



# This Week in the Senate

February 27- March 2

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## **Metal Theft Legislation**

The Senate passed SB 321 Wednesday with a vote of 44 to 5. Sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford), this legislation would place additional requirements on metal recyclers and sellers – particularly the recycling of copper – to curb metal theft in Georgia. The passage of SB 321 marks the third time in five years the Georgia legislature has addressed the ongoing issue of metal theft.

**-SB 321**

## **Charter School Amendment**

Senate Majority Leader, Chip Rogers (R-Woodstock) sponsored legislation that seeks to amend the Georgia Constitution to allow for state or local approval to create charter schools. It also defines “state charter school,” as a public school that operates under the terms of a charter between the State Board of Education and a charter petitioner and allows state funds to be used to support and maintain special schools created by the General Assembly, including state charter schools. However, a local school system’s state funding cannot be reduced because students living in the system boundaries enroll in a state charter school. The resolution passed the House 123-48, and the Senate tabled the resolution on Wednesday. –**HR 1162**

## **The Late Sen. Robert Brown Remembered**

Members of the Senate remembered Sen. Robert Brown in Chamber on Wednesday. The Chamber watched a video with fellow Senators paying tributes to the memory of Sen. Brown. Sen. Brown’s successor, Sen. Paris, sponsored Senate Resolution 1023 which honored his commitment and dedication to serve the people of Macon. Sen. Staton led a moment of silence and prayer in his remembrance. Leader of the Democratic Caucus, Sen. Steve Henson, said he remembers Sen. Brown was a quiet, yet effective and committed leader. Sen. Brown served three terms as a member of the Board of Education of Bibb County before his election as Bibb County's first black Senator since Reconstruction. He served 20 years in the state Senate and was elected Minority Leader in 2005. –**SR 1023**

**\*To view the remembrance video click here: <http://youtu.be/7cn8J6vYUsI>**

## **Eligibility for Appointment as an Assistant Adjutant General**

Under HB 800 which is sponsored in the Senate by Sen. Butch Miller (R-Gainesville), a candidate with five years of service in any federally recognized component of the Army or Air Force may be eligible for appointment as an Assistant Adjutant General. The legislation passed the House of Representatives with a vote of 92-61. On Monday it passed the Senate with a vote count of 32-15. –

**HB800**

## **License Plate Legislation**

Sen. Bill Heath (R-Bremen) sponsored a bill that will allow specialty and standard license plates to optionally display the nation’s motto “In God We Trust” in lieu of the county name or other

statements located at the bottom of the tag at no additional cost. The bill passed Tuesday with a vote of 48-3. –**SB293**

### **Bill to Delay County Board of Education Composition and Election Requirements**

SB 412 delays the effective date of a statute enacted by SB 79, a bill signed into law after the 2011 legislative session. The statute requires Georgia counties to follow specific county board of education requirements if it receives revenue from either a homestead option sales and use tax or a county sales and use tax for educational purposes. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Fran Millar (R-Atlanta) passed by a vote of 37-17 on Wednesday and means that DeKalb County school board will keep its nine members for the next two years. - **SB 412**

### **Bill to Restrict Irresponsible Uses of Laser Pointers**

On Monday, a bill sponsored by Sen. John Crosby (R-Tifton) would make it a misdemeanor to intentionally point a laser device at or near a law enforcement officer. The bill specifies that this rule applies even when the officer is inside a motor vehicle or building. Additionally, the legislation would make it a misdemeanor to point a laser device at aircraft. The bill passed with a vote of 43-4. –**SB441**

### **CPR Classes and Defibrillators for Public Schools**

A resolution by Sen. Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga) will urge the Department of Education to implement cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training classes and install automated external defibrillators in Georgia public schools. The bill passed Tuesday with a vote of 49-1. –**SR590**

### **Recovery Limits by Successor Creditors**

Legislation sponsored by Sen. Don Balfour (R-Snellville) that would limit the amount a successor creditor can recover against a guarantor on a debt obligation passed the Senate on Monday. Under this legislation, the successor creditor may only collect whichever is less: either the maximum amount allowed under the guaranty or the amount paid for the debt obligation, plus interest as stated on the obligation. The bill passed with a vote of 45-0. –**SB448**

### **Disposition of Veterans' Cremated Remains Act**

The Georgia Senate passed SB 372 on Monday. Sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford), this legislation would require funeral directors to make a reasonable effort to determine whether the deceased is a veteran. The passage of this bill provides military veterans with the burial honors they deserve and recognizes their selfless dedication to defend our nation. This bill passed 48-0. –**SB 372**

### **Georgia Agency Teleconference Meetings**

On Tuesday, Sen. Ronnie Chance (R-Tyrone) sponsored legislation that would authorize all agencies in Georgia to conduct meetings by teleconference where applicable, as long as laws governing meetings open to the public are met. The bill passed with a vote of 53-0.–**SB176**

