



This Week in the Senate

January 30- February 3

“Homestead Exemption” Bill Passes

The “Homestead Exemption” bill passed on Monday with a vote of 51 to 0. This will reduce the risk of homeowners losing their homes during financial hardship through an exemption from levy and sale of property, so as to increase the amount of certain exemptions in a home. For real or personal property that is the debtor’s primary residence this adds a \$21,500.00 exemption. For couples in which one spouse is indebted, this number is raised to \$43,000.00 –**SB117**

Sunset Legislation Passes

With a bipartisan vote of 37 to 12, the Senate passed the Georgia Government Accountability Act on Monday. Also known as “sunset legislation”, this bill calls for the creation of a joint committee, which will be tasked with assessing state agencies for efficiency. Although the committee would have no authority over the agencies it examines, it will make recommendations as to whether the agencies should be privatized, consolidated, eliminated, or remain unchanged. The Senate believes this bill will play a role in reducing unnecessary spending and inefficiency in the future. This bill was sponsored by Senators William Ligon (R-Waverly), Chip Rogers (R-Woodstock), Judson Hill (R–Marietta), Frank Ginn (R- Danielsville), John Albers (R- Roswell), and David Shafer (R-Duluth). –**SB223**

Unanimous Support for Condominium Bill

On Tuesday, a bill sponsored by Senator Bill Hamrick (R-Carrollton) passed 55 to 0. This bill allows for condominium unit owners to file a petition in a superior court in order to take control of their condominium association. The original individuals responsible for developing the association must fail to perform a number of requirements within thirty days, and approval to take control of the association must be granted from a superior court. –**SB136**

Bill to Amend State Definition of “Food Sales Establishment”

A bill sponsored by Senator John Bulloch (R-Ochlocknee) amends the definition of “food sales establishment” passed Tuesday 55-0. Facilities that boil, bottle, and sell sugar cane syrup or sorghum syrup are no longer included in the definition provided that all product labels meet a number of requirements, including the statement: “This product has not been produced in a facility licensed by the Georgia Department of Agriculture.” –**SB300**

Bill Permits Hunters to Equip Weapons with Silencers

Senators John Bulloch (R-Ochlocknee), Ross Tolleson (R-Perry), David Shafer (R-Duluth), Chip Rogers (R-Woodstock), Jeff Mullis (R- Chickamauga), and Greg Goggans (R-Douglas) sponsored legislation which allows any hunting firearm to be equipped with a silencer. Current law prohibits the use of a silencer for hunting. The bill passed 48-5. –**SB301**

“Taylor’s Law” Passes the Senate

Senator Rick Jeffares (R-Locust Grove) sponsored a bill that authorizes the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to issue special authorization to hunt big game or alligators to any person not older than 21 who has been diagnosed with a terminal illness. The bill is named "Taylor's Law," in honor of Taylor Gammling, the 18-year old inspiration for the bill who passed away from leukemia. Gammling's parents were in attendance as the bill passed 53-1. —**SB 309**

Daily Saltwater Fishing License Rate Changes

Senator William Ligon (R-Waverly) introduced legislation that makes a one-day saltwater shore fishing license \$5 and can be purchased by residents and non-residents. Current rates for residents are an annual fee of \$9.00 or two-year fishing license for \$16.00; nonresidents are limited to an annual fishing license of \$45.00. The bill passed 52-1. —**SB 307**

Legislation to Increase Bonding Authority for GAHEFA Passes

Senator Cecil Staton (R-Macon) helped pass legislation to increase the Georgia Higher Education Facilities Authority (GAHEFA) from \$300 to \$500 million. After the passage of SB 562 in 2006, students received parking decks, residence halls, dining halls and much more from the allotted \$300 million. The bill was passed 45-5. —**SB 302**

Reporting False Crimes Becomes a Misdemeanor

Senator Butch Miller (R-Gainesville), Sen. Charlie Bethel (R-Dalton) and Sen. John Crosby (R-Tifton) sponsored legislation that makes it a crime to transmit a false report of a crime. The bill passed Thursday 47-0. —**SB 225**

Georgia Lemon Law Faces Price Change

Senator John Bulloch's (R-Ochlocknee) bill was passed 30-19. The bill will increase the fee collected by motor vehicle dealers for implementation of the Georgia Lemon Law from \$3 to \$5, but only on new vehicle purchases. —**SB 305**

Bill Gives DNR Ability to Prohibit Boats in State Park Lakes

A bill that will prohibit the use of boats on state park lakes and other areas when the Department of Natural Resources has posted a sign or other form of notice restricting such use passed the Senate floor on Thursday. The bill is sponsored by Senator Rick Jeffares (R-Locust Grove). The bill passed 53-0. —**SB 319**

