



This Week in the Senate

March 3-7, 2014

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A Message from Senate President Pro Tempore David Shafer

“The Georgia General Assembly started the week with a significant date—Crossover Day. The Senate passed 27 Senate bills and resolutions for the year, and is now only considering bills that have already received House approval. The next two weeks will be very busy as we move these House bills through the committee and floor vote process.

“The Senate also completed the second of two constitutional obligations by approving the FY 2015 general budget. I would like to thank Chairman Jack Hill, the Senate Appropriations Committee, and the Senate Budget Office for the long hours spent on this challenging task. The Senate will now enter into the conference committee process with the House in order to resolve differences between the two versions of the bill.”

MONDAY, MARCH 3

Abortion Coverage Prohibited

Senate Bill 98, sponsored by Sen. Judson Hill (R-Marietta), prohibits the State Health Benefit Plan or Affordable Health Care Act from offering abortion coverage, except in the case of a medical emergency. The bill passed by substitute with a vote of 35 to 18. **–SB 98**

Delegation of Authority to Physician Assistants

Senate Bill 268 passed by substitute with a vote of 33 to 16. Sponsored by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R-Rome), SB 268 allows a physician to delegate the prescribing of Schedule II controlled substances to a physician assistant. However, the physician cannot delegate this authority for prescriptions larger than a 30 day supply. **–SB 268**

Agricultural History Museum

Sponsored by Sen. Valencia Seay (D-Riverdale), Senate Bill 274 provides for a space inside the State Capitol to set up an Agricultural History Museum. This museum will serve as an educational resource for all visitors and illustrate the large role agriculture and agribusiness have played in Georgia's heritage. SB 274 passed by a vote of 51 to 0. **–SB 274**

Purple Heart State

Senate Bill 276 designates Georgia as a “Purple Heart State;” honoring combat wounded veterans for their service and sacrifice in helping the United States of America maintain its independence. Sponsored by Sen. Ed Harbison (D-Columbus), SB 276 passed by a vote of 52 to 0. –**SB 276**



State Health Benefit Plan

Sponsored by Judson Hill (R-Marietta), Senate Bill 281 passed by a vote of 40 to 13. SB 281 would require the State Health Benefit Plan to offer at least one high deductible health plan paired with a health savings account. –**SB 281**

Ad Valorem Property Tax Assessment Reform

Sponsored by Sen. Fran Millar (R-Atlanta), Senate Bill 293 adds new regulations county boards of tax assessors must follow when determining the ad valorem tax value of a property. It also clarifies the rights of the property owner to appeal an assessment that is overvalued. SB 293 passed by substitute with a vote of 39 to 11. –**SB 293**

Continuing Care

Sponsored by Sen. Jesse Stone (R-Waynesboro), Senate Bill 304 passed by substitute with a vote of 35 to 0. SB 304 allows residents of nursing homes, and other care providers, to purchase living space as part of a continuing care agreement. –**SB 304**

St. Patrick’s Day Alcohol Sales

Sponsored by Sen. Lester Jackson (D-Savannah), Senate Bill 318 authorizes the sale of alcoholic beverages for consumption on the premises on Sundays during the celebration of St. Patrick’s Day in cities or counties already allowing alcohol on-premises consumption. SB 318 passed by a vote 32 to 18. –**SB 318**

Authorizing Teleconferences for the Private Colleges and Universities Authority

Sponsored by Sen. Rick Jeffares (R-McDonough), Senate Bill 326 authorizes the Private Colleges and Universities Authority to meet via teleconference in order to conduct business. The bill passed by a vote of 46 to 0. –**SB 326**

Property Owners and Hazardous Site Listing

Senate Bill 333 passed by a vote of 44 to 9. Sponsored by Sen. Ross Tolleson (R-Perry), SB 333 clarifies that property owners listed on the Environmental Protection Divisions’ hazardous site inventory prior to July 1, 2014, are not negatively affected. A Hazardous Site Inventory is a list of sites where there has been a known or suspected release of a regulated substance into the environment above a certain reportable quantity. –**SB 333**

Change Definition of “Project” in Relation to Development Authorities

Senate Bill 353, sponsored Sen. Brandon Beach (R-Alpharetta), passed by substitute with a vote of 35 to 13. SB 353 would revise the definition of a “project” as it relates to development authorities

to allow hotel and motel facilities constructed in connection with convention, sports or trade shows to receive tax exempt status. –**SB 353**

