



JANUARY 13, 2010 DAY-3

Upper Chamber Report

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TOP STORY

Legislative Day 3: State of the State Address

By Katie Wright

CHAMBER (Jan. 13, 2010) – Day three of the 2010 legislative session began with business as usual. Roll call and devotion were followed by an introduction of the Doctor of the Day, Dr. John Shih, and a few first readers.

The Chaplain of the Day, Jeff Chandler of SouthCrest Church in Newnan, was hosted by Majority Whip Mitch Seabaugh (R-Sharpshurg). “It was my pleasure to introduce Jeff Chandler to my colleagues in the Senate,” said Sen. Seabaugh. “His poignant message was inspirational to all those within the chamber as we begin this new legislative session.”

After daily business, the Senate and the House went into joint session to watch Governor Sonny Perdue give his final State of the State address. The speech spoke more of tomorrow than of today. He advised the legislature that hard decisions must be made to ensure the next generation does not get handed a problem-ridden state.

The governor spoke of the deep history of our nation. He quoted Thomas Paine, framing the era revolutionary soldiers lived in. “These are the times that try men's souls ... but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman ... we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.”

Gov. Perdue said the nation has faced harder times than this and the state must prove triumphant.

“This is our time to carry a heavy load ... to do the hard thing now for the sake of our children and grandchildren.”

Gov. Perdue talked little of budget. Traditionally the governor will provide details of the budget at his annual State of the State address. He mentioned that his budget team has been working since his administration began to make this a value-driven state. He also mentioned that when the details of his budget plan are announced on Friday, additional investment numbers will be included for FY 2010 and FY 2011. He focused on the idea of working for a better tomorrow so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy a peace that we are not fortunate enough to presently know. Quoting Thomas Paine, he said “If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace.”

He spoke briefly of his proposal to tie teacher pay to student performance, rather than post graduate degrees. Gov. Perdue said this is purely commonsense, and it is an effort to end the perception that teaching is a low paying job.

The governor also talked about Georgia investing more money into its mental health care system to improve the condition for the mentally challenged and developmentally disabled.

Gov. Perdue ended his speech with a call to stand firm and not retreat. He told another anecdotal story about an undefeated general who, when order-

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Sen. Curt Thompson Appointed to State Senate Appropriations Committee

By Jennifer Kitt

ATLANTA (Jan. 13, 2010) – State Sen. Curt Thompson (D-Norcross) was appointed by Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle to serve on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

“Georgia is facing one of the biggest budget deficits in its history, and I am ready to tackle this issue head on,” said Sen. Thompson. “It’s going to take some tenacity and hard work, but I am confident my colleagues and I will bring Georgia out of this budget

crisis and into a new promising future.”

Sen. Thompson has served portions of Gwinnett and DeKalb counties as a state senator since 2004. He currently sits on the Economic Development, Higher Education, Veterans, Military and Homeland Security and Special Judiciary committees.

“I will strike a balance between lowering our deficit and keeping critical funding for programs in the 5th district,” said Sen. Thompson.

“The needs of my constituents and this state will always be my number one priority.”

The appropriations committee allocates funds for state government agencies and balances the budget. The committee will join members of the House Appropriation Committee to hold joint budget hearings on Jan. 19, 20 and 21.

Senator Preston Smith Introduces Volunteer Emergency Assistance Bill

By Meredith Rich and Kallarin Richards

ATLANTA- (Jan. 13, 2010) - Sen. Preston Smith (R-Rome) introduced the Volunteer Emergency Assistance Bill (SB 315) which allows out of state licensed emergency personnel to assist the state in the event of a disaster. It seeks to ensure organization and rapid medical attention during a disaster.

“Our sister states like Louisiana and Mississippi have found themselves unable to respond adequately to mass casualties following Hurricane Katrina and Rita. Our state also has seen its share of natural disasters, most recently with the deadly flooding in September. In a time of a large scale emergency, assistance from any and all volunteers is crucial to ensuring the safety of Georgia citizens,” said Sen. Smith. “With this bill, safety measures and guidelines will be instilled so that in the event of a natural or man-made disaster, the appropriate medical attention can be brought to our state.”



Specifically, the bill allows physicians, medical providers, and veterinarians who are licensed in good standing in their home states, to enter Georgia with a temporary license and gives those volunteers immu-

nity from civil liability. The Volunteer Emergency Assistance bill reflects the “Good Samaritan Law,” in that it protects volunteers from liability in aiding those who are injured or ill. In the event the Governor declares a state of emergency, the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and the federal government will issue expedited temporary licenses.

