



This Week in the Senate

March 19-March 23

2012 Tax Reform Package

The Georgia Senate unanimously passed HB 386, a major piece of tax reform legislation. Features of the measure include a three-year sales tax holiday for school supplies and energy efficient products, significant reduction of the marriage penalty, elimination of the “birthday” tax and sales tax on motor vehicles, a tax exemption on energy used in manufacturing and construction materials, as well as an E-Fairness measure which will aid in the growth of local businesses. -**HB 386**

Amendment to the Georgia Constitution Pertaining to Charter Schools

Senate Majority Leader Chip Rogers (R- Woodstock) sponsored HR1162 to the Senate on Monday. The legislation would amend the Georgia Constitution to allow for state or local approval to create charter schools. It passed with a vote of 40-16. -**HR1162**

Passage of the Fiscal Year 2013 Budget

The Georgia State budget for the 2013 fiscal year passed the Senate on Wednesday with a vote of 53-0. HB742 was carried by Sen. Jack Hill (R-Reidsville). -**HB742**

Local School Truancy and Home School Reporting Requirements

Sen. Fran Millar (R- Atlanta) presented HB 39 to the Senate on Monday, which passed with a vote of 41-9. The bill seeks to discourage truancy among the students of the state’s education system. The bill would amend the law to require the school system to send a statement of attendance by certified mail to the parent or guardian before imposing a penalty on a parent or guardian who violates the attendance law. - **HB 39**

Juvenile Court Re-hearings

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R-Dalton) carried HB 272 on Thursday. In juvenile court, current law allows judges to call a re-hearing at any time, and also requires a re-hearing if a party files a written request after receiving an order from an (unelected or unappointed) associate juvenile court judge. This bill strikes the language authorizing re-hearings. This bill passed the Senate, 50-0 with a substitute and will go back to the House for approval. -**HB 272**

Income Tax Credits: Job Creation

Monday, Sen. Ronnie Chance (R-Tyrone) carried HB 868 which amends existing incentives for job creation in Georgia. Changes include expansions and modifications to definitions pertaining to business and job creation, as well as various adjustments pertaining to tax credit policy. The bill passed 43-13. -**HB 868**

Scrapped Trailers and Certificate of Title Cancellation

President Pro Tempore Tommie Williams (R-Lyons) sponsored HB 900 in the Senate on Monday with a vote of 49-0. The bill provides that in order for a trailer to be scrapped, the owner must also surrender the trailer's certificate of title. No title is required if the trailer is at least 12 models years

old, is worth \$1,700 or less, and the owner states this on a signed statement delivered to the Department of Revenue. –**HB 900**

Licensing and Registration of Veterinarians and Veterinarian Technicians

Sen. John Bulloch (R-Ochlocknee) carried HB409, which delays the application for a veterinarian's license until after the applicant has passed a board approved examination. It passed the Senate with a vote of 48-0. –**HB409**

Distillery Tastings

Sen. Johnny Grant (R-Milledgeville) presented HB514 on Tuesday. This legislation authorizes licensed distillers to provide educational and promotional tours of distillery premises upon application to the Commissioner. The tours may include limited free tasting of one-half ounce per person per day. It passed with a vote of 34 to 14. –**HB514**

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Established

HB 1146, sponsored by Sen. Butch Miller (R-Gainesville) would establish the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency and the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board. Also, it would transfer the Division of Rehabilitation Services from the Department of Labor to the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. It passed with a vote of 46-2. –**HB1146**

Small Business Legislation

Sen. Johnny Grant (R- Milledgeville) carried a bill that would revise “The Small Business Assistance Act” of 1975 and rename it “The Small Business Assistance Act” of 2012. Under the amended Act, a “Georgia resident business” represents any business that regularly maintains a place where business is physically conducted in Georgia for at least one year prior to any bid or proposal to the state, or a new business that is domiciled in Georgia and regularly maintains a place where business is physically conducted in the state. The bill passed with a vote of 37 to 7. –**HB863**

Vidalia Onion Royalties

This bill allows the Commissioner of Agriculture to impose and collect royalty or licensing fees for the use of the Vidalia onion trademark on products or packaging containing Vidalia onions. Sen. John Bulloch (R-Ochlocknee) carried the bill, which passed the Senate with a vote of 42 to 3. –**HB832**

