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# This Week in the Senate

## February 9 - 13, 2015



### A Message from Senate President Pro Tempore David Shafer

The Senate approved several bills focused on protecting children and families. Senate Bill 3, the “Supporting and Strengthening Families Act,” will allow parents to temporarily transfer custodial oversight to another adult during times when extenuating circumstances impact the ability to properly care for a child. Senate Resolution 7 and Senate Bill 8 aim to bring more severe punishments to those who capitalize on the exploitation of children. They also establish a fund that provides support services to these victims.

The Senate also took up the amended budget for Fiscal Year 2015, making adjustments to keep it in balance as required by our Constitution. We anticipate the House will send us the budget for Fiscal Year 2016 later this month; beginning our line-by-line review of proposed spending for the next year.

We also adopted Senate Resolution 167, which lays out a schedule for the remainder of the 2015 Legislative Session. Day 30, known as “Crossover Day” because it is the last day for a bill to pass the house in which it originated and “cross over” to the other house, will be Friday, March 13. Day 40, when we adjourn *sine die*, will be Thursday, April 2.

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## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

### Sunset Date Extended on Mental Health Evaluation Bill

Senate Bill 53, sponsored by Sens. Greg Kirk (R - Americus), Renee Unterman (R - Buford), Tyler Harper (R - Ocilla), Jesse Stone (R - Waynesboro), William Ligon (R - Brunswick) and Dean Burke (R - Bainbridge), passed the Senate with a vote of 51 to 4. SB 53 extends the sunset provision on a bill passed last year that allows licensed professional counselors to perform emergency examinations on individuals who are mentally ill, alcoholic or drug dependent. The sunset date would be extended from March 15, 2015 to June 30, 2018. Freshman Sen. Kirk took part in the Senate’s tradition of receiving a playful grilling from his peers when presenting his first piece of legislation. - **SB 53**

### Youth Villages Georgia Day

Sens. Lindsey Tippins (R - Marietta), Mike Dugan (R - Carrollton), Fran Millar (R - Atlanta), John Wilkinson (R - Toccoa) and Hunter Hill (R - Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 102 recognizing February 9, 2015, as Youth Villages Georgia Day at the Capitol. Youth Villages is a nonprofit organization that serves children and their families with psychiatric needs at a residential treatment facility in Douglasville, GA. - **SR 102**

### **Delta Sigma Theta Day**

Sen. Gloria Butler (D - Stone Mountain), sponsored Senate Resolution 156 commending the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority for 102 years of exemplary service and recognizing Monday, February 9, 2015, as Delta Sigma Theta Day at the Capitol. The sorority is composed of more than 200,000 college educated women committed to equal educational opportunities and equal rights for all. - **SR 156**



### **Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Day**

Sens. Ronald Ramsey (D - Stone Mountain), Emanuel Jones (D - Decatur), Lester Jackson (D - Savannah), Donzella James (D - Atlanta), Steve Henson (D - Tucker) and Gail Davenport (D - Jonesboro) sponsored Senate Resolution 161 commending Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity for their leadership and recognizing February 9, 2015, as Kappa Alpha Psi Day at the Capitol. With over 130,000 members, the fraternity aims to reach local youth through various initiatives and networking opportunities promoting community leadership service. - **SR 161**



### **Adjournment Resolution Set Through Day 40**

Sens. Bill Cowsert (R - Athens), David Shafer (R - Duluth), Steve Henson (D - Tucker) and Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonega) sponsored Senate Resolution 167, which sets the legislative calendar through Day 40 on Thursday, April 2, 2015. - **SR 167**

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## **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10**

### **Senate Passes Supporting and Strengthening Families Act**

Sens. Renee Unterman (R - Buford), David Shafer (R - Duluth), Bill Cowsert (R - Athens), William Ligon (R - Brunswick), Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonega) and John Albers (R - Roswell) sponsored Senate Bill 3, which states that parents may delegate power of attorney and authority regarding the care and custody of a minor child in certain extenuating circumstances. SB 3 includes the right to enroll the child in school, view records concerning the child and be involved with any other school-related functions or health treatments. SB 3 passed as amended with a vote count of 43 to 10. - **SB 3**



### **Savannah Harbor Expansion Project Protection Clause**

Sens. Bill Cowsert (R - Athens), Ben Watson (R - Savannah) and William Ligon (R - Brunswick) sponsored Senate Bill 5, which clarifies to the Federal government that the Georgia Ports Authority will be responsible in any instance of injury, loss, or damage occurring during the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project. - **SB 5**



### **Sen. Renee Unterman Recognizes Girl Scouts Day**

Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) sponsored Senate Resolution 19 recognizing February 10, 2015, as Girl Scouts Day at the Capitol. For more than 100 years, Girl Scouts has promoted the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of its members and has been an expert resource for growth and development. - **SR 19.**

### **Georgia College and State University Day**

Sen. Burt Jones (R - Jackson) sponsored Senate Resolution 64 recognizing February 10, 2015, as Georgia College and State University Day at the Capitol and celebrating the institution's 125th anniversary. Since 1996, Georgia College & State University has served the state as Georgia's designated public liberal arts university and currently has an enrollment of 6,772 undergraduate and graduate students. - **SR 64**



## **Gary Chadwick “Chad” Durrence Remembered**

Sens. John Wilkinson (R – Toccoa), Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega), Butch Miller (R – Gainesville), Frank Ginn (R – Danielsville) and Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga) sponsored Senate Resolution 141 honoring the life and memory of Gary Chadwick “Chad” Durrence. Durrence gave inspiration to many through his high ideals, morals, and deep concern for his fellow citizens. He passed on December 25, 2014, and will be missed by all who had the great fortune of knowing him. – **SR 141**

