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This Week in the Senate

March 23 - 27, 2015



A Message from Senate President Pro Tempore David Shafer

This week, the Senate took up a number of significant bills, including House Bill 1, which will make cannabis oil available to treat a number of debilitating medical conditions. Amendments made by the Senate were immediately accepted by the House, and the bill has been sent to the Governor for his approval.

Compromise has been reached on the autism bill. For years, the Senate has championed the cause of children with autism. Sen. Charlie Bethel, sponsor of Senate Bill 1, reached an agreement with House Leadership on legislation that will ensure early access to care.

Next week, during the Senate's final two legislative days, the Senate will resolve the two greatest unresolved issues: taking up conference committee reports for both the state budget and a transportation funding plan. The House plans to take up legislation protecting religious freedom.

MONDAY, MARCH 23

Professional Learning Recertification Deadline Extended

Carried by Sen. John Wilkinson (R - Toccoa) and sponsored by Rep. Chuck Martin (R - Alpharetta), House Bill 164 extends the recertification deadline for teachers looking to pursue continuing education courses. HB 164 will also extend the time period for the Professional Standards Commission to revise renewal rules until June 30, 2017. HB 164 passed unanimously. - **HB 164**

Urban Redevelopment Act Revised

House Bill 174, carried by Sen. Mike Dugan (R - Carrollton) and sponsored by Rep. LaDawn Jones (D - Atlanta), revises the terminology within the Urban Redevelopment Act. The terms "slum area" and "slum clearance and redevelopment" will be replaced with "pocket of blight" and "pocket of blight clearance and redevelopment." HB 174 passed by a vote of 54 to 2. - **HB 174**

State Board of Accountancy

Sen. Michael Williams (R - Cumming) carried House Bill 246, which was sponsored by Rep. David Knight (R - Griffin). HB 246 revises and clarifies current law relating to the State Board of Accountancy certification requirements and also the sanctions for when those requirements are violated. HB 246 passed unanimously. - **HB 246**

Employment of Minors

Carried by Sen. P. K. Martin (R - Lawrenceville) and sponsored by Rep. Brian Strickland (R - McDonough), House Bill 366 allows 16 and 17 year-old minors to work without an employment certificate or academic approval. HB 366 also

exempts any child labor-related records submitted to the Georgia Department of Labor from public disclosure. HB 366 passed with a vote of 50 to 5. - **HB 366**

Georgia's Safety Glazing Act

House Bill 368, carried Sen. Josh McKoon (R - Columbus) and sponsored by Rep. Brian Strickland (R - McDonough), passed unanimously. HB 368 revises certain safety requirements relating to the glazing of materials such as tempered glass, wire glass and rigid plastic. This legislation aligns Georgia's safety glazing act with federal law. - **HB 368**



Disposition of State and Local Government Property

Sen. John Albers (R - Roswell) carried House Bill 477, which was sponsored by Rep. Jan Jones (R - Milton). HB 477 revises the procedure for the disposal of former state and local government property. This legislation allows for notices to be sent to the property owner's association instead of the individual owners. HB 477 will require new municipal corporations to assume ownership, control, care and maintenance of county roads. HB 477 passed with a vote of 48 to 4. - **HB 477**



Henry County Board of Commissioners

Carried by Sen. John Albers (R - Roswell) and sponsored by Rep. Dale Rutledge (R - McDonough), House Bill 554 passed with a vote of 36 to 17. This legislation provides compensation to district commissioners and chairpersons of the board of commissioners. HB 554 will allow the board of commissioners to control the hiring, firing and discipline of personnel. - **HB 554**



Wadsworth Magnet School for High Achievers

Senate Resolution 416, sponsored by Sen. Emanuel Jones (D - Decatur), commended the Wadsworth Magnet School for High Achievers for its many recent achievements. Wadsworth Magnet School for High Achievers is an elementary school offering students in grades four through six an accelerated version of the DeKalb County School curriculum. Wadsworth Magnet School for High Achievers is a 2014 National Blue Ribbon School recipient and a National Beta School of Distinction. - **SR 416**



Bethesda Academy High School Men's Basketball Team

Sen. Lester Jackson (D - Savannah) sponsored Senate Resolution 523 congratulating the Bethesda Academy High School Men's Basketball Team on winning the South Carolina Independent School Association Class AA State Championship. The Bethesda Academy Men's Basketball Team completed their season with a record of 29-4 and Head Coach Clevan Thompson was named All-Region Coach of the Year. - **SR 523**



Commending Calvin E. Booker, Sr.

