



This Week in the Senate

March 11 – March 15, 2013

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A Message from Senate President Pro Tempore David Shafer

“In the week after Crossover Day, the Senate passed several House bills that will now go to Governor Deal’s desk for his final approval. There are still many House bills waiting to be reviewed in committee and the Senate will do all it can to ensure each one is given fair consideration.”

“We are currently in the process of reviewing the House version of the Fiscal Year 2014 general budget, and it’s anticipated that it will be presented to the full Senate for a vote late next week.”

– Senate President Pro Tem David Shafer

House Bills

MONDAY, MARCH 11

Food Service Establishment Exemptions and Permits Bill

Sen. John Wilkinson (R-Toccoa) carried HB 101, which would make it easier for non-profit organizations to provide food during certain events. Under current law, non-profit activities such as races and fundraisers are categorized as ‘fairs or festivals’ and must meet stringent food preparation regulations. HB 101 would classify these non-profit activities as ‘events’ and would relax the standards if the event is held on the property of the sponsoring organization, or on the property of a party which has provided written consent for the event. HB 101 passed the Senate by a vote of 50-0. –**HB 101**

Health Insurance Exchange Navigators Bill

HB 198, which would allow licensing of navigators who will provide insurance advice and guidance to uninsured individuals and groups seeking health insurance coverage under a health insurance exchange, passed the Senate by a vote of 37-15. Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), either the state or federal government must form and operate health insurance exchanges. HB 198 lists the requirements for a navigator’s license and prohibits a navigator from soliciting a person or business currently insured under an existing health benefit plan. HB 198 was carried by Sen. Tim Golden (R-Valdosta) –**HB 198**

Department of Transportation Value Engineering Cost Limits

HB 202, carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega), passed the Senate by a vote of 48-3. This bill would increase the cost limit of projects for which the Department of Transportation must perform value engineering studies. –**HB 202**

TUESDAY, MARCH 12

Revision to Workers Compensations Awards and Benefits

The Senate passed HB 154, which would change provisions relating to awards and benefits of workers’ compensation, provide a limitation period on medical benefits, change reimbursement structure for mileage charges, and increase the compensation benefits for total disability and temporary partial disability. HB 154 was carried by Sen. Tim Golden (R-Valdosta) and passed the Senate by a vote of 45-0. –**HB 154**

Proof of Required Minimum Motor Vehicle Liability Insurance Bill

HB 254, carried by Sen. Burt Jones (R-Jackson) passed the Senate by a vote of 52-0. This bill would allow drivers to produce proof of required minimum motor vehicle liability insurance coverage in either paper or electronic format. Under HB 254, drivers would be able to provide proof of coverage by pulling records up on their smart phones or tablets. –**HB 254**

Columbus Redevelopment Powers Law

The Senate passed HB 414, which would authorize Columbus to exercise all redevelopment powers permitted under the Redevelopment Powers Law. Powers include undertaking and carrying out community redevelopment, creating tax allocation districts, and issuing tax allocation bonds. HB 414 was carried by Sen. Ed Harbison (D-Columbus) and passed the Senate by a vote of 48-1. –**HB 414**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13**Notice of Automatic Renewal of Service Contracts Bill**

HB 234, carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega), would require service providers to provide timely, clear notifications about automatic service contract renewals. This bill applies to any provider that sells, leases, or offers to sell or lease any service to a consumer under a service contract. HB 234 passed the Senate by a vote of 49-0. –**HB 234**

Bill to Transfer Responsibilities of the Unified Carrier Registration Act

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga) carried HB 255, which would transfer the administrative responsibilities of the Unified Carrier Registration Act from the Department of Revenue to the Department of Public Safety. HB 255 passed the Senate by a vote of 49-0. If signed into law, this policy would go into effect in July of 2014. –**HB 255**

THURSDAY, MARCH 14**Alcohol Sunday Sales Clarification Bill**

The Senate passed HB 124, carried by Sen. Jack Murphy (R-Cumming) by a vote of 46-7. This legislation clarifies existing Sunday sales language, stating that counties that vote “no” to Sunday sales of distilled spirits would not nullify existing approval for Sunday sales of wine and beer. –**HB 124**

Enforcement and Penalties For Coin Operated Amusement Machines Bill

HB 487, carried by Sen. Butch Miller (R-Gainesville) passed the Senate by a vote of 35-16. This bill would transfer video poker machines into an operator-run, computer-networked video lottery program regulated by the Georgia Lottery. HB 487 is intended to be a crackdown on illegal gambling and to provide funds for HOPE scholarship. The bill would increase enforcement and penalties for illegal coin gambling but does not legalize any additional gambling. –**HB 487**

House Resolutions

TUESDAY, MARCH 12**Tift County Renamed in Honor of Henry Harding Tift**

HR 281 declares Tift County to be renamed in honor of the late Henry Harding Tift. Tift County was originally created in 1905, and named in honor of Nelson Tift, Henry’s uncle. HR 281 was carried by Sen. Tyler Harper (R-Ocilla) and passed the Senate by a vote of 50-0. –**HR 281**

Senate Resolutions

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13**School Bus Driver Neil McBrayer Honored**

