



Georgia State Senate Press Office Staff

Jennifer Yarber
Director

Adam Sweat
Sr. Communications Specialist

Brittany Wagner
Communications Specialist

Brett Johnson
Broadcast Specialist

Gaviella Coffman
Communications Associate

Natalie Rossetti
2015 Legislative Aide

Ike Duru
2015 Legislative Intern

Tyna Duckett
Photographer

201 Coverdell Legislative Office Building
18 Capitol Square S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30303
p: 404.656.0028
f: 404.463.6747

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This Week in the Senate

February 16 - 20, 2015



A Message from Senate President Pro Tempore David Shafer

This week, the Senate finalized the Amended Fiscal Year 2015 Budget by agreeing to House amendments on the supplemental appropriations bill. The bill was signed into law the same day. Our subcommittee work on the General Fiscal Year 2016 Budget will begin next week.

The Senate approved two bills that will improve educational and work opportunities for our military service men and women. Senate Bill 18 will allow practical military work skills or experience to be accepted by the Technical College System of Georgia as academic credit. Senate Bill 58, also known as the Georgia Leadership and Service Admission Act, will encourage military service by giving each legislator the ability to recommend one student for ROTC program each year. We greatly appreciate the unwavering commitment of those who serve our country in the uniformed services.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

College Credit for Military Service

Senate Bill 18, sponsored by Sen. Ed Harbison (D - Columbus), would allow the Technical College System of Georgia to accept skills learned through the military, prior work experience or self-study as academic credit. SB 18 received unanimous support in the Senate. - **SB 18**

Probate Courts Gain Jurisdiction over Game and Fish Violations

Senate Bill 62, sponsored by Sen. Tyler Harper (R - Ocilla), passed with a vote of 52 to 1. Under current law, probate courts only have jurisdiction over Game and Fish Code misdemeanor violations. SB 62 would grant probate courts full jurisdiction over all game and fish violations. - **SB 62**

Medical College of Georgia Day

Sen. Jesse Stone (R - Waynesboro) sponsored Senate Resolution 15 recognizing February 17, 2015, as Medical College of Georgia Day at the Capitol. The Medical College of Georgia has the 10th largest total enrollment of the nation's 141 accredited medical schools. Vice Dean Dr. Paul Wallach thanked the members of the Senate for their unwavering support of higher education. - **SR 15**

Malnutrition Awareness Week

Sen. Nan Orrock (D - Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 254 recognizing September 28 - October 2, 2015, as Malnutrition Awareness Week. Malnutrition during childhood leads to reduced physical and mental development during childhood. In 2014, Georgia ranked among the top five states with the highest rate of food-insecure children under 18. - **SR 254**

Senate Welcomes Congressman Sanford Bishop

Congressman Sanford Bishop (GA - 2) appeared in the chamber to update the Senate on congressional endeavors in the U.S. House of Representatives. Congressman Bishop thanked the Senate for their service to the State of Georgia and spoke about the importance of a strong educational system.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Georgia Leadership and Service Admission Act

Senate Bill 58, sponsored by Sen. Hunter Hill (R - Atlanta), passed with a vote of 54 to 0. SB 58 will allow each member of the General Assembly, along with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, to recommend one high school student each year for admittance to a ROTC program at an institution within Georgia's university system. - **SB 58**



Senate Approves Expansion of Victim Compensation Bill

Senate Bill 79, sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford), will double the amount of victim compensation available to surviving family members for funeral expenses when a crime results in death. SB 79 also expands eligibility for compensation awards. This monetary award will help victims' families pay for funeral expenses, lost wages, counseling and other financial hardship. SB 79 passed with a vote of 50 to 3. - **SB 79**



The 40th Anniversary of the Conclusion of the Vietnam War

Sen. Hunter Hill (R - Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 96 recognizing the week of May 6-12, 2015, as the 40th observance of the ending of the Vietnam War. The Senate stood in solidarity as they honored Vietnam War veterans and their families with a moment of silence. Retired Colonel Paul Longgrear thanked the Senate for their support. More than 228,000 Georgians served during the Vietnam War. - **SB 96**



Habersham County Day

Sen. John Wilkinson (R - Toccoa) sponsored Senate Resolution 151 recognizing February 18, 2015, as Habersham County Day at the Capitol. Habersham County has become well known for its natural beauty and the warm hospitality of the people who live there. The Habersham County of Commerce will celebrate its 25th anniversary this year, and several past and present members visited the Capitol on this day. - **SR 151**



Georgia Restaurateurs of the Year

Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville) sponsored Senate Resolution 129 commending Ben Johnson, Jennifer Johnson, Shelley Sweet and Todd Ginsberg on being named the Georgia Restaurant Association's Restaurateurs of the Year. These restaurateurs were recognized for their involvement with the Atlanta Community Food Bank, which provides groceries and meals for families and individuals throughout Atlanta and North Georgia. - **SR 129**