Sponsored by Sen. Valencia Seay (D - Riverdale), Senate Resolution 482 commended Mr. Calvin E. Booker, Sr., the Corporate Vice President of Public Affairs for Waste Management, Inc. Booker is responsible for the development and implementation of governmental affairs, community relations and communication for Waste Management in Georgia. He represents the state on the Board of Governors for the National Waste and Recycling Association. - **SR 482**



Honoring Terence Avery Green

Senate Resolution 488, sponsored by Sen. Donzella James (D - Atlanta), honors the life and memory of Terence Avery Green. Green was a distinguished 22 year veteran of the Fulton County Police Department. He served his fellow Georgians with integrity, intelligence, fairness and kindness. He is survived by his devoted parents, Johnny and Bertha Green, and four sons: Marquez, Isaiah, Emmanuel, and Samuel. – **SR 488**

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

Haleigh's Hope Act

Carried by Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville) and sponsored by Rep. Allen Peake (R - Macon), House Bill 1 passed with a vote of 48 to 6. HB 1 legalizes the possession of a regulated volume of THC oil for certain medical conditions, including cancer, Crohn's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, mitochondrial disease, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, seizure disorders and sickle cell disease. HB 1 will create the Georgia Commission on Medical Cannabis, which will conduct clinical research programs. This legislation provides civil immunity to health care providers who administer the oil to patients. – **HB 1**

Employees of Aviation, Space and Aerospace Exempt from Laws Governing Engineers and Land Surveyors

Sen. John Albers (R - Roswell) carried House Bill 18, which was sponsored by Rep. Jason Spencer (R - Woodbine). HB 18 exempts employees of aviation, space and aerospace companies from complying with certain provisions in law governing engineers and land surveyors. HB 18 also exempts contract workers, subcontractors and independent contractors working for aviation, space and aerospace companies. HB 18 passed with a vote of 33 to 1. – **HB 18**

Scholarship Program for Special Need Students

House Bill 62, sponsored Rep. Kevin Tanner (R - Dawsonville) and carried by Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville), removes the one-year residency requirement for students whose parent is active duty military and was stationed in Georgia within the previous year. Current law states that special needs students qualify for certain scholarship programs if their parent currently resides in Georgia for at least one year. HB 62 passed with a vote 35 to 8. – **HB 62**

Georgia Adult and Aging Services Agency

Carried by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) and sponsored by Rep. Tommy Benton (R - Jefferson), House Bill 86 transfers the Division of Aging Services to the Georgia Adult and Aging Services Agency. HB 86 creates a Board to establish policies, procedures and manage the operation of the Agency. HB 86 passed with a vote of 45 to 1. – **HB 86**

Jason Flatt Act Georgia

Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) carried House Bill 198, which was sponsored by Rep. Katie Dempsey (R - Rome). HB 198 will require the Department of Education to adopt rules for all certified public school personnel to receive annual training in suicide awareness. HB 198 also requires local school systems to adopt policies regarding suicide prevention, intervention and post intervention. HB 198 passed with a vote of 45 to 1. – **HB 198**

State Workforce Development Board and Workforce Division

House Bill 348, carried Sen. Mike Dugan (R - Carrollton) and sponsored by Rep. Robert Dickey (R - Musella), replaces the Workforce Investment Board and the Governor's Office of Workforce Development with the State Workforce Development Board and the Workforce Division. The Workforce Investment Board will be authorized to develop and facilitate workforce programs in Georgia. The Workforce Division will create guidelines that ensure all independent contractors have sufficient insurance coverage. HB 348 passed with a vote of 47 to 1. – **HB 348**