Georgia Legislative Retirement System Membership

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R-Dalton) sponsored HB 183 which passed the Senate Wednesday with a vote of 43-6. This bill allows General Assembly members to make irrevocable elections to become members of the Legislative Retirement System and would require public employers to notify the Board of Trustees if they hire a retired plan member. –**HB 183**

Retired Teacher's Return to Full-Time Service under the Teachers Retirement System

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R- Dalton) carried HB 208 which will make provisions to the Teachers Retirement System. Currently, a retired teacher may return to full-time service as a classroom teacher, principal, superintendent, media specialist, or counselor and continue to receive retirement benefits from the Teachers Retirement System. The provisions allowing this will be

automatically repealed on June 30, 2016 under current law. This legislation would change the automatic repeal date to June 30, 2013. The bill passed Wednesday with a vote of 46-2. –**HB 208**

Residential Mortgage and Foreclosure Fraud

HB 237, carried by Sen. Bill Hamrick (R-Carrollton), passed the Senate on Wednesday with a vote of 48-0. Under this legislation the term “mortgage lending process” is amended to include the execution of deeds under power of sale and the execution of assignments required to be recorded. Under this bill, one cannot be charged with residential mortgage fraud based solely upon the truthful information correction of errors, mistakes, or omissions in previously filed county documents. –**HB 237**

Social Workers

Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford) carried HB 434 which revises the description of the scope of practice for social workers. Currently, licensed social workers are authorized under Georgia law to provide psychological evaluation and analyses to determine an individual’s current needs. The bill passed with a vote of 48-2. –**HB 434**

Confidential Communications in Domestic Violence Cases

HB 711, carried by Sen. Bill Hamrick (R-Carrollton), passed the Senate Wednesday 52-1. This bill would keep all communication confidential between victims and advocates at domestic violence and sexual assault centers. The bill also exempts domestic abuse cases from the spousal evidence privilege in criminal proceedings. –**HB 711**

Dentist and Physician Licensure

Sen. Greg Goggans (R-Douglas) carried HB 785, which passed the Senate 44-6 on Wednesday. This legislation prohibits using a dentist's or physician's participation in any public or private health insurance plan, public health care system, public service initiative, or emergency room coverage as a condition of granting a state license to practice medicine. –**HB 785**

Providing Parents with Information on the Flu Vaccine

On Wednesday, the Senate passed HB 845 with a vote of 42-7. Carried by Sen. Jesse Stone (R-Waynesboro), this legislation would require early care and education programs provide information on the flu vaccine to parents of its enrolled children. –**HB 845**

Changes “Code Inspector” to “Code Enforcement Officer”

The Senate passed HB 93 on Wednesday 45-1. Carried by Sen. John Albers (R-Roswell), this legislation would amend the current law and changes the name of a local government ‘Code Inspector’ to a ‘Code Enforcement Officer’ and amends the current definition. –**HB 93**

Repeal of Georgia Work Ready Program

On Wednesday, Sen. Buddy Carter (R-Pooler) passed legislation that amends and deletes language governing the Georgia Workforce Investment Board (GWIB). The term “Georgia Work Ready” is deleted and the GWIB is empowered to draft rules and regulations. The bill passed with a vote of 46-0. –**HB897**

Automatic Fee Adjustments

Sen. Greg Goggans (R-Douglas) carried HB 181 which passed the Senate 45-7 on Thursday. This bill would put in place automatic fee adjustments for certain fees collected, such as: the solid waste disposal fee, the tire disposal fee, and certain fees pertaining to traffic violations collected by the courts. –**HB 811**

Alerting Parents to the Availability of the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship

Sen. Fran Millar carried HB 181 on Thursday, which passed with a vote of 34-16. This bill requires local resident school systems to notify parents of disabled students that their child may be eligible for a Georgia Special Needs Scholarship and where additional information may be obtained. Also, the system must provide the parent with possible scholarship eligibility at each Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting. –**HB181**

