy and produces 141,000 jobs.

Georgia Forest Facts:

- Of Georgia's 36.8 million acres of total land area, 66% is forested, the sixth largest percentage among all the states, and twice the national average.
- Georgia has 23.8 million acres of commercial forest land, more than any other state.
- Individuals own 72% of the state's commercial forest land; corporations, 21%; and government, 7%.
- More than 260,000 Georgians own a combined 72% of the state's commercially forested land.
- Forestry makes one of the largest contributions to the state's economy...approximately \$19.7 billion.
- The Georgia forest economy generates 177,000 jobs; employed directly and in industries supporting forest products manufacturing.
- Timber is Georgia's highest valued agricultural product and one in which it leads the nation. □

Stop Metal Theft Task Force created to Combat Rising Tide of Metal Theft

State Leaders speak out to raise awareness of new local effort to crack down on rampant criminal problem

By Raegan Weber

EAST POINT (January 27, 2009). – Georgia General Assembly leaders banned together today to crack down on rampant metal thefts around the state and in hopes of calling attention to this nation-wide issue. State Senator Jack Murphy (R-Cumming), chairman of the Senate Public Safety Committee, announced the formation of the Stop Metal Theft Task Force to combat the rising problem of recycled metals being stolen from homes, cars and even graveyards.

“Metal theft is a wide-spread problem in Georgia and other states across the nation,” said Murphy. “Thefts increase during downturns in the economy and this situation is quickly escalating to a crisis. Home builders and vehicle owners are particularly at risk and we must do everything we can to help prevent more crimes.”



Joe Bulat, 24 yr. veteran of Atlanta PD and Director of Security, Schnitzer Steel, outlined the scope of the metal theft problem in the area and explained how the task force will fight the problem and put thieves and their black marketers behind bars. The task force’s work will be maximized by the **STOP METAL THEFT (SMT)™** website, which has been dubbed the MySpace of metal theft. Items that are typically at risk include catalytic converters, copper piping in vacant homes, copper coils and wires in air-conditioning units and platinum.

Gwinnett County is a leading example in Georgia of the brazenness of thieves. Criminals in 2008 pulled hundreds of pounds of underground wiring that power the outdoor lamps at five popular parks. Electricians who repaired the electrical systems believe the crooks used trucks to pull the heavy wiring from the ground.

Authorities across the country also have linked metal thefts to the illegal drug trade. Recyclable metals are now valuable enough to be attractive to drug users who formerly may have stolen jewelry and other valuables from homes to support their habits.

“Criminals see metal thefts to be easy and hard to trace,” said website founder Maria Strollo Zack, of The Strollo Group. “Not any more! **STOP METAL THEFT (SMT)™** Task Forces are impeding the proliferation of these kinds of thefts and putting criminals where they belong - in jail!”

Metal theft can also be deadly for those who commit it. A 36-year-old Rockmart man died Nov. 8 as he was trying to cut copper cable from a Georgia Power pole in Floyd County, police said.

The Georgia law that took effect July 1, 2007 provides prosecutors with more ability to seek a felony conviction of thieves, rather than a misdemeanor. The law allows prosecutors to go after the full cost of restoring the property to its condition before the theft, rather than just the cost of the metal. The new law also compels those convicted to make full restitution to the owner. In passing the law, Georgia joined more than 20 other states that are aggressively pursuing those who traffic in stolen metals.

State Senator Seth Harp proposed additional legislation today for seizing vehicles and tools of the criminals that were used during the crime and creating a registry for metal thieves so they will be known throughout their neighborhoods.

“GA is a model state in the country in reducing metal theft crimes,” said Harp. “The two bills I’m proposing today will strengthen our laws and shut this black market down. We must stop those who

prey upon the vulnerability of others and protect our communities.”

The Atlanta Region Stop Metal Theft Task Force is modeled after the Macon-Middle Georgia Theft Committee that was formed in November 2006 and has received national acclaim for its success in driving down the number of metal theft incidents. The National Crime Prevention Council said the Macon organization is a “stellar” example of a community stakeholders banding together to address a common threat.