Public Disclosure of Student Identifying Information

Carried by Sen. Frank Ginn (R - Danielsville) and sponsored by Rep. Chuck Williams (R - Watkinsville), House Bill 320 assures that the Georgia Student Finance Commission, the Georgia Higher Education Assistance

and the Georgia Student Finance Authority will keep all current or former student records confidential. HB 320 will also protect the identity of individuals subject to repayment or refund of a loan or grant, wage garnishment and or state tax refund withholding. HB 320 passed with a vote of 47 to 1. - **HB 320**

City of Stonecrest Incorporated

Sponsored by Sen. Ronald Ramsey (D - Lithonia), Senate Bill 208 will incorporate the City of Stonecrest in DeKalb County and provide a charter for the City of Stonecrest. The legislation will also provide official boundaries and authority to the City of Stonecrest. SB 208 passed with a vote of 45 to 1. - **SB 208**

White County Color and Honor Guard

Sen. Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonega) sponsored Senate Resolution 149, which commends the White County Color and Honor Guard for their service to Georgia. The White County Color and Honor Guard participate in approximately 65 funerals each year; honoring veterans in White County and surrounding areas. - **SR 149**

Honoring Charlene Coburn

Senate Resolution 182, sponsored by Sen. Donzella James (D - Atlanta), commends Charlene Coburn for a lifetime of outstanding achievements. Charlene Coburn broke down numerous barriers for women throughout her lifetime, saving buildings from being demolished and providing housing for families in need. At 92 years old, Coburn is the only female business owner listed in the International Structural Movers Association roster. - **SR 182**

Senate Recognizes Officer John K. Wilson

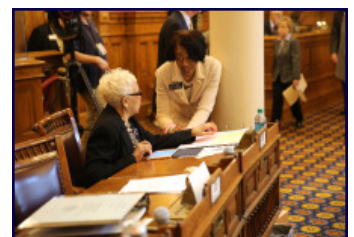
Sponsored by Sen. Jack Hill (R - Reidsville), Senate Resolution 439 commends Officer John K. Wilson of the Bibb County Public Schools Campus Police Department for going beyond the call of duty to protect Georgia citizens. Officer Wilson responded to a gun threat at Westside High School in Macon and quickly placed the armed student in custody. Officer Wilson has been recognized as Officer of the Year and received the Valor Service Award from the Peace Officers Association of Georgia. - **SR 439**

Honoring Dale Mann

Sen. Jack Hill (R - Reidsville) sponsored Senate Resolution 440, which recognized Dale Mann for his many contributions to police agencies, administrators and executives in Georgia. After beginning his career as a law enforcement patrol officer, he served as a sergeant and training officer at the University of Georgia Police Department, and also as the assistant director of the North East Georgia Police Academy. Before retiring, Mann was appointed Director of the Georgia Public Safety Training Center by former Gov. Sonny Perdue. - **SR 440**

University of West Georgia Football Team

Sen. Mike Dugan (R - Carrollton) sponsored Senate Resolution 273, which commends the University of West Georgia football team for their record-breaking season. The team finished with a record of 12-3 and won the South Region 2 Championship. Sixteen players were named to the All-Gulf South Conference team, four earned All-Region status and six were named to various All-American teams. In addition, 107 players were named to The University of West Georgia Honor Roll. - **SR 273**



University of Georgia Law School Day

Senate Resolution 568, sponsored by Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville), recognized March 24, as University of Georgia Law School Day at the Capitol. The University of Georgia Law School is widely recognized as one of the best law schools in the country and its distinguished alumni includes numerous state legislators, former governors, U.S. representatives and U.S. senators. The University of Georgia Law School mock trial team has won five national titles, 11 regional championships and five state trophies over the past six years. Carey Miller, President of the Georgia Law School Student Bar Association and Sen. Miller's son, thanked the Senate for their support. - **SR 568**

National Superintendent of the Year

Sponsored by Sen. Bill Cowsert (R - Athens), Senate Resolution 500 commends Philip D. Lanoue, Ph.D. for being named the National Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School Administrators. This award is given to a superintendent who demonstrates leadership in learning, community involvement and professionalism. Dr. Lanoue currently serves as superintendent of the Clarke County School District. - **SR 500**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