Sens. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega), Jack Murphy (R-Cumming), Butch Miller (R-Gainesville), John Wilkinson (R-Toccoa), Judson Hill (R-Marietta) and Buddy Carter (R-Pooler) honored school bus driver Neil McBrayer in the Senate Chamber. McBrayer, a Forsyth County school bus driver, was recognized by the National School Transportation Association as one of the safest drivers in the country. To earn this distinction, McBrayer competed in the National School Transportation Association's School Bus Driver International Safety competition, the Bus Safety Road-e-o, in which he placed fourth. —**SR 120**

Civil Air Patrol Day

Sens. Barry Loudermilk (R-Cassville), Bill Heath (R-Bremen), Ed Harbison (D-Columbus), Judson Hill (R-Marietta) and Chuck Hufstetler (R-Rome) sponsored Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Day at the State Capitol. Major Scott Westbrook, who serves as Chaplain to the Georgia Wing CAP, also served as Senate Chaplain of the Day. Georgia Wing Commander Col. Tonya Boylan, the first female Wing Commander in Georgia, was present along with additional officers and cadets from Georgia Wing CAP. Civil Air Patrol was formed during WWII by pilots who wanted to serve the Air Force but couldn't. The contributions of CAP included logging more than 500,000 flying hours, sinking two enemy submarines, and saving hundreds of crash victims during World War II. In 1948, Congress permanently established CAP as an auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force.—**SR 429**

THURSDAY, MARCH 14

Majority Leader Ronnie Chance Hosts McIntosh High School Lady Chiefs

Sen. Ronnie Chance (R-Tyrone) hosted members of the McIntosh High School Lady Chiefs soccer team. The Lady Chiefs were the 2012 AAAAA State Champions for the second consecutive year. —**SR 132**

Bleckley/Pulaski Forestry Unit Recognized

Members of the Bleckley/Pulaski Forestry Unit were recognized by Sen. Ross Tolleson (R-Perry) for being named the Georgia Forestry Commission 2012 Southern Unit of the Year. The organization's most notable achievements include assisting on 2,486 acres of prescribed burning, plowing 173 miles of firebreaks, and harrowing 328 miles. The forestry unit also maintained outstanding wildlife protection of Bleckley and Pulaski County's forested areas, responding to 132 wildfires that burned a total of 336 acres. —**SR 196**

Oconee District Forestry Commission Commended

The Oconee District was commended for being named the State Forestry Commission 2012 District of the Year by Sen. Ross Tolleson (R-Perry) and Bill Cowsert (R-Athens). The Oconee District was selected because of improved job performance in 31 of 50 measurable goals. —**SR 200**

Assistance League of Atlanta Honored

Sen. Fran Millar (R-Atlanta) honored the Assistance League of Atlanta for their 31st anniversary. The Assistance League of Atlanta was founded in 1982 by a group of 34 women and started by selling senior citizens' crafts at malls and outdoor markets. Since then, the group has grown to over 250 volunteers who have recorded on average more than 45,000 volunteer hours each year over the last four years. The Assistance League of Atlanta serves over 50,000 families per year through seven programs that are operated, funded and run entirely by volunteer efforts. —**SR 505**

Marcus Bartlett Welcomed

Sens. Rick Jeffares (R-Locust Grove), Emanuel Jones (D-Decatur) and Gail Davenport (D-Jonesboro) welcomed Clayton State University student Marcus Bartlett to the Senate Chamber. Bartlett will graduate with a double major in chemistry and mathematics, is published in the *Journal of Combinatorial Mathematics Combinatorial Computing*, and has been recognized as the discoverer of a new measure of distances of structures in molecules, now known as the Bartlett Index. His achievements as an undergraduate student are rare, and are even more remarkable since he began his college career six years ago when he was 24 and as someone who, in his words, "was horrible in math." Bartlett has been accepted into the chemistry Ph.D. program at the University of Georgia. —**SR 511**

Guests and Events

MONDAY, MARCH 11

Sen. Donzella James Welcomes Akua Sena Dansua

Sen. Donzella James (D-Atlanta) welcomed Akua Sena Dansua to the State Capitol. Dansua is a Ghanaian journalist and politician who is a Member of Parliament for North Dayi in Ghana and also the Minister for Tourism. She has been a strong advocate for Ghana and serves as a local adviser for the Africa Women Development Fund.

TUESDAY, MARCH 12

Georgia Pre-K Day

Representatives from Georgia's Pre-K system visited the State Capitol to raise awareness for Georgia's Pre-K program. Georgia's Pre-K program is a state lottery funded educational program for all age-eligible four-year-old children in Georgia. The purpose of the program is to prepare children for success in Kindergarten and later school years. The program usually operates on the regular school system calendar for the length of a typical school day, and programs may be offered at local public schools or through private providers of preschool services.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13

March of Dimes

Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford) welcomed representatives of March of Dimes. March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies across the country. The organization supports local projects aimed at helping women have healthier pregnancies. Funding from community grants enhances the availability and quality of health care and prevention services for women and their babies. Sen. Unterman addressed the Senate and spoke specifically about how March of Dimes offers comfort and support to families with a baby in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

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