The task forces forming across Georgia will go after the criminals who steal metal from homes, businesses, graveyards, streets and even electrical substations and sell it on the black market. The group’s work will be enhanced by the **STOP METAL THEFT (SMT)™** website, which enables members to communicate while eliminating the need for administrative support. The alert system allows a businesses or government hit by a theft to send an alert to the task force administrators with extensive information that identifies the stolen materials. The alerts will put recyclers on notice that identifiable materials have been stolen. Unscrupulous buyers know they place themselves at risk of prosecution if they knowingly purchase stolen materials.

To learn more about the task forces, go to www.stopmetalthefts.com. The website was created and designed by Maria Strollo Zack, of The Strollo Group www.strollogroup.com, while serving on the lobbying team promoting stronger penalties for those convicted of metal thefts. The lobby team was responsible for the passage of Georgia Senate Bill 203 in 2007 making felony convictions easier by assessing the true cost of the □

Please note that the 2009 Legislative Process Dates will be included in future reports upon finalization.



Mark your Metal Campaign!™

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR METAL

⇒ **What to Mark:** catalytic converters, ac coils, copper piping, wiring, cables, building supplies, fabricated steel, rebar, bronze, grave markers, valuable metals

⇒ **How to Mark:**

- Paint a unique color combination of copper pipe - i.e. red, yellow, blue dots - and photograph samples.
- Create stencil of logo - "property of acme corp." Spray paint on back of property
- Engrave identifying numbers or codes
- Crimp in unique information
- Attach micro dots containing ownership information
- Apply high temperature paint for catalytic converters and etch vin number
- Photograph bronze grave markers. Paint cemetery logo on back of marker.
- Imprint: Municipalities should order their city or county name imprinted on road signs, manhole covers, other metals. Steel foundries are capable of casting name into new cast iron drains, drain covers, manhole covers, etc.

⇒ **Guard your Metal -- especially air conditioners and copper**

- Install security systems
- Increase lighting – motion detecting
- Hire security guards/services
- Utilize guard dogs
- Provide secure lock systems
- Mount inexpensive cameras - motion sensitive. (deer hunting/nature)
- Install thorny bushes around air conditioners
- Extend existing home alarm system to cover the outside heating and air
- Large commercial companies may utilize GPS/Lo Jack attached to more expensive units

⇒ **How to Document your Metal:**

- Keep thorough lists
- Photograph you Metal
- Document your inventory with cost
- Log in receipts of metal purchases

Wednesday, January 28

DAILY NEWS CLIPS

Economy/Budget

Delta posts \$1.4 billion 4Q loss

By [KELLY YAMANOUCI](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

[Delta Air Lines](#) on Tuesday posted a net loss of \$1.4 billion in the fourth quarter of 2008 and \$8.9 billion for the full year. Both losses were composed mainly of massive special charges and write-downs.

Delta also said it expects to report a “sizable loss” this quarter. But Chief Executive Richard Anderson said in a written statement that Delta expects to be “solidly profitable in 2009 driven by lower fuel costs, capacity discipline, and merger synergies.”

http://www.ajc.com/news/content/business/delta/stories/2009/01/27/delta_earnings.html

An update from House and Senate budget writers

By Jim Galloway

Atlanta Journal Constitution

You have to wade through seven minutes of other stuff to get there, but GPB’s “The Lawmakers” last night had an interview with Ben Harbin (R-Evans) and Jack Hill (R-Reidsville), chairmen of the House and Senate appropriation committees, respectively.

Both dropped some hints about their budget strategies.

http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/shared-blogs/ajc/politicalinsider/entries/2009/01/27/an_update_from_house_and_senat.html?cxntfid=blogs_political_insider

House GOP tries to box Democrats on property tax hike

By Jim Galloway

Atlanta Journal Constitution

House Republican leadership are trying to put Democrats in a box with some admirably cagey legislation that could end the homeowner’s grant next year and result in increased property taxes across the state.

According to my AJC colleague [James Salzer](#), [H.B. 143](#) would requiring the funding of the grants this fiscal year, which would save homeowners between \$200 and \$300.

http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/shared-blogs/ajc/politicalinsider/entries/2009/01/27/house_gop_tries_to_box_democra.html?cxntfid=blogs_political_insider

Foreclosure crisis spurs bill to help tenants

By [D.L. BENNETT](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Conceding that Georgia’s foreclosure crisis may be beyond the power of the General Assembly to fix, a bipartisan group of lawmakers proposed a series of reforms Tuesday.