FAIR BUSINESS PRACTICES ACT OF 1975: TELEMARKETING OVERSIGHT

Sen. Cecil Staton (R-Macon) carried HB 1132 which adds new language regulating telemarketing and solicitation services made into and within the State of Georgia. The telemarketers must clearly identify themselves or the entity making the call and caller ID services may not be blocked or disabled by the telemarketer or solicitation service. Violations of these laws may result in \$10 fines per violation and are subject to class action status. The bill passed Thursday, 45-0. –**HB 1132**

Dead Peasants Legislation

This legislation, carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R-Dalton), prohibits Georgia's public retirement systems from having an insurable interest in active or retired members of their system. No public retirement may have the authority to expend or obligate funds under its control to purchase life insurance on its members except where all benefits are paid to a member's estate or to a beneficiary designated by the individual member. The bill passed, 52-0 on Thursday. –**HB297**

Brewpubs

Under HB 472, selling barrels of beer or malted beverages to wholesale dealers and retail consumption dealers would not be counted toward the gross sales of the brewpub. Carried by Sen. Josh McKoon (R-Columbus), the bill passed 49-1 on Thursday. –**HB 472**

War Veterans Homes – Veterans Service Board

Carried by Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford), HB 535 will allow the Veterans Service Board to authorize residency in and services provided by, a facility of the Georgia State War Veterans' home for a reasonable fee. The bill passed Thursday, 50 to 0. –**HB 535**

Annual Commercial Wrecker Emergency Tow Permit

Sen. Greg Goggans carried HB 835 which authorizes the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation to issue a \$500 annual permit, with certain restrictions, to a commercial wrecker that exceeds maximum weight and dimension limits when the wrecker is conducting an emergency tow. The bill passed 47-1 on Thursday. –**HB 835**

Care of Students with Diabetes while at School

Sen. Ronnie Chance (R-Tyrone) carried HB 879 which requires the Department of Education to develop guidelines on the training of school employees in the care needed for students with diabetes. The bill passed 35-14 on Thursday. –**HB 879**

Temporary License Plates

HB 985, carried by Sen. Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga), clarifies and streamlines provisions related to temporary license plates. Specific changes include: No longer requiring temporary plates to be surrendered to the county tag office, providing for the physical composition of a temporary plate and authorizing DDS to release information to the Revenue Department for use in the detection and prevention of fraudulent tax returns, including name, address, date of birth, gender, driver identification number, photograph, and signature. The bill passed 48-0 on Thursday. –**HB 985**

Georgia Forestry Commission 2011 Awards

On Monday, Sen. Ross Tolleson (R-Perry) commended the Chattahoochee District on being named the Georgia Forestry Commission 2011 District of the Year, the “Coweta Forestry Unit” on being named the Georgia Forestry Commission 2011 Northern Unit of the Year, and the Decatur County Forestry Unit on being named the Georgia Forestry Commission 2011 Southern Unit of the Year. –**SR1007, SR 1008, SR 1009**

State YMCA of Georgia's Youth Assembly

On Monday, Sen. Jack Hill (R-Reidsville) recognized the participants in the 67th Youth Assembly of the State YMCA of Georgia. The Youth Assembly is a model state legislature, which educates young Georgians on the policymaking process. Participants meet in the Capitol and assume roles of policymakers, lobbyists, and others. –**SR1163**

Georgia Speech-Language-Hearing Association Day at the Capitol

Sen. Butch Miller (R-Gainesville) commended the Georgia Speech-Language-Hearing Association and their practitioners for their “many years of efficient, effective, unselfish, and tireless dedication” to those Georgians who suffer from speech, language, or hearing disabilities. –**SR1119**

CHRIS Kids Day at the Capitol

Thursday, Sen. Emmanuel Jones (D- Decatur) sponsored a resolution to honor CHRIS Kids Day at the Capitol. CHRIS was founded by the Junior League in 1981 to provide additional support to foster care children experiencing great emotional distress. The Senate commended the CHRIS Kids for their 30 years of service to the children, adolescents, and families of Georgia. –**SR1185**

Monica Pearson Honored

Sen. Donzella James (D-Atlanta) welcomed Mrs. Pearson to the Senate body on Thursday to honor her work in Atlanta broadcasting. Monica Pearson joined Channel 2 Action News in August of 1975 as Atlanta's first woman and first minority to anchor the 6 P.M. news hour and dedicated more than 30 years as the *Nightbeat* anchor. –**SR 947**

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