“Today as we watch footage of the wreckage left behind by the earthquake in Haiti, the importance of rapid and organized emergency assistance cannot be overstated. My thoughts and prayers go out to the people of Haiti as they recover from this devastating tragedy,” added Sen. Smith.

This bill will make it easier for volunteers to cross state lines if an unforeseen disaster occurs, and help is needed. With legitimate professionals on hand, recovery time will shorten, making the process more organized. The bill seeks to engage in the most effective way to handle and carry out additional medical attention in the event of a disaster.

Sen. Harp Introduces Health Care Systems Bill

By Natalie Strong

ATLANTA, GA- (Jan. 13, 2010) Today, Sen. Seth Harp (R - Midland) introduced SR 795, the Health Care Systems bill, which fights to protect Georgia citizens against federally mandated health care programs and penalties.

The proposed constitutional amendment protects every Georgian's right to private health care and guards against interference with a citizen's right to pay directly for lawful medical services. Additionally, it shields Georgians from federal encroachment by guarding them from penalizations and fines levied for choosing to participate in various health care systems, or declining insurance all together.



Sen Seth Harp (R-Midland) and Sen. Johnny Grant (R-Milledgeville) at health care press conference.

"We are poised on a slippery slope if we allow the government's hand in our pockets and voice in our doctor's office. Passing this Amendment will help protect Georgians from disastrous health care mandates which allow government to control our basic liberties," said Sen. Harp. "This constitu-

tional amendment helps safeguard the rights of Georgians to accept or reject any health care or health insurance plan on their own terms."

If the amendment is passed by the legislature during the 2010 Session, it will then become an issue for voters to consider on the November 2010 gubernatorial ballot.

Sen. Harp continued, "By taking the necessary measures, we will prevent Georgians from being forced to spend their hard earned money on a government ordered health care. Georgians are the best stewards of their dollars, so we must prohibit the federal government, or any other entity, from mandating how Georgians will receive and pay for health care."

Sen. Shafer Introduces Water Conservations and Savings Act

By Sen. David Shafer

ATLANTA (Jan 13, 2010) - Sen. David Shafer (R-Duluth) today introduced legislation to fund the repairing of leaky water infrastructure without forced tax or water rate increases.

"Millions of gallons of water are lost each day to aging or inadequately maintained infrastructure -- as much 18% of the surface water withdrawn for public use," Shafer said. "Senate Bill 311, the Water Conservation and Savings Act, provides a way to pay for repairs without resorting to forced tax increases or unfunded mandates."

Shafer bill's directs the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to compile data showing the water loss by public utility and request plans from each utility to correct the loss.

"Unfortunately, because many local governments hold water withdrawal permits for more water than their citizens need, there is a little incentive for them to make repairs," Shafer said. "At the same time, many growing counties are waiting years to obtain withdrawal permits

of their own"

Shafer's legislation creates a new funding mechanism for repairing water infrastructure. It would allow a local government seeking a water withdrawal permit to help pay the costs of repairing the infrastructure of another local government within the same river basin, provided that the amount of water saved from the repairs is reallocated from the permit, as well as the government receiving the repairs to the permit of the government paying for the repairs.

"The system would be voluntary," Shafer said. "No local government willing to repair its own infrastructure would be required to accept help from another local government."

Shafer said the bill creates an option for funding repairs that does not involve forced taxes, unfunded mandates or even an increase in the amount of water permitted to be withdrawn.

Shafer's bill has been endorsed by the Georgia Conservancy and Georgia Conservation Voters.

Sen. Jackson Meets With Governor Perdue to Promote Savannah Cruise Ship Terminal

By Natalie Strong

ATLANTA, Ga. – (Jan. 13, 2010) Sen. Lester Jackson (D- Savannah), Rep. J. Craig Gordon (D- Savannah), Rep. Bob Bryant (D- Savannah), Rep. Mickey Stephens (D- Savannah), and Savannah Alderman Tony Thomas met with Governor Sonny Perdue to discuss the need for a cruise ship port in the city of Savannah. The proposal for a cruise ship port has received support from the mayor of the City of Savannah, the city manager, Chatham County, the Savannah Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Savannah Chamber of Commerce. Financial backing from the state would mean vested entities could progress with plans to create a feasibility study which would determine the cost and benefits associated with locating a cruise ship terminal in Savannah.



Pictured from left to right: Rep. J. Craig Gordon (D- Savannah), Rep. Bob Bryant (D- Savannah), Governor Sonny Perdue, Sen. Lester Jackson (D- Savannah), Rep. Mickey Stephens (D- Savannah), Savannah Alderman Tony Thomas

Sen. Jackson’s message today is a direct response to the Governor’s call to action for state legislators to “...worry less about bringing home the pork, and more about empowering our people to grow their own hogs.”