Missing Children Information Center

Senate Bill 358 passed by substitute with a vote of 46 to 0. Sponsored by Sen. John Albers (R-Roswell), SB 358 expands who can file a missing child report with the Missing Children Information Center (MCIC) to include individuals and institutions charged with the care of foster children. –**SB 358**

Create Georgia Geospatial Advisory Council

Sponsored by Sen. Buddy Carter (R-Pooler), SB 361 creates the Georgia Geospatial Advisory Council in order to provide reliable geospatial data, which updates flood maps. The bill passed by 50 to 1. –**SB 361**

Georgia First Informer Broadcasters Act

Sponsored by Sen. Brandon Beach (R-Alpharetta), Senate Bill 381 passed by 41 to 11. SB 381 directs the unified incident command system and the Georgia Emergency Operations Plan to create an emergency plan for first informer broadcasters. Such a plan will allow first informer broadcasters to have more access to fuel, food, water and other materials necessary for maintaining a broadcast signal. –**SB 381**

Retail Theft Crimes

Senate Bill 382 passed by substitute with a vote of 52 to 0. Sponsored by Sen. Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga), SB 382 makes the following acts illegal in Georgia: providing a false/fake name or ID to obtain a refund for merchandise or giving the name of another person for a refund on merchandise without that person's prior consent. This legislation establishes the penalties for these offenses, including harsher penalties for subsequent offenses and for thefts of higher value. –**SB 382**

Coroner's Obligations Regarding Unclaimed Property and Objects

Senate Bill 383, sponsored by Sen. Hardie Davis (D-Augusta), passed by a vote of 51 to 0. SB 383 clarifies that coroner or medical examiners are prohibited from taking possession of personal items and outlines proper measures for the return of personal possessions to the family of the deceased. –**SB 383**

America's Founding Philosophy and Principle Act

Sponsored by Sen. Fran Millar (R-Atlanta), Senate Bill 384 requires the local boards of education, beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, to recommend high school students participate in a semester course of study in America's founding philosophy and principles. SB 384 passed by substitute with a vote of 52 to 0. –**SB 384**

Participation in TRICARE program

Senate Bill 391, sponsored by Sen. Don Balfour (R-Snellville), passed by substitute with a vote of 48 to 2. SB 391 requires medical facilities in Georgia to apply for TRICARE program certification, a global health care program for military service members and their families. –**SB 391**

Registration/Title of Former Military Vehicles

Senate Bill 392 passed by a vote of 48 to 0. SB 392, sponsored by Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega), allows former military vehicles, as well as vehicles that are at least 25 years old, to be registered and titled without having to be in compliance with federal emissions and safety standards. –**SB 392**

Motion to Repeal Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act

Sponsored by Sen. William Ligon (R-Brunswick), Senate Resolution 747 was adopted by a vote of 43 to 6. SR 747 urges Congress to enact legislation to repeal or amend the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act. Repealing or amending the Act will help restore flood insurance premiums to an affordable level and eliminate the negative impact on home values and the local community. –**SR 747**

Prohibiting the Collection of Future State Ad Valorem Taxes

Senate Resolution 783 proposes an amendment to the Georgia Constitution to prevent the Georgia General Assembly from imposing future ad valorem taxes on or after January 1, 2016. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 38 to 13 and sponsored by Sen. Bill Heath (R-Bremen). –**SR 783**

Georgia Legacy Program

Sponsored by Sen. Ross Tolleson (R-Perry), Senate Resolution 896 establishes the Joint Study Committee on the Georgia Legacy Program to examine funding possibilities for the conservation of the state's natural resources and land. SR 896 was adopted by a vote of 49 to 3. –**SR 896**

Thomas Watson Cullars Memorial Highway

Senate Resolution 920 was adopted by a vote of 45 to 0 and sponsored by Sen. Bill Jackson (R-Applying). SR 920 dedicates the portion of State Route 79 in Lincoln County from the bridge over Soap Creek to the Goshen community as the Thomas Watson Cullars Memorial Highway. –**SR 920**

Road and Bridge Naming Resolutions

Sponsored by Sen. Jesse Stone (R-Waynesboro), Senate Resolution 937 pays tribute to various individuals by dedicating roads and bridges statewide in their honor. The resolution was adopted by substitute with a vote of 50 to 0. –**SR 937**