Senate Bill 57 would help protect tenants, give local governments more ability to combat the ills of abandoned foreclosed home and require brokers who sell subprime loans to be more forthcoming about the terms of such deals.

http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/stories/2009/01/27/foreclose_senate_bill.html

Bill to raise property taxes could get vote by Friday

By [JAMES SALZER](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Homeowners likely would see a property tax increase this fall under legislation moving quickly through the state House of Representatives.

The bill, sponsored by House Ways & Means Chairman Larry O'Neal (R-Bonaire) and co-sponsored by most of the House leadership, would obligate the state to pay for property tax relief grants the Legislature gave to homeowners last fall.

http://www.ajc.com/news/content/metro/stories/2009/01/27/georgia_property_tax.html

Use tag fees, 'super-speeder' fines to fund trauma care?

By [MARY LOU PICKEL](#)

Atlanta Journal Constitution

Car tag renewals could cost \$10 more as a way to pay for a statewide trauma care network. And super-speeders could get \$200 fines above and beyond a regular speeding ticket.

These separate efforts to breathe life into the state's weak trauma network were introduced in the state Legislature Tuesday.

Both ideas have been tried in the past with no success.

http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/stories/2009/01/27/trauma_care_funding.html

State budget spat could force delinquent tax notices on landowners

By Melissa Weinman

The Association County Commissioners of Georgia brought out a new weapon in what is shaping up to be a battle royale over the fate of the Homestead Tax Relief Grant.

The Homestead Tax Relief Grant is a state reimbursement of \$428 million to counties and cities for money lost in property tax homestead exemptions. Local governments are supposed to pass the funds along to homeowners as tax credits, averaging about \$200 to \$300 per household. Hall County was slated to receive about \$5 million, but Gov. Sonny Perdue has proposed cutting the grant from this year's state budget.

<http://www.gainesvilletimes.com/news/article/14110/>

GWCC could slip farther into red ink

By [LEON STAFFORD](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

The Georgia World Congress Center could sink deeper in the red this fiscal year if convention attendance continues to fall and operators of trade shows don't seek more exhibit space.

That's the conclusion of officials at Georgia's largest convention facility after the first six months of its fiscal year. GWCC Executive Director Dan Graveline, who months before informed members of the facility's board that fiscal 2009 would be tough, even seemed taken aback when he spelled out the challenges ahead.

http://www.ajc.com/services/content/business/stories/2009/01/27/gwcc_economy.html?cxtype=rss&cxsvc=7&cxcat=6

Too late to hit property owners

Albany Herald

Republican leaders in the Georgia House are taking a better approach than has been proposed regarding the homeowner tax relief grants that are being threatened.

These grants, which cost the state \$428 million a year, are on the chopping block as Gov. Sonny Perdue attempts to cut into a \$2.2 billion budget shortfall in the state's spending plan.

<http://www.albanyherald.com/stories/20090128e1.htm>

Broun suggests bold economic jump-start

By BLAKE AUED

Athens Banner Herald

U.S. Rep. Paul Broun, R-Athens, wants the federal government to cut a check for \$9,000 to every taxpayer to stimulate the economy.

But one economist said Broun's plan would do far less to bring the country out of a recession than President Obama's proposed \$825 billion mix of spending and tax cuts.

http://www.onlineathens.com/stories/012809/gen_382281730.shtml

Broun's economic stimulus proposal worth a try

Athens Banner Herald

His logic is unassailable, and given the utter confusion, if not outright failure, of the current approaches to kick-starting America's ailing economy, Congressman Paul Broun's proposed amendment to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 ought to get some serious consideration in Washington.

In a news release issued Tuesday, Broun announced his introduction of an amendment to the \$825 billion economic stimulus legislation, an amendment that would take a radically new, but imminently sensible, approach to economic recovery.

http://www.onlineathens.com/stories/012809/opi_382243544.shtml

Session '09

[Tight Budget Pushes Other Issues Aside](#)

GPB.org

The \$2.2 billion dollar budget shortfall is pushing a lot of controversial issues to the sidelines.

Lawmakers say things are different this year than any other year. The Republican controlled legislature has never faced such drastic cuts to balance a state budget.

<http://gpbnews.blogspot.com/2009/01/tight-budget-pushes-other-issues-aside.html>

Committee Meetings Make For Busy Afternoon

By Nelson Mullins

The Gold Dome Report

Greetings from the Gold Dome! Today, Lawmakers convened at 10:00 a.m. and the afternoon was a flurry of Committee meetings.