Zero Emission Vehicle Sales

Carried by Sen. Ben Watson (R - Savannah) and sponsored by Rep. Chuck Martin (R - Alpharetta), House Bill 393 allows manufacturers of zero emission vehicles to sell factory-direct to consumers through no more than five dealerships within Georgia and an unlimited number of repair shops. HB 393 passed in a vote of 48 to 4. - **HB 393**

Georgia High School Graduation Test

Carried by Sen. Fran Millar (R - Atlanta) and sponsored by Rep. Brooks Coleman (R - Duluth), House Bill 91 passed in a vote of 50 to 3 and eliminates the Georgia High School Graduation Test. Additionally, the bill allows former students to obtain a high school degree if all other graduation requirements have been fulfilled, even if the student failed the Georgia High School Graduation Test. - **HB 91**

Trapping of Raccoons

Sen. Rick Jeffares (R - McDonough) carried House Bill 160, which was introduced by Rep. Emory Dunahoo (R - Gainesville). HB 160 repeals a provision in current law that prohibits the trapping of raccoons in certain counties in North Georgia. HB 160 passed in a vote of 32 to 17. - **HB 160**

Timber Harvesting and Removal Requirements

Carried by Sen. Tyler Harper (R - Ocilla) and sponsored by Rep. John Corbett (R - Lake Park), House Bill 199 allows counties and municipalities to require notice of timber harvesting before entering the property. Notice should be given to the county or municipality within 24 hours of the timber removal and within 24 hours of the job's completion. HB 199 passed in a vote of 49 to 0. - **HB 199**

Equalized Homestead Option Sales Tax Act of 2015

House Bill 215, carried by Sen. Fran Millar (R - Atlanta) and sponsored by Rep. Mike Jacobs (R - Brookhaven), passed with a vote of 47 to 0. The bill allows counties who levy a Homestead Option Sales Tax (HOST) and a MARTA sales tax to adopt an equalized HOST to apply towards property tax reduction, if approved by voters. The bill currently only applies to DeKalb County but includes provisions for cities created after the effective date. - **HB 215**

Passenger Vans and Safety Belts

Carried by Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville) and sponsored by Rep. Bill Hitchens (R - Rincon), House Bill 325 requires occupants in vans designed to carry up to 15 passengers to use a safety belt. This legislation does not apply to 11 to 15 passenger vans manufactured before July 1, 2015, that do not have safety belts installed. HB 325 passed in a vote of 45 to 5. - **HB 325**

Incorporation of the City of LaVista Hills

House Bill 520, carried by Sen. Fran Millar (R - Atlanta) and sponsored by Rep. Tom Taylor (R - Dunwoody) passed with a vote of 38 to 5. HB 520 proposes the incorporation of the City of LaVista Hills in DeKalb County, if approved by the qualified voters of the proposed city on November 3, 2015. - **HB 520**



Incorporation of the City of Tucker

Carried by Sen. Steve Henson (D - Tucker) and sponsored by Rep. Billy Mitchell (D - Stone Mountain), House Bill 515 proposes the incorporation of the City of Tucker in DeKalb County, if approved by qualified voters of the proposed city on November 3, 2015. HB 515 passed with a vote of 41 to 1. - **HB 515**

Top Army ROTC Cadet in the Nation

Sen. Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonega) sponsored Senate Resolution 130, commending University of North Georgia's Cadet Jonathan Chase Strickland for being named the United States Army Cadet Command's Cadet of the Year. The United States Army's 2014 National Order of Merit List ranked more than 5,617 Army ROTC cadets based on physical fitness, campus leadership, academic achievement and performance at the Army's Leadership Development Assessment Course. - **SR 130**



Lambert High School Girls Swimming Team

Sponsored by Sen. Michael Williams (R - Cumming), Senate Resolution 283 congratulated the Lambert High School Girls Swimming Team for winning the state championship title for the third year in a row. Coach Kerry Langley and members of the team thanked Senators for the recognition. - **SR 283**



Senate Commends Emani Lynn Jones

Sen. Emanuel Jones (D - Decatur) sponsored Senate Resolution 565 commending his daughter, Emani Lynn Jones, for her many accomplishments. Jones, a senior at Woodward Academy, was recently crowned Miss Debutante at the 30th annual Forever Pink Foundation Debutante Cotillion for raising the most money for college scholarships. - **SR 565**