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## **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11**

### **Amended FY2015 Budget**

The Senate passed the Amended Fiscal Year 2015 Budget by a vote of 54 to 1. The bill was sponsored by House Speaker David Ralston (R - Blue Ridge) and carried in the Senate by Sen. Jack Hill (R - Reidsville). The \$21.1 billion supplemental budget runs through June 30, 2015, and includes increases for K-12 education growth and public health initiatives. – **HB 75**

### **Cordele-Crisp County Fish Fry**

Sens. Greg Kirk (R – Americus), Bruce Thompson (R – White), Mike Dugan (R – Carrollton), Ellis Black (R – Valdosta), Bill Jackson (R – Appling) and Frank Ginn (R – Danielsville) sponsored Senate Resolution 140 recognizing the second annual Cordele-Crisp County Fish Fry at the Capitol. Sen. Kirk welcomed the cooking team and commended them for their hard work put into hosting the event. – **SR 140**

### **Fort Valley State University Day**

Sen. Freddie Powell Sims (D – Dawson) sponsored Senate Resolution 191 recognizing February 11, 2015, as Fort Valley State University (FVSU) Day at the Capitol. Sen. Sims invited the university’s Student Government Association president, Ariel Hill, to speak to members of the Senate about FVSU’s continued academic achievements and commitment to excellence. – **SR 191**

### **Jackson-Butts County Day**

Sens. Burt Jones (R – Jackson), Hunter Hill (R – Atlanta) and Bill Cowser (R – Athens) sponsored Senate Resolution 107 recognizing February 11, 2015, as Jackson-Butts County Day at the Capitol. SR 107 also commends Jackson-Butts County for its culture, tradition and history. Sen. Jones welcomed dozens of county leaders and constituents to the Capitol. – **SR 107**

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## **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12**

### **“Safe Harbor/Rachel’s Law”**

Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) sponsored Senate Bill 8, also known as the “Safe Harbor/Rachel’s Law” bill. The legislation extends the statute of limitations for child sex trafficking victims from the age of 23 to the age of 25, incorporates federal guidelines for victim support services, increases penalties for sex trafficking, requires convicted sex traffickers to register as sex offenders, and allows for the forfeiture of vehicles used in or money gained from trafficking crimes. SB 8 also creates the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund and the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund Commission. SB 8 passed with a vote of 52 to 3. – **SB 8**

### **Companion Resolution to “Safe Harbor/Rachel’s Law”**

Senate Resolution 7 provides a funding mechanism for the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund by placing a constitutional amendment for approval by Georgia voters on the 2016 ballot. The proposed amendment would allow the Georgia General Assembly to set additional penalties or fees in cases where a person is found guilty of severe sex crimes, including keeping a place of prostitution, pimping, pandering, trafficking of persons for sexual servitude, or sexual exploitation of children. The proposed amendment would also permit the General Assembly to impose state regulatory fees on adult entertainment establishments. The resolution was approved with a vote of 53 to 3. – **SR 7**

### **Caterpillar Named Business Partner of the Year**

Sens. Bill Cowsert (R - Athens), Frank Ginn (R - Danielsville) and Fran Millar (R - Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 145, commending Caterpillar, Athens for being selected as the “2014 Business Partner of the Year” at the Lieutenant Governor’s Business and Education Summit. Caterpillar, Athens received recognition for its commitment to partnerships that provide employment opportunities to students.  
- **SR 145**



### **Athens Community Career Academy Receives Recognition**

Sens. Bill Cowsert (R - Athens), Frank Ginn (R - Danielsville) and Fran Millar (R - Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 144 recognizing the Athens Community Career Academy (ACCA) for winning Career Academy of the Year at the Lieutenant Governor’s Business and Education Summit. ACCA is dedicated to providing students with valuable work experience and employment opportunities upon graduating from high school. - **SR 144**



### **Georgia Gwinnett College Day**

Sens. David Shafer (R - Duluth), Renee Unterman (R - Buford), P.K. Martin (R - Lawrenceville), Steve Henson (D - Tucker), Gloria Butler (D - Danielsville) and Curt Thompson (D - Tucker) sponsored Senate Resolution 187 recognizing February 12, 2015, as Georgia Gwinnett College Day at the Capitol. Georgia Gwinnett College was commended for its commitment to educational excellence and rapid expansion. University president Dr. Stanley Preczewski addressed the Senate and was joined by the school mascot, Grizzly. - **SR 187**



### **Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Awareness Day**

Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) sponsored Senate Resolution 176 recognizing February 12, 2015, as Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Awareness Day at the Capitol. Hundreds of activists gathered at the capitol to raise awareness of the need to end domestic minor sex trafficking in Georgia. - **SR 176**

### **Aviation Day**

Sens. Valencia Seay (D - Riverdale), Gail Davenport (D - Jonesboro), Horacena Tate (D - Atlanta), Gloria Butler (D - Stone Mountain) and Steve Henson (D - Tucker) sponsored Senate Resolution 180 commending the employees of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and recognizing February 12, 2015, as Aviation Day at the Capitol. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport still holds the title as the world’s busiest passenger airport with 96 million passengers annually and contributes \$64.3 billion to the regional economy. Miguel Southwell, general manager of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport offered remarks to the Senate.  
- **SR 180**



**The Georgia State Senate will reconvene for DAY 16  
on Tuesday, February 17, at 10:00 a.m.**