Home Schooling Legislation Passes

Senator Barry Loudermilk (R-Cassville) sponsored a bill that amends current law to allow a home study program to submit declarations of intent and all attendance records to the Georgia Department of Education. It will give the Georgia Department of Education authority to report to the appropriate authorities when a homeschooled student is in violation of the state attendance policies and will take effect with the 2012-2013 school years. The bill passed 47-11. —**SB 227**

Insurance License Renewal Goes from Annual to Biannual

Renewing insurance licenses will now become biannual instead of the previous annual. HB 477 was passed on through the Senate with a vote of 52 to 0 and will now go to the Governor's desk for Governor Deal's signature. —**HB 477**

House Bill Passage Helps Small Businesses

The other House bill to make its way to the Senate was HB 683, which clarifies the execution and filing of an answer to a wage garnishment summons is not a practice of law, and therefore an attorney's services is not required. This bill passed the Senate 52 – 0 and is a victory for small businesses who often respond to this type of summons without a lawyer, simply because they cannot afford the legal fees. With HB 683, this activity would no longer be considered an unauthorized practice of law. –**HB 683**

Congressman Phil Gingrey visits the State Senate

U.S. Congressman Phil Gingrey (R-GA) spoke to the Senate on Monday. He praised Georgia's bipartisanship, as well as the state's balanced budget. He closed by encouraging the Senators to "keep up the good work". Prior to his service in Congress, Gingrey served in the Georgia State Senate from 1998 to 2003.

Representative Mike Hubbard Visits from Alabama

Rep. Hubbard, Alabama's Speaker of the House and University of Georgia graduate, visited the Senate Chamber on Tuesday. He touched on how Georgia and Alabama are similar and how he is looking forward to working alongside Georgia to develop ideas that work. He also noted the appreciation between leaderships in the two states.

Stop the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Rally

Senator Renee Unterman (R-Buford) was joined by Lt. Governor Casey Cagle, Attorney General Sam Olens, Rep. Edward Lindsey, and Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed outside the Capitol to host a rally Wednesday morning. Supporters were adorned in purple scarves to support the cause. A resolution was passed to make Feb. 1 "Stop the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Rally" within the Senate Chamber.- **SR 767**

Food Bank Day

Members of the Georgia Food Bank Association hosted an exhibit in the South Wing of the Capitol. Senator Tim Golden (R-Valdosta) hosted the CEO and President of the Second Harvest Food Bank as the Chaplain of the Day. The Second Harvest Food Bank serves over 25 million people with 15 million pounds of food a year. – **SR 763**

World Series Champion Edwin Jackson Recognized

Senator Ed Harbison (D- Columbus) welcomed St. Louis Cardinals World Series Champion, Edwin Jackson from his district of Columbus to the Senate Chamber Wednesday. Jackson's son, Xavier, was in attendance along with his parents.

Go Red for Women

Women from around the state gathered at the Capitol on Thursday to support "Go Red for Women" which raises awareness for women with heart disease. Senator Valencia Seay (D-Riverdale) asked members of the Senate to dress in red to raise awareness for cardiovascular disease which claims the lives of nearly 500,000 American women each year.

Georgia State University Day

A Senate Resolution was passed Thursday to make Feb. 2 as Georgia State Day at the Capitol. Cheerleaders and band members were on hand to celebrate along with head football coach, Bill

Curry. Senator Ronnie Chance (R-Tyrone) said that it was a “thrill and honor to see what is happening at Georgia State”. - **SR 755**

Veterinary Medicine Recognized on Thursday

The Georgia Veterinary Medical Association was given special recognition for their influential role in veterinary medicine for over 100 years. The Senate commended professionals in the veterinary medicine industry for their contributions to the health and welfare of the state’s animals, as well their critical role in Georgia’s agribusiness industry.—**SR662**

Senate Honors Recipient of the Milken Educator Award

Senator Valencia Seay (D-Riverdale) recognized Shekema Silveri on Thursday for her contribution to the education of Georgia’s children. Ms. Silveri is the only Georgian to receive the prestigious Milken Educator Award and serves as the chair of Mount Zion High School’s language arts department. —**SR649**

Jenny Lynn Anderson Recognized on Stop Violence Against Women Day

Senator Jack Hill (R- Reidsville) recognized Jenny Lynn Anderson author of the book, *Room 939, Fifteen Minutes of Horror, Twenty Years of Healing*. Her book recounts her recovery from a violent sexual assault and has provided encouragement and comfort to others who have been victims of similar violence. A resolution passed to make February 2 Stop Violence Against Women Day at the Capitol.—**SR768**

Lucy Craft Laney Honored

Senator Horacena Tate (D-Atlanta) took the well Thursday to remember the life of Lucy Craft Laney (April 13, 1854 – October 24, 1933) in honor of African-American History Month. In addition to opening the first black school, Ms. Craft opened the first black nursing school and first black kindergarten. In 1974, she was selected as one of the first three African-Americans to have their portrait hung in the capitol.