Increase Number of Visas for Korean Citizens

Senate Resolution 941, sponsored by Sen. David Shafer (R-Duluth), was adopted by a vote of 51 to 1. SR 941 requests Congress increase the number of visas granted to Korean citizens who possess skills in a specialty occupation according to the U.S. - Korea Free Trade Agreement of March 15, 2012. –**SR 941**

Violence Against Health Care Workers Joint Study Committee

Sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R- Buford), Senate Resolution 981 was adopted by a vote of 48 to 4. SR 981 creates the Joint Study Committee on Violence Against Health Care Workers. The Committee will study the problems and needs related to violence against workers in the health care field. –**SR 981**

SPLOST Reform Joint Study Committee

Senate Resolution 1027, sponsored by Sen. Brandon Beach (R-Alpharetta), creates the Joint Study Committee on SPLOST Reform to address local governments interested in additional flexibility to structure local option sales taxes. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 45 to 3. –**SR 1027**

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

Senate Resolution 171 commends the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and celebrates their achievements. The organization's membership has expanded to become the largest African American Greek sorority in the world. This legislation was sponsored by Sen. Gloria Butler (D-Stone Mountain). –**SR 171**

TUESDAY, MARCH 4

Claims Against Municipal Corporation

Sen. Josh McKoon (R-Columbus) carried House Bill 135, states that a person bringing a lawsuit against a city or town must provide written notice of the specific amount of monetary damages being sought within six months from the date of the incident. HB 135 was sponsored by Rep. Andrew Welch (R-McDonough) and passed by a vote of 46 to 0. –**HB 135**

Mobile Broadband Infrastructure Leads to Development (BILD) Act

House Bill 176, carried by Sen. Butch Miller (R-Gainesville) and sponsored by Rep. Don Parsons (R-Marietta) passed by a vote of 48 to 1. HB 176, also known as the Mobile BILD Act, would streamline regulations and requirements governing previously-approved local cell phone towers and other wireless facilities. This legislation is focused on attracting broadband companies interested in relocating to Georgia and standardizing cell phone tower regulations statewide. –**HB 176**

Cancellation of Insurance Policies

House Bill 375, carried by Sen. Burt Jones (R-Jackson), allows an insurer to cancel a policy if the insured individual does not comply with a rate audit or investigation requested by the insurer. Sponsored by Rep. Bruce Williamson (R-Monroe), HB 375 passed by substitute with a vote of 49 to 0. –**HB 375**

Joint County and Municipal Sales and Use Tax

Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega) carried House Bill 719, which passed by a vote of 46 to 1. Rep. Kevin Tanner (R-Dawsonville) sponsored this bill, which allows for the continued collection of the joint county and municipal sales and use tax implemented prior to June 4, 2010. –**HB 719**

Commending Corporal Stan Phillips

Senate Resolution 870, sponsored by Sen. Jack Hill (R-Reidsville), commends Corporal Stan Phillips of the Griffin Police Department for being recognized as Officer of the Year with a Valor Service Award from the Peace Officers Association of Georgia. Phillips was awarded for saving a child from a dog attack. –**SR 870**

Recognizing Debbie Shaw

Debbie Shaw was named Peace Officer of the Year for Meritorious Service by the Peace Officers Association of Georgia and was recognized in the chamber by Senate Resolution 871. SR 871 was sponsored by Sen. Jack Hill (R-Reidsville). –**SR 871**

Honoring Samuel D. Smith

Senate Resolution 934 honors Samuel D. Smith for his contributions to Disabled American Veterans (DAV) in Gainesville. Smith has spent several hours volunteering and helping disabled veterans by serving as commander of his chapter and organizing fundraisers. SR 934 was sponsored by Sen. Butch Miller (R-Gainesville). –**SR 934**

Aquinas High School Football Team and Coach James Leonard

Sponsored by Sen. Hardie Davis (D-Augusta), Senate Resolution 988 commends Aquinas High School Football Team and Coach James Leonard for winning the Class A State Championship. The team secured the school's first-ever Class A State Championship with a 14-0 undefeated season. –**SR 988**

Commending Jocelyn Dorsey

Senate Resolution 1059 honors Jocelyn Dorsey of WSB-TV for her 35 years of service. Dorsey has worked as the Director of Editorials & Public Affairs at Channel 2 since 1983. She was the first African-American anchor of a Channel 2 newscast, as well as the first African-American news anchor in the Atlanta market. SR 1059 was sponsored by Sen. Donzella James (D-Atlanta). –**SR 1059**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5

