



FEBRUARY 11, 2010 - DAY 17

Upper Chamber Report

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TOP STORY

Legislative Day 17: Senate Passes Bill to Give Banks More Lending Flexibility



Sen Jim Butterworth discusses giving banks more flexibility to renew loans

By Jennifer Kitt

CHAMBER (Feb. 11, 2010)-The Senate showed support for flexible bank loans with the passage of House Bill 926. The bill, which was immediately signed by Governor Sonny Perdue, gives Georgia banks more flexibility in renewing loans for customers in good standing. Sen. Jim Butterworth (R-Clarkesville) presented the bill to the Senate, and explained how customers with good credit histories are being turned down for loans because of decreasing bank capital. The bill will now put Georgia's banks under similar guidelines with those on the federal level. Sen. Steve Thompson (D-Marietta) applauded Sen. Butterworth and the Senate Banking and Finance Committee for passing the legislation, saying the bill will help Georgia's businesses grow in difficult economic times.

The Senate also welcomed Georgia Boy Scout troops to the Capitol for the 100th anniversary of scouting during annual Boy Scout Day. Sen. Chip Pearson (R-Dawsonville) presented SR 840 commemorating the event and welcomed troops to the Capitol. He also announced the Boy Scouts' new partnership with the Department of Natural Resources to help maintain Georgia's state parks. (See more on page 2.) Sen. George Hooks (D-Americus) recounted his fond memories of being a Boy Scout and later receiving the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award.

Today also marked Community Health Day and Sen. Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville) welcomed various community health workers from across the state to the Capitol. The community health system helps to alleviate some of the patients that would otherwise go to emergency rooms or use Medicaid. These facilities see approximately 300,000 Georgians a year, and save the state \$124 million dollars. □

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Georgia State Capitol Celebrates 100 Years of Scouting

ATLANTA— State lawmakers today welcomed Boy Scout troops from across Georgia to celebrate 100 years of scouting during Boy Scouts of America Day at the Georgia State Capitol. Representatives of the Department of Natural Resources were also on hand to announce the “Scouting for State Parks” initiative that will engage thousands of scouts and volunteers to help maintain Georgia’s state parks.



communities and of our state’s tourism industry.”

Rep. Ehrhart noted, “I’m so pleased to be a part of the celebration of the centennial of the Boy Scouts of America, and of the tenth anniversary of Boy Scout Day at the Georgia Capitol. Over the past ten years, thousands of young men from all over Georgia have taken part in Boy Scout Day, and it has given them a chance to meet their elected officials and learn more about how our democracy works.”

Each year, Sen. Chip Pearson (R-Dawsonville) and Rep. Earl Ehrhart (R-Powder Springs), along with other legislators involved in scouting, host the troops at the State Capitol for the day and formally recognize them in the Senate and House chambers with a special resolution. “The Boy Scouts are an integral part of every community they serve. As an Eagle Scout and board member of the Northeast Georgia Council of the Boy Scouts of America, I’ve had a unique opportunity to see first-hand the level of dedication the organization, its scouts and volunteers bring to each project,” said Sen. Pearson. “I look forward to seeing how our state parks benefit under this partnership. Parks are a vital part of Georgia’s

Each of Georgia’s thirteen Scout chapters, or councils, has committed to undertaking a large-scale service project for a local state park throughout this year. Georgia state parks have suffered from painful budget cuts due to severe declines in state income. Maintenance and improvement projects have been put on hold, while cuts have been made to staff and public resources. Through this partnership, state parks will receive maintenance and care at no additional cost to taxpayers by enlisting many of Georgia’s 200,000 Scouts, volunteers, and alumni.

This initiative has received strong bi-partisan support

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Senator Vincent Fort’s Dropout Deterrent Act Passes Education Committee

By Jennifer Kitt

ATLANTA – Sen. Vincent Fort’s (D-Atlanta) Dropout Deterrent Act passed unanimously out of the Senate Education and Youth Committee. The bill will increase the mandatory school attendance ages from 16 to 17. Sen. Fort drafted the legislation to deter young people in the state from dropping out of high school.

“You must have a high school diploma to succeed in today’s society. Our state is dealing with an astronomical dropout rate,” said Sen. Fort. “Our children must know an education is the key in living a prosperous life. In addition, the cost to Georgia for the 5,500 students that drop out every year is \$1.8 billion annually.”