“Today, Governor Perdue called on Georgians to be innovative leaders; he challenged us to make viable solutions for and with our constituents and I have responded with this proposal. This is not a partisan issue, or even a Savannah issue, this is a chance for economic empowerment and to build a better Georgia,” said Sen. Jackson. “This small investment in our state’s future will mean millions of dollars of state revenue and certain economic growth.”

Currently, Georgia is one of the only coastal southeast states which does not have a cruise ship terminal. A terminal in the Coastal Empire would increase

tourism, revenue for the local community and the state, as well as create hundreds of jobs for Georgians.

Jackson continued, “Over 9 million Georgians must choose to travel to states such as Alabama, Florida, Texas, South Carolina, and Louisiana in order to take a cruise. As they take advantage of this opportunity across state lines they take with them their hard earned money and million of dollars in economic growth. It is imperative that we keep these tourism dollars in their our own back yard and create a source of additional revenue for Georgia”

40 percent of leisure travelers in America are interested in taking a cruise during the next two years. This number rises to 46 percent among leisure travelers who are interested in visiting Georgia. The cruise industry is a robust market that is destined to grow in the years ahead.

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ing a retreat, was met by defiance from his undefeated army. They did not know how to retreat. The governor urged the legislature to let go of any knowledge of retreat and fight for a better tomorrow.

After the address President Pro Tempore Tommie Williams (R- Lyons) offered that he thought it was a “very moving speech.”

When asked about the budget issues the legislature is facing, he said “we’re going to be creative....we’re going to make the tough decisions like all those small business leaders do, just like every family is doing.”

Minority Leader Robert Brown (D- Macon) felt the speech lacked substance. When approached about the

budget, he said “I think it will be difficult, we’ll have to look at special interest cuts.”

Sen. Brown added that “we’re seeing a structural realignment in our economy. We’re going to have to do more in terms of re-training our workforce and putting more emphasis on education.”

Sen. Ramsey Selected for Several Leadership Roles at Capitol

By Katie Wright

ATLANTA (Jan. 13, 2010) – Today, State Senator Ronald B. Ramsey, Sr. (D–Lithonia) was selected for several leadership roles at the state capitol. He was appointed to the Senate Judiciary Committee, selected as a member of the State Workforce Investment Board, under the Governor’s Office of Workforce Development. He was also appointed to serve on the Georgia World Congress Center Authority Oversight Committee.

“I am honored by these appointments,” said Ramsey. “This is an exciting opportunity to serve the citizens of Georgia with this expanded level of responsibility.”

The Senate Judiciary Committee works with legislation affecting judicial proceedings, both civil and criminal. Its jurisdiction includes civil liberties, governmental information and constitutional amendments. Sen. Ramsey, a former judge, has a vast background in judiciary and currently works as a federal government investigator and attorney. He is one of several attorneys in the Georgia Senate

Workforce Development is a focused, integrated approach to coordinate business, academic and government sector policies. It includes programs that enable individuals to sustain a livelihood and obtain set goals. The goal of the Workforce Development office is to ensure Georgia is competitive on a global

level. Sen. Ramsey will be one of four legislators on the board that provides oversight for the Governor’s Office of Workforce Development.

The Georgia World Congress Center Authority exists for the primary purpose of promoting and facilitating events and activities that generate economic benefits to the citizens of the State of Georgia and the City of Atlanta. The legislative oversight committee works to ensure the facilities are being used for the betterment of Georgia and its citizens. The activities of the Georgia Dome, Centennial Olympic Park and related facilities are included in the board’s oversight.

Sen. Seay Introduces Bill Requiring First Aid Certification in GA High Schools



By Natalie Strong

ATLANTA, GA.- (Jan. 13, 2010) – Yesterday, Sen. Valencia Seay (D-Riverdale) introduced SB 298, which would require mandatory certification in basic first aid as a graduation requirement for all

Georgia students. The course, offered in eight grade and higher, will provide a standard for certification and provide an opportunity for participating students to obtain a basic, hands-on first-aid certification.

“I believe that first responders are often the people present on the scene should an accident occur. If students are armed with the education needed to protect and save lives, we are teaching our youth the value of benevolence not destruction or violence,” said Sen. Seay. “We must empower our youth with these invaluable life skills because often times the simplest bit of first-aid knowledge can become life saving and life changing.”

If passed, SB 298 will require certification through a mandatory first aid course for all students beginning in 2014. Local schools boards will be able to use volunteer instructors under the condition that they are approved by the State Board of Education and have served as a certified volunteer for organizations such as the American Red Cross.

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]*

40th day - Passage of bills or resolutions tabled day 39; removed from the table on day 40. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]