



FEBRUARY 4, 2010 - DAY 11

# Upper Chamber Report

Raegan Weber, Press Director  
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## TOP STORY

### Legislative Day 11: Emergency Volunteer Assistance Legislation Passes in the Senate



Sen. Ralph Hudgens (R-Hull) greets baseball player Gordon Beckham

By Meredith Rich

CHAMBER (Feb. 3, 2010) – Sen. Preston Smith’s (R-Rome) emergency volunteer assistance bill (Senate Bill 315) passed unanimously out of the Senate today, which allows out-of-state, licensed emergency personnel to assist the state in the event of a disaster. The bill will ensure organization and rapid medical attention during an emergency. When the governor declares a state of emergency, registered health practitioners can enter the state and begin treating Georgians under a temporary license. *(For more information, see page 2)*

MLB baseball player Gordon Beckham was recognized in the chamber for his outstanding career in baseball at the University of Georgia and as a professional player. Sen. Ralph Hudgens (R-Hull) presented Beckham with a resolution honoring his achieve-

ments of being named SEC All-American and Rookie of the Year in 2009. He is now playing for the Chicago White Sox.

Sen. Jim Butterworth (R-Cornelia) introduced the chaplain of the day,

Dr. Bill Cashion, who is currently the senior pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Clarkesville. Dr. Cashion received his Master of Divinity degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Doctor of Ministry in Missiology from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary.

Sen. Valencia Seay (D-Riverdale) reminded everyone that Friday is National Wear Red Day, dedicated to building awareness that heart disease is the number one killer of women.

Sen. Butterworth also recognized Georgia State Patrol officers in chamber, while Sen. Buddy Carter (R-Pooler) introduced members of the Georgia Psychological Association to the Senate. The Doctor of the Day was introduced by Sen. Cecil Staton. Dr. Dan Callahan is a physician from Warner Robbins and attended the Medical College of Georgia. □

## Rogers Introduces “Early Hope Scholarship” for Foster and Military Children

By Raegan Weber

ATLANTA (Feb. 3, 2010) – Senate Majority Leader Chip Rogers (R-Woodstock) today introduced *Georgia’s Early Hope Scholarship Program* to help military, foster and special needs children receive the best education opportunities possible.

“I know for certain that every child can learn if placed in the right learning environment. The decision of which environment serves the child best must be placed in the hands of those who ultimately have the child’s best interest in mind – the parents. Children of military and foster care often get shuffled from school to school and can fall behind. By providing parents a better choice for a stable learning environment, these children will be more likely

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*Sen. Rogers looks on as a mother of four speaks in support of his legislation*

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## Senate Unanimously Passes Sen. Smith’s Volunteer Emergency Assistance Bill



By Kallarin Richards

ATLANTA- (Feb. 3, 2010) – The Georgia State Senate today unanimously passed Sen. Preston Smith’s (R-Rome) bill to allow licensed, out-of-state emergency personnel to assist the state in the event of a disaster. The Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act (Senate Bill 315) will make it easier

for health professionals to quickly respond should a disaster or emergency arise in Georgia.

Sen. Smith delivered an impassioned speech before his colleagues on the Senate Floor, pointing to the mass casualties in Haiti and the destruction following Hurricane Katrina as the need for a rapid and systematic emergency response. “In Haiti, health personnel had to take extraordinary measures, even using vodka to sterilize medical tools and performing amputations without anesthesia. There’s no reason to allow a disaster to succumb to that level if we have the resources to protect our citizens,” said Smith. “This bill will allow the state to utilize the assistance of our neighboring health practitioners and ensures Georgians will receive rapid medical attention.”

If the governor declares a state of emergency, volunteer practitioners will be allowed to enter the state with a temporary license. The bill aims to expedite the process for issuing these temporary licenses, which will only be given to those who are in good standing under the laws of their home state. Volunteers can register in advance of or during an emergency with a qualified registration system. The Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) will oversee the registration system and will coordi-

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to succeed in school and in life. The successful results shown by the Special Needs Scholarship are undeniable. These children deserve to be a part of this wonderful program that places education, not bureaucracy first,” said Rogers.

Children of military personnel and children in foster care would be able to transfer to another public or private school under this school choice proposal. In addition, the legislation expands the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program that already provides scholarships to those with learning disabilities to others with disabilities. *Georgia’s Early Hope Scholarship Program* would only serve students in grades K-12 and would allow parents to choose a learning environment that best suits their child’s learning needs.

There are approximately 14 military installations throughout Georgia where about 110,000 military

personnel work and have children. This does not include National Guard and Reserves who have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan yet hold civilian jobs and live in communities throughout Georgia.

In addition, the legislation would make scholarships available to Georgia’s 15,000 foster children. Many of these children have learning disabilities and most are academically challenged, according to the Foster Children’s Foundation.

Rogers’ bill would also allow children currently enrolled in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship to obtain a scholarship throughout the year and not have to enroll only during a short enrollment window. “We want to open up as many options for special needs children as possible. We shouldn’t be asking them to renew their scholarship in the middle of the school year,” said Rogers. □

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## Snakes Slither Their Way Back in to Natural Resources Committee

By Natalie Strong

CAP 450 (Feb. 3, 2010) - Sen. John Douglas (R –Social Circle) returned to the Natural Resources and Environment Committee on Wednesday to present the newest draft of Senate Bill 303, the Wild Animal Permits Bill. Sen. Douglas worked with members of the committee and wildlife experts in order to strengthen the language and stipulations in his legislation. Changes included a permit that lasts two years, not one, and a grace period for current snake owners to be grandfathered in.

