



This Week in the Senate

February 18 – February 22, 2013

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A Message from Senate President Pro Tempore David Shafer

"The Georgia General Assembly has worked diligently over the last few weeks to consider amendments and adjustments to the FY 2013 Budget, and this week the Senate approved HB 105 which reduces spending during this year's budget by \$69.7 million.

We were pleased to welcome Congressman Sanford Bishop, Congressman Doug Collins and Congressman Tom Price to the Senate Chamber and appreciate their kind remarks about our work. Of course, in that regard, we owe a debt of gratitude to the hard working members of Senate. Your expertise and assistance helps equip us to meet the challenges facing our great state."

– Senate President Pro Tem David Shafer

Senate Bills

Ginseng Harvest Season Shortened

On Tuesday, February 19, SB 81 passed the Senate with a vote of 48-3. This legislation was sponsored by Sen. John Wilkinson (R-Toccoa) and would shorten the ginseng harvest season by one month. Under federal law, ginseng berries must be replanted at the time of harvest. Georgia's current harvest season means that unripe berries are often planted. A shortened harvest season would allow farmers to replant ripe berries and keep Georgia in compliance with federal regulations. SB 81 will now travel to the House for consideration. –**SB 81**

"Call Before You Dig" Amendments Pass Senate

Amendments to Georgia's "Call Before You Dig" bill passed the Senate with a vote of 53-0 on Tuesday, February 19. SB 117, sponsored by Sen. Rick Jeffares (R-Locust Grove), was a collaborative effort between 18 different construction-related institutions and the result of over 30 meetings. This is the first series of revisions since the original bill passed in 2005. SB 117 will now travel to the House for consideration. –**SB 117**

Georgia Geospatial Advisory Council Reestablished

SB 11 passed the Senate on Wednesday, February 20 by a vote of 49-0. This bill, sponsored by Sen. Buddy Carter (R-Pooler) would reestablish the Georgia Geospatial Advisory council, which sunset on June 30, 2012, and allow for the auditing of Georgia's GIS system. SB 11 will now travel to the House for consideration.

–**SB 11**

Bill Passes to Protect Identity of Children Who Report Abuses

On Wednesday, February 20, the Senate passed SB 69 to protect the identity of children who report abuses in the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) by a vote of 51-0. This legislation, sponsored by Sen. Jack Murphy (R-Cumming) would prevent officials and employees of the DJJ from disclosing children's identities and information supplied by children who report wrongdoings in the juvenile justice system, unless the reporting child or their representatives request the information. At least once per year, the DJJ commissioner will issue a public report that

summarizes the amount and nature of reported abuse and wrongdoings. SB 69 will now travel to the House for consideration. **–SB 69**

Senate Passes Bill to Further Protect Victims of Family Violence

SB 86 passed the Senate by a vote of 49-0 on Wednesday, February 20. This legislation, sponsored by Sen. Jesse Stone (R-Waynesboro) would strengthen current laws regarding family violence orders. SB 86 expands the scope of domestic violence orders and allows law enforcement officers to arrest without a warrant, but with probable cause, the violator of a family violence order. In cases where an officer has been given authority to arrest without a warrant, judicial review for probable cause must occur within 48 hours. **–SB 86**

Senate Passes Bill to Combat Childhood Obesity

On Thursday, February 21, SB 12 passed the Senate by a vote of 50-0. This bill, sponsored by Sen. Josh McKoon (R-Columbus) would combat childhood obesity through participation in afterschool physical fitness programs. If passed into law, this bill would limit liability for the governing authority of a school that operates under a recreational agreement with a public or private group or organization. **–SB 12**

Senate Passes Cremation Bill

On Thursday, February 21, the Senate passed SB 83, Sponsored by Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega) by a vote of **42-0**. Under current law, whenever a family is unable to provide for a deceased family member's burial, the county in which the individual passed away will fund the burial. This legislation would authorize the inclusion of cremation. **-SB 83**

Local Plan Limitations Removed

On Thursday, February 21, SB 104 passed the Senate by a vote of 46-4. This bill, sponsored by Frank Ginn (R-Danielsville), would remove limitations on actions by counties or municipalities for local plans and projects under the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. **–SB 104**

Career and Technical Advisory Commission Reestablished

Sens. John Wilkinson (R-Toccoa), Lindsey Tippins (R-Marietta), Freddie Powell Sims (D-Dawson) and Butch Miller (R-Gainesville) sponsored SB 100, which would reestablish the Career and Technical Advisory Commission. SB 100 passed the Senate on Friday, February 22, by a vote of 47-2. **–SB 100**

House Bills

Budget Passes Senate

On Friday, February 22, the Senate passed HB 105 by a vote of 49 to 0 to amend the Fiscal Year 2013 budget that ends on June 30, 2013. The Senate has approved, by committee substitute, a version of the bill that reduces spending throughout the end of the fiscal year by \$69.7 million. Because the House version of the bill includes line items different from the bill passed in the Senate, members from both chambers will be appointed to conference committee to determine a final version of the bill. The senators who will serve on the conference committee members for HB 105 are Sen. Jack Hill (R-Reidsville), Senate Majority Leader Ronnie Chance (R-Tyrone) and Senate President Pro Tem David Shafer (R-Duluth).