Property and Casualty Insurers

Carried by Sen. Burt Jones (R-Jackson), House Bill 229 eliminates the requirement for companies insuring homes, cars, and businesses (property and casualty insurance) to submit an annual report to the Insurance Commissioner detailing its policies written in Georgia. The bill still allows the Insurance Commissioner to require reports by rule or regulation, and passed by a vote of 32 to 17. –**HB 229**

Transportation Clean-up Bill

House Bill 774 makes various changes in the Department of Transportation. Carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega), the bill makes changes to local government contracting, DDS record-keeping, traffic signals, maximum lawful speed limits and others. HB 774 passed by substitute with a vote of 45 to 3. –**HB 774**

Honoring First Lady Sandra Deal

Senate Resolution 1052, sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford), commends the First Lady on her career as a teacher and her work traveling the state inspiring children to read. –**SR 1052**



Recognizing Technical College System of Georgia's Organizations and Student Leaders

Senate Resolution 754, sponsored by Sen. Bill Cowsert (R-Athens), commends the Technical College System of Georgia's organizations and student leaders for their accomplishments and contributions. SR 754 applauds student leaders of the National Technical Honor Society, Phi Beta Lambda, SkillsUSA and the Statewide Student Leadership Council. –**SR 754**

2013 Business Partner of the Year

Sponsored by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R-Dalton), Senate Resolution 790 recognizes Shaw Industries as the 2013 Business Partner of the Year. It also commends their work with youth and education across the state, including Northwest Georgia College and Career Academy. –**SR 790**

2013 College and Career Academy of the Year

The Central Education Center was recognized with Senate Resolution 817 for being named the 2013 College and Career Academy of the Year. Sponsored by Sen. Mike Crane (R-Newnan), the resolution commends the school's work in pairing interested students with internships around the state, including Turner Broadcasting and NASA Engineering. –**SR 817**

Heritage Preserve Property

Sponsored by Sen. Rick Jeffares (R-McDonough), Senate Resolution 847 was unanimously adopted by a vote of 52 to 0. SR 847 authorizes development of facilities for Department of Natural Resources staff and a historical preservation laboratory on the Heritage Preserve land in Panola Mountain State Park located in Rockdale and Henry counties. –**SR 847**

Commending the Lovett School Football Team

Senate Resolution 1016, sponsored by Sen. Hunter Hill (R-Atlanta), recognizes the Lovett School varsity football team for winning the 2013 Class AA State Championship. –**SR 1016**

Georgia School Workers

Sponsored by Sen. Vincent Fort (D-Atlanta), Senate Resolution 1061 commends Georgia school workers for their courage care of students during January's winter storm. Many workers remained on buses or stayed the night in a school to maintain the safety of Georgia's children. –**SR 1061**

Honoring Barbara Kennon

Sponsored by Sen. Ed Harbison (D-Columbus), Senate Resolution 1093 recognizes Barbara Kennon for her induction into the Georgia Association of Realtors Hall of Fame. Kennon is the first honoree from Columbus. –**SR 1093**

THURSDAY, MARCH 6

FY 2015 General Budget

The Georgia Senate approved \$20.8 billion in funding for the Fiscal Year 2015 General Budget through the passage of HB 744, which was carried in the Senate by Sen. Jack Hill (R – Reidsville.) The Senate version includes significant increases to K-12 education in regards to enrollment growth and training, instructional days and reductions of furlough days/increases to teacher pay; capital funding for technology infrastructure; funding for the expansion of the community-based

Juvenile Incentive Funding Grant, adult felony drug and mental health accountability courts, and family dependent drug courts. HB 744 will now go to conference committee. –**HB 744**

Fees and Charges Not Considered Interest

House Bill 824, carried by Sen. Lindsey Tippins (R-Marietta), amends the legal definition of the term “interest” in a contract between a depositor and financial institution. The bill also specifies the maximum rates of interest and criminal penalties for charging excessive interest. HB 824 was sponsored by Rep. Richard Smith (R-Columbus) and passed by a vote of 48 to 5. –**HB 824**