The legislation exempts students that are enrolled in community college or technical schools. The bill will now go to the Senate for a vote. □



Sen. Butterworth Hosts Toccoa-Stephens County Day At the State Capitol



By Katie Wright

ATLANTA (Feb. 11, 2010) – Yesterday, State Sen. Jim Butterworth (R-Clarksville) hosted Toccoa-Stephens County Day at the State Capitol. It was an opportunity for state and local leaders to come together, foster relationships and work collaboratively to further economic growth in Northeast Georgia.

“These counties will be strong leaders as Georgia grows out of this economic downturn,” said Sen. Butterworth. “I was honored to host the over 40 local leaders and citizens who came to visit the State Capitol and I look forward to discussing how to further promote job growth and economic prosperity in Stephens County.”

Officials from the city of Toccoa, Stephens County, Toccoa-Stephens County Chamber of Commerce, and Stephens County Development Authority travelled to the State Capitol to meet with their legislators and other state leaders. These local leaders and citizens, along with Sen. Butterworth and Rep. Michael Harden (R-Toccoa), attended to the legislative priorities of Toccoa-Stephens County including improved infrastructure, economic development and tourism.

The Senate adopted Senate Resolution 1031, sponsored by Sen. Butterworth, recognizing Feb. 10 as Toccoa-Stephens County Day at the State Capitol. The resolution mentioned several notable aspects of the counties. The City of Toccoa and Stephens County were deemed a Signature Community City by the Department of Community Affairs and an Entrepreneur Friendly county by Governor Sonny Perdue. □

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from Georgia’s state lawmakers. Sen. George Hooks (D-Americus), the only Georgia state senator to receive the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award, offered his encouragement to the Boy Scouts and state park staff to take pride that their partnership will benefit thousands of Georgians across the state. “During such difficult economic times, the state needs all the help it can get from citizens who are willing to lend a helping hand.”

Rep. Pedro Marin (D-Duluth) remarked, “It has been truly an honor to have participated for the last eight years in Boy Scout Day at the Capitol, especially this year as we celebrate Scouting’s 100th anniversary. Throughout the years we have seen a movement that has embraced diversity by bringing together people from all cultures and helped millions develop the necessary components to influence their adult lives through character building, leadership training, and physical activities.”

“For 100 years, Scouts have served Georgia’s communities,” said Scouting’s Georgia State President Scott Sorrels. “Now, during Scouting’s Centennial, we’re focusing our resources like never before to address a critical need – the budget crisis in our state parks.”

National author and Scouting advocate Alvin Townley was instrumental in helping develop the program. “We saw our state and its magnificent park system in trouble and we realized Scouting has 200,000 youth and adult volunteers here in Georgia who can help,” he explained.

To learn more about Scouting for State Parks, visit www.ScoutingForStateParks.org.

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Committee Votes to Include First Aid in Health Curriculum

By Katie Wright

CLOB 310 – Sen. Valencia Seay (D-Riverdale) introduced legislation that arms students with first aid knowledge so they can be prepared in the event of an emergency. Senate Bill 298 simply includes first-aid instruction in health curriculum for students in 8th grade or higher. The Senate Education Committee passed Sen. Seay’s legislation unanimously.

Additionally, Sen. Vincent Fort’s (D-Atlanta) bill that raises the mandatory school attendance age from 16 to 17 passed unanimously.

Sen. Don Balfour (R-Snellville) presented SB 386, regarding performance-based pay structure for Georgia educators. This bill will preserve current salary structure but will allow current teachers to opt-in to the new performance pay system when it is fully implemented in 2014. New teachers and those opting into the pay system will not be eligible for automatic

supplements for advanced degrees, but will be eligible for higher bonuses based on classroom observations and the degree to which their students have grown academically. The bill will enable those already enrolled in advanced degree programs to complete their studies and remain in the current pay scale.

Sen. Balfour presented the bill with Erin Hames, Policy Director in the Office of the Governor and Kelly Henson of the Professional Standards Commission.



The biggest concern for the committee and the witnesses that testified was that advanced degrees would lose relevance. Hames explained that if a teacher feels an advanced degree will improve student achievement in the classroom, then that should be reason enough to further their education.

The committee will continue hearings on SB 386 before taking a vote. □

Nasal Spray: Topic of Discussion in Health and Human Services

By Katie Wright

CAP 450 – Expanding the definition of influenza vaccines to include nasal sprays that administer the flu vaccine in a live influenza virus was approved by the Health and Human Services Committee. Senate Bill 367, authored by Sen. Don Balfour (R-Snellville), is a provision that most states already recognize.