### **Providing for New Funding for Airports and Landing Fields**

Sen. Lindsey Tippins (R-Marietta) authored the bill to expand cooperative agreements between local governments and community improvement districts so that CID funds can be used for the improvement of airports and landing fields within the CID. CIDs are designated areas where the

commercial property owners vote to impose a self tax to fund local projects and services. SB 371 passed with a vote of 51 – 4. –**SB 371**

### **Expanded List of Actions Viewed as Unauthorized Practice of Law**

Sen. Jesse Stone (R-Waynesboro) authored a substitute to SB 365 to clarify what is viewed as the unlawful practice of law during real estate closings. This includes preparing deeds of conveyance, facilitating or supervising the execution of deeds of conveyance and the disbursement of the funds necessary to close a real estate transaction. Under the bill, consumers harmed by the unlawful practice of law will have the right to sue offenders. The bill passed with a vote of 52-0. – **SB 365**

### **Functions Move from the Georgia Department of Labor to Office of Fire Safety**

This legislation will transfer the following functions currently held by the Georgia Department of Labor to the Office of Safety Fire Commissioner: oversight and inspection of elevators, dumbwaiters, escalators, manlifts, and moving walks, requirements for and inspection of scaffolding and staging design, regulation of boilers and pressure vessels and amusement and carnival ride safety and inspection. The legislation, sponsored by Sen. Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga) passed with a vote of 53-0. –**SB446**

### **Motorized Wheelchairs and Scooters Require Reflectors**

Sen. Donzella James (D-Atlanta) passed legislation on Wednesday that will require motorized wheelchairs and scooters that are operated on the sidewalks and public ways to be equipped with reflectors. The bill passed 49-2. –**SB 238**

### **Ease of Restrictions for Mail-Order Prescription Drugs**

Legislation that will ease restrictions on the selling and delivering of prescription drugs by mail or common carrier in Georgia was passed on Wednesday. Sen. Don Balfour (R-Snellville) sponsored the bill which will also allow prescription drugs to be mailed directly to a patient on behalf of a pharmacy and allow a pharmacy to mail a prescription to another pharmacy for a patient to receive the prescription and patient counseling. The bill passed 54-0. –**SB 346**

### **Bill to Amend Definition of “Budget” on Local Government Level**

Sen. William Ligon (R-Brunswick) sponsored a bill that amends the definition of “budget” as it relates to local governments and the electronic submission of budgets by local school districts. The bill passed 50-0 on Wednesday. –**SB 381**

### **Ratios and Funding Formula Established for Nurse Programs in Local Schools**

Legislation by Sen. Fran Millar (R-Atlanta) will establish a ratio and funding formula for school health nurse programs in local schools and establishes the position of a school health nurse program coordinator within the Department of Education. The bill passed on Wednesday 50-0. – **SB 403**

### **Professional Development Funding**

SB 404 would ensure that all education staff development funding is appropriately related to levels of improved student achievement. The amount of professional development funding available for certified and classified personnel will total at least 1 percent of the salaries, and these funds will be distributed to local boards of education. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Fran Millar (R-Atlanta) passed on Wednesday 45-6. –**SB 404**

### **Liability for Public Records Removed for Private Colleges**

Under legislation by Sen. Butch Miller (R-Gainesville), when private colleges or universities provide the Office of Student Achievement (OAS) with confidential records concerning their students, the private institutions will not be held liable. Under current law, public colleges are already protected, this bill will grant private colleges the same protection. The bill passed Wednesday 49-0. - **SB 405**

### **Foundations of American Law and Government Displays**

Senator Bill Heath (R-Breman) sponsored legislation allowing the displays of educational and informational material about the history and background of American law, and the Foundations of American Law and Government display, to be in any public building of the state. Currently, the Foundations of American Law and Government display can be posted publicly in the judicial facilities of each municipality and political subdivision. The bill passed 41-9 on Wednesday. -**SB 424**

### **Environment Protection Division: Permits and Variances**

This legislation sponsored by Sen. Ross Tolleson (R-Perry) requires The EPD to develop procedures to ensure timely processing of permits or variances. Further, the status of the applications must be securely available via the applicable agency's website. The bill passed on Wednesday 53-0. -**SB 427**

### **Fiscal Note Required for Deadlines and Private Sector Impacts**

This legislation mandates that fiscal notes will be required for general bills that have significant revenue impact on state government or on the private sector. Fiscal notes requested by members-elect of the General Assembly will still have until December 1, and this date is specifically included in actions upon failure to meet the deadline. Sen. Tolleson (R-Perry) sponsored the bill that passed 39-13 on Wednesday. -**SB 429**

### **Cell-Phone Jammers Prohibited in Prisons, Jails, and Youth Detention Centers**

This resolution, sponsored by Sen. Johnny Grant (R-Milledgeville), urges Congress to amend the Communications Act of 1934 and the Federal Communication Commission's rules to permit the use of "cellular jammers" for the prevention of illegal cell phone use in prisons, jails, and youth detention facilities. Current federal law prohibits the manufacture, importation, marketing, sale, and operation of "cellular jammers" within the United States. The bill passed 51-0 on Wednesday. -**SR 858**