St. Patrick’s Day Parade Committee

Senate Resolution 380 honors the members of the 2013 Savannah St. Patrick’s Day Parade Committee, including Chairman Brendan T. Sheehan and Grand Marshal James A. Ray. SR 380 was sponsored by Sen. Buddy Carter (R-Pooler). –**SR 380**



Math Day

Sponsored by Sen. Hardie Davis (D-Augusta), Senate Resolution 886 recognizes February 11, 2014, as Math Day at the State Capitol in order to increase awareness about the importance of mathematics education. –**SR 886**

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Day

Senate Resolution 968, sponsored by Sen. Ed Harbison (D-Columbus), recognizes February 12, 2014, as the 6th annual Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Day at the State Capitol. SR 968 commends the fraternity's exemplary public service and cardinal principles: manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift. –**SR 968**

FRIDAY, MARCH 7

Hunting and Fishing Privileges for Military Personnel

Carried by Sen. Mike Dugan (R-Carrollton), House Bill 740 grants full-time military personnel on active duty, as well as dependents, status as residents of the particular state they currently reside in for certain hunting and fishing privileges. HB 740 was sponsored by Rep. Kevin Tanner (R-Dawsonville) and passed by a vote of 48 to 0. –**HB 740**

Georgia State Employees’ Pension and Savings Plan

House Bill 764, carried by Sen. Fran Millar (R-Atlanta), passed by a vote of 51 to 0. HB 764, sponsored by Rep. Howard Maxwell (R-Dallas), increases the contribution of certain state employees’ compensation into their 401(k) account from 1 percent to 5 percent. –**HB 764**

Infant Lifetime Sportsman’s License for Nonresidents

Carried by Sen. Tyler Harper (R-Ocilla), House Bill 786 passed by a vote of 48 to 4. The bill also reduced the time required to satisfy residency requirements for a lifetime sportsman's license from 12 to 3 months. HB 786 was sponsored by Rep. David Knight (R-Griffin). —**HB 786**

Shoal Creek Water Reclamation Facility

Sponsored by Sen. Valencia Seay (D-Riverdale), Senate Resolution 789 congratulates the Shoal Creek Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) for winning the Wastewater Plant of the Year Award for their category. The Shoal Creek WRF also received the highest inspection score of all the categories inspected for the award. —**SR 789**

Recognizing the 60th Anniversary of the Parade of Quartets

Sponsored by Sen. Hardie Davis (D-Augusta), Senate Resolution 932 recognizes the Parade of Quartets' 60th Anniversary Diamond Celebration on Saturday, March 1, 2014. Many local/national artists and church choirs have displayed their talents in the Parade of Quarters over the years. —**SR 932**

Child Fatality Review Committee of the Year

Sponsored by Sen. Gloria Butler (D-Stone Mountain), this resolution recognizes Cherokee County for receiving the 2013 Child Fatality Review Committee of the Year and Prevention Team award. Senate Resolution 961 commends the committee for its dedicated work developing prevention activities to reduce child injuries and deaths. —**SR 961**

Coroner of the Year

Senate Resolution 962 commends Buddy Bryan of Muscogee County for being awarded Coroner of the Year by the Child Fatality Review Panel. Sponsored by Sen. Gloria Butler (D-Stone Mountain), the resolution also recognizes Bryan's undertaking of educational efforts for young mothers. —**SR 962**

Cystic Fibrosis Education and Awareness

Senate Resolution 1035 recognizes March 7, 2014 as Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Education and Awareness Day at the State Capitol. CF is a life-threatening genetic disease affecting the lungs and digestive system. Sponsored by Sen. Fran Millar (R-Atlanta), the resolution honors the struggle of those suffering from CF and commends the hard work of nonprofit organizations such as the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. —**SR 1035**



Commending the Savannah River Caucus of the South Carolina Legislature

Senate Resolution 1166 honors the Savannah River Caucus of the South Carolina Legislature, which was formed in 2013. The Savannah River Caucuses of the Georgia General Assembly and the South Carolina Legislature meet regularly to promote the mutual interests and find solutions for the areas surrounding the Savannah River. SR 1166 was sponsored by Sen. Buddy Carter (R-Pooler). —**SR 1166**

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The Senate Press Office is located at 201 Paul D. Coverdell Legislative Office Building, 18 Capitol Square, Atlanta, Georgia 30334. We can be reached at 404.656.0028 or outside the Atlanta area 800.282.5803