B.W. Smith, a representative from Animal South, and Jason Clark with the Southeast Reptile Association returned to voice their strong objection to the mandatory micro chipping stipulation. Both cited that many snake owners would not have the funds to pay for the permit as well as the micro chipping. This would have reverse consequences and cause many owners to release their snakes into the wild. Clark noted that the Georgia Department of Natural Resources currently has a method to register wild animals in order to track without the expense of micro chipping. Smith noted that it would be nearly impossible for the type of problem that exists in Florida to spread to Georgia, as these animals don’t survive well around people and are only prevalent in Florida because they are protected as a wild animal in the Everglades.



He suggested that we treat Georgia as a state that doesn’t have a problem, like North Carolina, and not compare the state to that with a larger problem, such as Florida.

Aaron Colson, a representative for lobbyists for Life and Liberty, took the microphone to speak against the bill. He stressed that this bill was a direct violation of property rights and a blatant attempt to tax consumers with a 200 percent tax. He cited that no incident has ever been recorded of a snake of this size in the wild causing a death in the United States.

The committee asked Sen. Douglas to review the current legislation in North Carolina and make necessary changes to his bill to reflect stricter caging and securing requirements. The committee will vote on the bill at their next meeting. □

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nate with other emergency response organizations to dispatch volunteers where assistance is needed.

Similar legislation has been passed in 10 other states. This creates greater uniformity among the states to provide for better cooperation and assistance in emergencies. Three other states besides Georgia have introduced a similar bill this year. Model legislation was first drafted in response to the crisis that occurred as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. In these instances, volunteers were sometimes delayed or entirely prevented from providing assistance as they waited to obtain authorization. While all 50 states uniformly recognize licenses for those who respond to emergencies, this is not an effective system to handle the high number of licenses needed to deliver assistance in a statewide emergency. Sen. Smith's legislation implements an effective system to handle and carry out additional medical attention in the event of a disaster. □

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## Joint Committee Meets to Discuss “Reasonable” Price of Motor Vehicle Records

By Adam Sweat

CLOB 506 (Feb 3, 2010) - Yesterday, the Joint House Motor Vehicle and Senate Public Safety Committee met to hear testimony regarding the sale of motor vehicle records to third parties. RL Polk and Experian Automotive, two of the leading nationwide businesses who had contracts with the Department of Revenue (DOR), sent individuals from their companies to testify before the committee members.

According to the latest statistics available, Georgians account for approximately 3 percent of the nation's driving population. As of August 2009, the state has not been able to sell the motor vehicle records to third parties due to a disagreement in the cost of the information. These records consist of crucial information that includes safety recalls for manufacturers, vehicle history reports and statistical reports pertaining to each vehicle. The lack of access Georgia's drivers have to this information signals the potential risks citizens face.

Representatives from both RL Polk and Experian Automotive were present to dispute the increase in price per record. Previously, the state was selling records for four cents a piece. The new price increase would now have the state selling them at eight cents per record. Both companies supported the current

legislation that requires the sale of the information to be at a “reasonable” price. They claimed that the new price was in fact not reasonable, especially when compared to other states in the Southeast.

North Carolina charges third parties \$1,000 annually for unlimited record procurement. South Carolina charges a flat annual fee of approximately \$200,000 for unlimited annual access. Last year, Georgia

charged over \$430,000 to third parties for the sale of motor vehicle information. If the current legislation were to be enacted, the state would double that fee in the first year alone.

Both Chairman Jack Murphy (R-Cumming) and Chairman Tom Rice (R-Norcross), along with

the other committee members, were curious to find out the exact cost of obtaining the motor vehicle information so that they could better assess what a reasonable price would be. After hearing additional testimony from DOR, they concluded that the department would come back to the committee with concise information regarding the actual cost the state incurs when compiling the information. Once these figures are obtained, the committee will be better suited to decide what a reasonable price is for the motor vehicle records. The bill will be held in committee until that time. □



# Legislative Process Dates

## Important Dates in the Legislative Process

### Introduction - Last day to file and/or 1st Read in Senate.

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - last day to introduce General Senate bills and resolutions (even year). [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - last day to accept General House bills and resolutions. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**39<sup>th</sup> 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.

**28<sup>th</sup> day** - General Senate bills and resolutions.

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - Local Senate bills and resolutions.

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - General House bills and resolutions.

**40<sup>th</sup> 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

**26<sup>th</sup> day** - File with Secretary of the Senate. [Rule 3-1.2 (a)]

**27<sup>th</sup> day** - 1st Reading and referral to committee. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**28<sup>th</sup> day** - Committee report read upon convening. (A recommitted bill already 2nd read - report day 29.)

**29<sup>th</sup> day** - 2nd Reading. [Rule 4-2.6]

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - Passage [Rule 4-2.10 (a)] and immediate transmittal to House. [Rule 4-2.14]

### Local Senate Bills and Resolutions

**35<sup>th</sup> day** - File with Secretary of the Senate. [3-1.2 (a)]

**36<sup>th</sup> day** - 1st Reading and referral to committee. (Cannot pass for 2 days.) [Rule 4-2.4 (c)]

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - Favorable report by committee, passage and immediate transmittal to the House. [Rule 4-2.14]

**39<sup>th</sup> day** - 2nd Reading in House.

**40<sup>th</sup> day** - Favorable report and passage in House.

### General House Bills and Resolutions

**30<sup>th</sup> day** - Transmitted from House and received by Secretary.

**31<sup>st</sup> day** - 1st Reading and referral to committee. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**38<sup>th</sup> day** - Favorable report upon convening and 2nd reading. (Applies to days 36 - 38) [Rule 4-2.6]

**39<sup>th</sup> day** - Passage. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]

**40<sup>th</sup> 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

**39<sup>th</sup> day** - 1<sup>st</sup> Reading and referral to committee.

**40<sup>th</sup> 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]*

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