2014 National Geographic Bee Finalist

Sen. Donzella James (D - Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 75 commending Ansel Ahabue on his top 10 finish in the 2014 National Geographic Bee in Washington, D.C. Ansel is currently a ninth grader at Parkview High School. - **SR 75**

League of Women Voters of Georgia Day

Sen. Nan Orrock (D - Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 139 recognizing February 18, 2015, as League of Women Voters of Georgia Day at the Capitol. For 95 years, the League of Women Voters of Georgia has been instrumental in encouraging voter registration and civic participation. – **SR 139**

Clayton State University Day

Sen. Gail Davenport (D - Jonesboro) sponsored Senate Resolution 174 recognizing February 18, 2015, as Clayton State University Day at the Capitol. Clayton State University was commended for its efforts in partnering academics with community engagement. Clayton State University President Dr. Thomas Hynes thanked the Senate for their dedication to education. – **SR 174**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Pharmaceutical Substitutions for Biological Products

Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge) sponsored Senate Bill 51, which passed with a vote of 47 to 1. SB 51 clarifies standards and procedures for pharmacists when dispensing substitutions for certain name-brand biological medications. – **SB 51**



Increase Residual Exemptions for Property in Bankruptcy/Insolvent Estates

Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro) sponsored Senate Bill 65, which passed by a vote of 46 to 5. State law currently provides exemptions for those declaring bankruptcy. SB 65 doubles the residual exemptions for property in bankruptcy or other insolvent estates from \$600 to \$1,200, and \$5,000 to \$10,000 respectively. – **SB 65**

Amended Fiscal Year 2015 Budget

The Senate agreed to minor differences between the House and Senate versions of House Bill 75, the Amended Fiscal Year 2015 Budget, in a vote of 50 to 1. HB 75 was signed by Governor Deal that same day. – **HB 75**



Senate Welcomes Congressman Doug Collins

Congressman Doug Collins (GA – 9) visited the Capitol on Thursday and expressed his gratitude to the Senate for their hard work and dedication to creating a better Georgia. Congressman Collins served three terms in the Georgia House of Representatives from 2007-2012 until his successful run for Congress.

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Day

Sen. Lester Jackson (D – Savannah) sponsored Senate Resolution 173, commending the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and the Georgia District Chapters by recognizing February 19, 2015, as Alpha Phi Alpha Day at the State Capitol. The Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity remains committed to promoting leadership development and academic excellence throughout its members. – **SR 173**



Senate Recognizes the Georgia Farm Bureau Federation

Sponsored by Sen. John Wilkinson (R – Toccoa), Senate Resolution 88 recognized February 19, 2015, as Georgia Farm Bureau Federation Day at the State Capitol. The Georgia Farm Bureau Federation, with more than 300,000 members, is Georgia's largest agricultural organization and is dedicated to promoting the agricultural industry throughout the state. Bureau President Zippy Duvall thanked legislators for their continued efforts to ensure that agriculture remains the number one industry in the state. – **SR 88**



LEAD Atlanta Day

Senate Resolution 198, sponsored by Sen. Nan Orrock (D – Atlanta), recognized February 19, 2015, as LEAD Atlanta Day at the State Capitol and commended the organization for their work in equipping young professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to be effective leaders. LEAD Atlanta is an eight-month leadership development and community education program focused on empowering young people between the ages of 25 and 32. – *SR 198*

University of Georgia Day

Sen. Bill Cowsert (R – Athens) sponsored Senate Resolution 184 recognizing February 19, 2015, as University of Georgia Day at the State Capitol and congratulating the University on its 230th anniversary. The University of Georgia educates more than 35,000 students and leads the nation in providing an exceptional education at an affordable cost. University President Jere W. Morehead thanked the Senate for recognizing the anniversary of the first state-chartered university in America's history. – *SR 184*

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Urban Redevelopment Projects Definitions Expanded

Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega) sponsored Senate Bill 4, which passed with a vote of 43 to 3. Current law allows certain projects or uses of land to qualify for public and private funding if used in rehabilitation or urban redevelopment efforts. SB 4 expands the number of rehabilitation projects to include surface transportation projects. – *SB 4*

Tanja's Law

Sponsored by Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga), Senate Bill 72 establishes new crimes and punishments for harming or killing a law enforcement animal. In Georgia, a person who injures or kills a police animal faces one to five years in prison. SB 72 increases the sentence for those convicted of such crimes to 10 - 30 years in prison. "Tanja's Law" is named in honor of a Walker County K-9 killed in the line of duty and passed with a vote of 46 to 3. – *SB 72*

The Georgia State Senate will reconvene for **DAY 20
on Monday, February 23, at 10:00 a.m.**