New Legislation

SB 54 – Sen. Thompson (D-Marietta) proposed to repeal and re-enact the "Georgia Fair Lending Act" in Chapter 6A of Title 7. The purpose is to prohibit abusive home loan practices. Numerous definitions are inserted, including new terms of "covered home loan," "prime rate," and "variable rate loan." These new terms are defined as:

http://www.nelsonmullins.com/news/nelson-mullins-newsletter_detail.cfm?id=1A6DE3EA-ED4D-72FB-9A7547C8A5E3AA11&CFID=132190&CFTOKEN=b11d9f88fa33c529-5EEC5DC1-FFCB-10A1-1812949036497A34

Gold Dome newbies staging their own quiet revolution

By Bill Shipp

Let's face reality. Georgia needs a federal bailout. The Peach State is in worse shape than Chrysler and Bank of America put together. President Obama's stimulus package has earmarked about \$5.6 billion to help Georgia.

That is not nearly enough. We need some serious money. President Bush approved almost a trillion dollars to rescue Wall Street banks with few strings attached. One bank installed a new executive bathroom with part of the money; others bought out less-fortunate banks. You and I were left holding the IOUs.

http://www.onlineathens.com/stories/012809/opi_382243558.shtml

Savannahians to lobby lawmakers in Atlanta

By [Larry Peterson](#)

Savannah Morning News

Shrimp and grits.

Except for that menu addition, count on more of the same this year at the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce's annual Savannah-Chatham Day.

The schmoozefest is expected to draw 250 to 300 local residents to the Capitol on Thursday, said Trip Tollison, chamber vice president for government affairs.

"It's the most anticipated event of the session," said Rep. Burke Day, R-Tybee Island.

<http://savannahnow.com/node/661694>

Health

Grady's \$75M bills to counties called a stunt

By [CRAIG SCHNEIDER](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Grady Memorial Hospital officials have sent bills totaling \$75 million to counties for services that were provided to their residents but went unpaid.

Some counties have taken the request seriously, but others suspect the move is a publicity stunt or part of a strategy to entice more dollars for Grady from the state government.

Transportation

DOT action could kill Beltline, angry mayor says

By [ARIEL HART](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

City of Atlanta officials are fuming over a move by the state Department of Transportation and Amtrak that they say could kill the Beltline, a planned 22-mile loop of transit, parks and trails around the city's core.

The dispute centers on part of the land the Beltline would need.

Georgia DOT and Amtrak have united against the city and the Norfolk Southern rail company to oppose abandonment of a key northeast part of the corridor, according to a letter Mayor Shirley Franklin wrote to Rep. John Lewis. The abandonment would enable redevelopment.

http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2009/01/27/atlanta_beltline_dot.html?cxntlid=homepage_tab_newstab

BELTLINE: Amtrak wants land for heavy rail

By [Ariel Hart](#)

Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin says the state Department of Transportation and Amtrak have made moves that endanger the Beltline, a planned 22-mile loop of transit, parks and trails around the city's core.

The dispute centers on part of the land the Beltline would need.

Franklin, in a letter to U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), said Georgia DOT and Amtrak are trying to keep a key northeast part of the corridor available for heavy rail. The city wants the Beltline devoted to light rail, parks and transit.

<http://www.ajc.com/services/content/printedition/2009/01/28/beltline0128.html>

Cobb lawmakers hopeful for traffic solution

By Jon Gillooly

Marietta Daily Journal

The Georgia Senate's T-SPLOST proposal is scheduled for a vote in the Senate Transportation Committee today and may be headed to the floor for a vote as early as Friday, said state Sen. Doug Stoner (D-Smyrna).

The legislation would allow counties to band together into regions and, with voter approval, levy a one-cent sales tax to fund transportation projects.

<http://www.mdjonline.com/content/index/showcontentitem/area/1/section/21/item/126870.html>

Education

2-day furloughs ordered for school employees

By [MEGAN MATTEUCCI](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

All [Fayette County](#) school custodians, secretaries and office staff will have to take two unpaid days off before June 30 to offset a projected deficit.