### **Deputy James D. Paugh Memorial Highway**

A House Resolution was presented to dedicate the portion of Interstate Route 520 in Richmond County from Exit 2 (Wrightsboro Road) to Exit 3 (Gordon Highway) as the Deputy James D. Paugh Memorial Highway. Sen. Hardie Davis sponsored the resolution which passed 51-0 on Wednesday. -**HR 1103**

### **Macon Day at the Capitol**

Sen. Miriam Paris (D-Macon) and Sen. Cecil Staton (R-Macon) welcomed citizens and public officials from Macon and Bibb County to observe February 29, 2012, as Macon Day at the state

capitol. Numerous members of the General Assembly and local Macon businesses welcomed guests at the Depot on Wednesday night. –**SR 966**

### **Radio Hall of Fame and the Country DJ Hall of Fame Honored**

Sen. John Albers (R-Roswell) recognized legendary DJ Mr. James "Moby" Carney on Wednesday. Moby in the Morning has been a morning staple for Atlanta's KICKS 101.5 FM listeners for the past ten years. On October 15, 2011, Mr. James "Moby" Carney was inducted into the Georgia Radio Hall of Fame and on February 21, 2012, he was inducted into the Country DJ Hall of Fame at the Country Radio Broadcasters' Seminar in Nashville, Tennessee. –**SR 1051**

### **American Idol Alum Visits Chamber**

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga) welcomed Lauren Alaina, a native of Rossville, Ga. to the Senate Chamber on Monday. Alaina was the runner-up of the tenth season of American Idol. She has gone on to release her single "Like My Mother Does" which entered the Billboard Hot Country Songs chart at forty-nine and the Hot 100 chart at twenty. The song sold 121,000 copies in its first week. –**SR 954**

### **MADD**

Sen. Donzella James (D-Atlanta) recognized members of Mothers Against Drunk Driving on Monday at the Capitol. MADD Volunteers work diligently to raise awareness about the dangers of drinking and driving through public education and work to make impaired driving laws tougher through their Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving. –**SR 877**

### **Children's Day at the Capitol**

Sen. Fran Millar (R-Atlanta) sponsored a resolution in honor of Children's Day at the Capitol. Over 23 advisory groups were present at the Capitol this day. Sen. Millar reminded the Senate that children make up one third of our population and one hundred percent of our future. –**SR 1058**

### **Cheick Sidi Diarra Recognized**

Ambassador Cheick Sidi Diarra was in the Senate on Tuesday to receive his resolution from Senator Donzella James (D-Atlanta) for his incredible career and diplomatic service. He discussed the bond of friendship between the citizens of Georgia and West Africa, and expressed his gratitude to all Georgians. –**SR 804**

### **The Late Freddie Richardson Honored**

Senator Josh McKoon (R-Columbus) honored Mr. Freddie Richardson in the Senate on Tuesday. Richardson served on the Columbus Police Department for 16 years and retired from the Department of Corrections after 21 years of service. He passed away in early February. –**SR 1015**

### **Skin Cancer Awareness Day**

Members of the Georgia Society of Dermatologists were in the Capitol on Wednesday to raise skin cancer awareness and provide spot checks for suspicious spots. Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford) announced that it is reported that of the one million newly diagnosed cases of melanoma and other skin cancers an estimated 10,710 people will die from this illness each year. –**SR 714**

### **Sen. Cecil Staton Honors Wesleyan College**

Sen. Cecil Staton (R-Macon) presented Wesleyan College with Senate Resolution 797 in the Senate Chamber on Wednesday, commemorating their 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the schools continued tradition of academic excellence. February 29, 2012, was also recognized as “Macon Day” at the State Capitol. Located in Macon, Wesleyan was founded on December 23, 1836, and is the first college in the world to grant degrees to women –84 years before women were allowed to vote. – **SR 797**

#### **Life South Blood Drive Members Recognized**

Sen. Don Balfour (R-Snellville) honored members from LifeSouth Community Blood Centers and the Five Points of Life Foundation on Wednesday. LifeSouth Community Blood Centers is one of the largest blood providers in the United States, and collects and supplies blood for more than 100 medical facilities in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. –**SR 1026**

#### **Bikers Thanked for Strides in Nonprofit Organization**

Sen. Bill Jackson (R-Applying) passed a resolution to make February 29, 2012 Biker’s Day at the Capitol. American Bikers Active Toward Education is a politically active nonprofit organization working on motorcyclist's rights. Their goal is for more rider education and public awareness of motorcyclists. –**SR 1070**

#### **Comcast Members Welcomed to the Senate**

A resolution was passed on Wednesday to recognize Comcast for its Leaders and Achievers and Internet Essentials Programs. The programs provide charitable and scholarship support to the communities where its customers and employees live, work, and raise families. Sen. Fran Millar (R-Atlanta) sponsored the resolution. –**SR 1037**

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