Testimony was heard from two physicians; Dr. Karen Duncan, a Grady and Emory Pediatrician, and Dr. Tara Gonzales, pediatrician and science director with Medimmune. Both testified that the nasal spray is a safe and effective way to administer the vaccine, even to children. Both witnesses mentioned that a consent form must be completed in order to weed out those who the vaccine would not be compatible with.

Bryan Looby represented the Medical Association of Georgia, which opposes the legislation because it does not require a prescription from a doctor. A main concern is that without a prescription, vaccine compatibility might be an issue with consumers.

The committee voted unanimously to pass Sen. Balfour’s bill.

The committee also voted unanimously to pass two other bills. House Bill 194, authored by Rep. Fran Millar (R-Dunwoody), ensures that a pharmacist who substitutes a generic drug for a brand name drug will display the names of both drugs on the prescription label with an explanation that there was a substitution. SB 353, authored by Sen. Buddy Carter (R-Savannah), adds certain drugs to the classification of controlled substances. □

Agriculture Committee Votes for Fire Safety

By Katie Wright

CAP 123—Currently, there are several counties that do not allow a manufactured home that is more than 10 years old to be moved into the county. The Agriculture Committee met Thursday to discuss a bill carried by Sen. John Bulloch (R-Ochlocknee) that simply states that age of a manufactured home will not determine fire safety, rather it will be contingent upon a fire safety inspection.

The committee heard two favorable testimonies on the bill. Todd Edwards with the Association County Commissioners of Georgia reiterated that several counties have age restrictions throughout the state and that there was no objection to the proposed bill. Lamar Morton of the Georgia Municipal Association and Charlotte Gaddis of the Georgia Manufactured Homes Association supported using health and safety standards as opposed to age in determining the safety of a manufactured home.

The last witness, Ron Jackson of the Insurance Department, testified that there might be a staffing issue regarding who would perform the inspections, but Sen. Bulloch explained that those issues are up to the local authority, not the state.

Senate Bill 384 passed unanimously out of committee. □

Regulated Industries Passes Four Bills with Overwhelming Support

By Natalie Strong

(450 CAP)- The Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee passed four bills out of committee on Thursday with little debate. Committee Chairman Sen. David Shafer (R-Duluth) presented two bills Senate Bills 150, the Junk Dealers Bill and 148, the Georgia Occupational Regulation Review Law. Under SB 150, a current \$1 tax on all junk dealers would be repealed in its entirety. Currently, probate judges are required to levy this dollar tax on area junk dealers.

SB 148 would give the Georgia Occupation Regulation Review Council the ability to review existing state boards to determine the need for change to their current regulations, as well as evaluate the regulations of existing state boards at least once every seven years in order to see if all boards are still required. The reviewing board would then present a non-binding recommendation to the legislature. Under current law, the state is not able to create a new licensing board without having it reviewed after one session. Secretary of State Brian Kemp spoke in support of the bill, noting that there is a need to assure that each board was still relevant and productive. Some boards have remained in existence but are still valid or impose little to no fines. This piece of legislation would hold all boards and agencies accountable. Both bills passed unanimously out of committee.

The next order of business was Sen. Jack Murphy's (R-Cumming) SB 335, which passed out of Senate

last session but failed in the House. The bill would allow municipalities, housing authorities and counties the power to decide whether or not to allow alcohol to be consumed within 100 yards of a housing authority property. Chairman Shafer noted that there was a new philosophy on public housing and several areas across the state have sought to mix in different socioeconomic backgrounds in order to improve these housing communities and the surrounding areas. Murphy reminded the committee that this is a good economic development bill which will help many areas grow and improve. Both the Georgia Municipal Association and the Association of County Commissioners were on hand to support the bill, which passed unanimously out of committee.

Finally, the committee heard testimony on House Bill 231, the Interior Designer Bill. The bill will clearly define that an interior designer is able to draw and consult on drawings for construction permits for areas of a building that has been previously designed by an architect but cannot change load bearing or mechanical construction. Additionally, they can not change the outside shell or building without the approval of an architect. Rep. Sean Jerguson (R-Canton) noted that the bill preserves the practice of architecture while allowing interior designers to continue to practice trade. Representatives from the Home Builders Association and the architecture and interior design communities all spoke in favor of the bill, which passed unanimously out of committee. □

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)]