Senate Resolutions

Future Farmers of America Honored

Sens. John Wilkinson (R-Toccoa), Tyler Harper (R-Ocilla), Frank Ginn (R-Danielsville), Jason Carter (D-Decatur) and Butch Miller (R-Gainesville) honored Georgia's Future Farmers of America (FFA) on Tuesday, February 19. FFA and agricultural education provide a strong foundation for the youth of America by ensuring a steady supply of young professionals to meet the growing demands of the science, business and technology of agriculture. The FFA promotes premier leadership, personal growth and career success among its members. Georgia's FFA association is the third largest state FFA association in the nation and has 30, 256 current members. **–SR 40**

Sen. John Wilkinson Honors Toccoa-Stephens County

Sen. John Wilkinson (R-Toccoa) honored Toccoa-Stephens County on Tuesday, February 19. The City of Toccoa and Stephens County were recognized for numerous awards, including being named a Signature Community city and an Entrepreneur Friendly county. The area is especially known for its golf course atop the shores of Lake Hartwell as well as its celebration of all things Curahee. **–SR 180**

Sen. Don Balfour Recognizes Georgia's Restaurant Industry

Sen. Don Balfour (R-Snellville) recognized Georgia's restaurant industry on Tuesday, February 19. Currently, 30 international restaurant industry brands are headquartered in Georgia. The restaurant industry plays a vital role in Georgia's economic prosperity and includes over 16,000 food and drink establishments that generate more than \$14 billion annually and 380,000 jobs state wide. **–SR 205**

Sen. John Wilkinson Honors Habersham County

Sen. John Wilkinson honored Habersham County on Wednesday, February 20. Habersham County provides a diverse culture and is home to such attractions as Tallulah Gorge, the Soque Rivers, Lake Russell, and Panther Creek Falls. Habersham County's Clarkesville was named as the #2 Best Small Town for Retirement in the United States and boasts state-of-the-art medical facilities, a nationally recognized hospital, and numerous higher educational institutions. **–SR 86**

Sam R. Cunningham Recognized

Sen. Josh McKoon (R-Columbus) and Sen. Ed Harbison (D-Columbus) recognized Sam. R. Cunningham on Wednesday, February 20. Cunningham began his career in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in 1974 and has dedicated his entire career to the improvement of EMS in Georgia. **–SR 110**

Alpha Gamma Rho Recognized

Sens. Frank Ginn (R-Danielsville) John Crosby (R-Tifton), Tyler Harper (R-Ocilla) and John Wilkinson (R-Toccoa) recognized Alpha Gamma Rho (AGR) Fraternity on Wednesday, February 20. AGR is an agriculturally-based fraternity whose members are motivated to unite as men pursuing careers in agriculture, to present a positive attitude toward fellow agricultural students, to lend assistance to others when needed, and to bring out the best qualities in one another. **–SR 193**

Greg Mason Recognized

On Wednesday, February 20, Sens. Ronald Ramsey (D-Decatur), Gail Davenport (D-Jonesboro), Vincent Fort (D-Atlanta), Gloria Butler (D-Stone Mountain) and Steve Henson (D-Tucker) recognized Greg Mason for his dedicated service to Georgia, his deep personal commitment to the welfare of the citizens of Georgia and the protection of the state's natural resources during his 29 years of service with the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA). **–SR 202**

Sen. Charlie Bethel honors Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R-Dalton) honored the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) on Wednesday, February 20. FCA is the largest interdenominational, school based, Christian sports organization in America. Since 1954, FCA has been challenging coaches and athletes on the professional, college, high school, junior high school, and youth levels to use the powerful medium of athletics to impact the world for Jesus Christ. **-SR 250**

Augusta Christian School Athletes Recognized

Sen. Jesse Stone (R-Waynesboro) welcomed student athletes from the football and cheerleading teams of Augusta Christian Schools to the State Senate on Thursday, February 21. The school's cheerleading team won many championships in 2012, including the South Carolina Independent School Association Class AAA State Competition Cheerleading Championship. **–SR 265**