The [Fayette County](#) school board on Tuesday unanimously approved the two-day mandatory furloughs, including a request for administrators to take voluntary furloughs.

http://www.ajc.com/services/content/metro/fayette/stories/2009/01/27/fayette_school_cutbacks.html?cxtype=rss&cxsvc=7&cxcat=13

Many leery of 2-year college proposal

By Amber Pittman

Covington News

The recommendation made to Gov. Sonny Perdue by the Tough Times or Tough Choices working group to merge two-year colleges and technical schools has both educators and students in Newton County leery of what their educational future may hold.

The working group was appointed by Perdue in July of last year and they were given the task of finding ways to make Georgia more "globally competitive." The group was asked to build off work done by the Investing in Education Excel-

lence Task Force to determine "how Georgia might reform its education policies and practices to cause needed change for its educational system," according to a release from the governor's office.

<http://newmedia.covnews.com/news/article/5620/>

Lawmaker wants HOPE extended to GMC students

By Travis Fain

A powerful state lawmaker is again pushing to make Georgia Military College students eligible for the HOPE Grant, which would help the college expand and offer new technical certificates.

State Rep. Ben Harbin's House Bill 162 is simple. It inserts Georgia Military College into state codes that allow the grant to fund tuition at state universities and technical colleges. But Georgia Military College has been left out because it is an independent public college.

<http://www.macon.com/741/story/601830.html>

Crime/ Judicial

Metal Theft Press Conference

4: 30 p.m. News

WGCL-ATL (CBS)

Metal theft has become a widespread crime in Georgia and other states. The Metro Atlanta Stop Metal Theft Coalition is pushing for a new law allowing police to seize vehicles used.

<http://mms.tveyes.com/Transcript.asp?StationID=760&DateTime=1/27/2009%204:41:35%20PM&Term=Jack%20Murphy&PlayClip=TRUE>

Advocates push to raise juvenile age in Georgia's court system

Associated Press

Seventeen-year-old lawbreakers in Georgia would be treated as juveniles under a proposal being pushed by a coalition of children's advocates.

The change would mean fewer teens would be prosecuted as adults. It faces an uphill fight in the Republican-led state legislature, which has moved in recent years to toughen criminal penalties.

http://www.onlineathens.com/stories/012809/gen_382281741.shtml

Sunday Alcohol Sales

State Senator Jeff Mullis caves to pressure regarding alcohol sales bill sponsorship (sort of)

Peach Pundit.com

Looks like Georgia State Senator [Jeff Mullis](#) has caved into pressure from his constituents and withdrawn his co-sponsorship of [SB 16](#) to allow local voting on Sunday alcohol sales. WDEF Television has the [details](#).

In particular, Mullis noted: "The bill I was working on is a bipartisan effort that will give local control to the people of our communities, and the right to decide if they want alcohol sales on Sunday. While I am and remain opposed to such sales, I believe that such decisions should be decided through a vote. I believe this to be the meaning of the U.S. Constitution when it describes government as "of the people, by the people, for the people.""

<http://www.peachpundit.com/2009/01/27/state-senator-jeff-mullis-caves-from-pressure-regarding-alcohol-sales/>

Salmonella Outbreak

Peanut plant found salmonella, sold products anyway

By [JEFFREY SCOTT](#), [CRAIG SCHNEIDER](#)

Atlanta Journal Constitution

A South Georgia peanut butter plant linked to a national salmonella outbreak failed to follow safe food practices when

it found evidence of the bacteria in its products and still sold them, federal health officials said Tuesday.

The plant found salmonella contamination on 12 occasions in the last two years, but the company still sold the products after an outside lab said the product was safe, federal investigators said.

http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/stories/2009/01/27/salmonella_georgia_plant.html

Immigration

Amnesty through apathy?

Augusta Chronicle

You might be wondering what the nation's policy on illegal immigration is these days.

The short answer is: No one seems to care.

Not even those who seem to.

http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/01/28/edi_509344.shtml

Energy

Georgia Power: Nuclear critics' data is flawed

By [MARGARET NEWKIRK](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Georgia Power fired back at critics this week, saying dire warnings about the cost of its proposal to collect fees upfront for nuclear power expansion were mistaken.

In testimony filed with the state Public Service Commission late Monday, the utility said critics including the PSC's public advocacy staff had mixed accounting apples and oranges to come up with their estimates. Those critics will have an opportunity to cross-examine the company in two weeks.

http://www.ajc.com/services/content/business/stories/2009/01/27/georgia_power_nuclear.html?cxtype=rss&cxsvc=7&cxcat=6