Restrictive and Nonexclusive Easements Granted

On Thursday, February 21, SR 113 passed the Senate by a vote of 50-0. This resolution, sponsored by Sen. Bill Jackson (R-Appling) would authorize the granting of restrictive and nonexclusive easements for operation and maintenance of facilities. **–SR 113**

Request to Consider Socioeconomic Impact on Fort Benning Passes Senate

On Thursday, February 21, SR 201 passed the Senate by a vote of 50-0. This resolution, sponsored by Sen. Ed Harbison (D-Columbus) would request that the Department of the Army carefully consider the socioeconomic impact the Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Army 2020 Force Restructuring will have on Fort Benning, Georgia and the surrounding region. **–SR 201**

Engineers Welcomed to the Senate

In celebration of National Engineers Week, Sens. Hardie Davis (D-Augusta), Mike Crane (R-Newnan), Frank Ginn (R-Danielsville) and Hunter Hill (R-Atlanta) welcomed engineering students and professionals to the State Senate on Friday, February 22. “This week is an opportunity to volunteer year-round in the hopes of educating young minds that will eventually become engineers,” said Sen. Davis, who discussed the vital role that engineers play in our economy. **–SR 230**

SR 253—Georgia Court Reporting and Captioning Week

Sens. Joshua McKoon (R-Columbus), Bill Cowsert (R-Athens), Ronald Ramsey (D-Decatur), Jesse Stone (R-Waynesboro), Curt Thompson (D-Tucker) and Judson Hill (R-Marietta) honored court reporters and captioners on Friday, February 22. Court reporters and captioners are responsible for translating the spoken word into text and preserving our history as well as for closed captioning for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. There are over 1100 certified court reporters in the state of Georgia. **–SR 253**

LaNette Holloman Honored

Sens. Bill Cowsert (R-Athens), Lindsey Tippins (R-Marietta), Cecil Staton (R-Macon) and Buddy Carter (R-Pooler) honored LaNette Holloman on Friday, February 22. Holloman was the state recipient of the Technical College System of Georgia 2012 Georgia Occupational Award of Leadership, which is the first program of its type in the nation to honor outstanding technical college students. Holloman addressed the Senate and discussed the importance of technical education by telling the Senate how technical college changed her life. **–SR 319**

Jean-Yves Vendeville Honored

On Friday, February 22, Sens. Bill Cowsert (R-Athens), Lindsey Tippins (R-Marietta), Cecil Staton (R-Macon) and Buddy Carter (R-Pooler) honored Jean-Yves Vendeville for his work in the Georgia’s Technical College System. Vendeville was selected as the state recipient of the Technical College System of Georgia’s 2012 Rick Perkins Award for Excellence in Technical Instruction, naming him the Technical College System of Georgia’s Instructor of the Year. Vendeville is an instructor for the culinary arts program at Savannah Technical College. **–SR 320**

Request to Promote and Strengthen Ties with African Nations Passes Senate

On Friday, February 22, SR 9, sponsored by Sen. Donzella James (D-Atlanta) passed the senate by a vote of 41-1. This resolution would urge the Department of Economic Development to promote and strengthen mutually beneficial ties with African nations. **–SR 9**

Guests and Events

Congressional Guests Address Senate

U.S. Representative Sanford Bishop addressed the Georgia State Senate on Tuesday, February 19. Rep. Bishop told the Senate that his years in the Georgia General Assembly had been truly enriching, and that he wished that the Federal government could, like Georgia, pass a balanced budget. He encouraged senators to remember their mission as public servants. “It’s been said that service is the rent we pay for the space we occupy on this Earth. “I commend you on your service; together we serve the citizens of Georgia,” said Rep. Bishop.

On Wednesday, February 20, U.S. Representative Doug Collins visited the Senate. “It’s good to work with you, and it’s good to be back here where things get done,” said Rep. Collins. “You’re what makes the economy work and you’re what we need more of in Washington.”

U.S. Representative Tom Price visited the Senate on Friday, February 22. “Our goal isn’t to make your jobs more difficult. If there’s anything we can do for you, please let us know,” said Rep. Price.

Sen. Donzella James Welcomes Ambassador Thandi Luthuli-Gcabashe

Sen. Donzella James (D-Atlanta) welcomed Ambassador Luthuli-Gcabashe to the State Senate on Thursday, February 21. Ambassador Thandi Luthuli-Gcabashe was a political refugee who lived and worked in Atlanta for 22 years before returning to her native South Africa in 1991. In 1996, she received the Freedom of the City of Atlanta award. Ambassador Luthuli-Gcabashe currently serves as the South African Ambassador of Venezuela, Latin American and the West Indies.

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