Kennesaw State University Day

Senate Resolution 571, sponsored by Sen. Lindsey Tippins (R - Marietta), recognized March 25, as Kennesaw State University Day at the State Capitol. Kennesaw State University is Georgia's third largest university and has an economic impact of more than \$1.2 billion in the northwest Georgia corridor. KSU's President, Dr. Daniel Papp, thanked members of the Senate for the recognition. - **SR 571**

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

State Soil and Water Conservation Commission

Carried by Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville) and sponsored by Rep. David Knight (R - Griffin), House Bill 397 creates the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission and assigns it to the Department of Agriculture for administrative purposes. The bill also clarifies how Commission members are appointed. HB 397 passed with a vote of 31 to 19. - **HB 397**

Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales and Use Tax

Carried by Sen. Tommie Williams (R - Lyons) and sponsored by Rep. Jay Roberts (R - Ocilla), House Bill 106 passed with a vote of 49 to 2. HB 106 authorizes counties to impose a 1 percent transportation special purpose

local option sales and use tax (T-SPLOST), subject to voter approval. One hundred percent of the revenue collected through the TSPLOST must be used for transportation purposes. - **HB 106**

Suspected Child Abuse Reporting by School Employees and Child Welfare Services

House Bill 177, carried by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) and sponsored by Rep. David Wilkerson (D - Austell), passed unanimously. HB 177 requires child protection agencies designated by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to acknowledge the receipt of a report made by a school employee in cases of suspected child abuse and also disclose to authorized school personnel if the suspected abuse was confirmed. - **HB 177**

Private Home Care Providers

House Bill 183, carried by Sen. Greg Kirk (R - Americus) and sponsored by Rep. David Knight (R - Griffin), passed with a vote of 51 to 3. HB 183 regulates licensed private home care providers by requiring care plan supervision over the companions and sitters employed by the provider. - **HB 183**

Regulations on Ridesharing Companies

Carried by Sen. Brandon Beach (R - Alpharetta) and sponsored by Rep. Alan Powell (R - Hartwell), House Bill 225 requires that all for-hire drivers pass a background check and pay sales taxes on fares collected. It also instructs ridesharing companies to carry insurance at the levels mandated for taxi and limousine companies. It also places a freeze on the issuance of medallions under a taxicab medallion system. HB 225 passed with a vote of 48 to 2. - **HB 225**

J. Calvin Hill Jr. Act

Carried by Sen. John Albers (R - Roswell) and sponsored by Rep. Michael Caldwell (R - Woodstock), House Bill 252, known as the J. Calvin Hill Jr. Act, updates numerous code provisions that have become obsolete and repeals pages of outdated or judicially overturned sections of the Georgia code. HB 252 passed with a unanimous vote. - **HB 252**

Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Carried by Sen. John F. Kennedy (R - Macon) and sponsored by Rep. Christian Coomer (R - Cartersville), House Bill 263 passed with a vote of 44 to 1 and expands the function and authority of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council by adding “juvenile justice agencies” as a component of the Georgia criminal justice system. The legislation also requires the Council to distribute criminal justice information to those agencies. - **HB 263**

Convenience Fees Charged For Electronic Payments

House Bill 299, carried by Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville) and sponsored by Rep. Emory Dunahoo (R - Gainesville), establishes the standards for convenience fees that can be charged to consumers on electronic payments. The fee must be the actual cost of the service incurred by the lender or merchant, or an average cost of the service per transaction. Convenience fees can only be charged if the merchant also allows check, cash and money order payments. HB 299 passed with a vote of 31 to 13. - **HB 299**



Interest Payments in Certain Domestic Relations Cases

House Bill 347 gives a judge in domestic relations cases the authority to establish a different time period for delinquent child support or alimony payments to start accruing interest. Carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton) and sponsored by Rep. Dustin Hightower (R - Carrollton), HB 347 passed with a vote of 46 to 1. - **HB 347**

Nonpublic Postsecondary Educational Institutions Act Revisions

Carried by Sen. Fran Millar (R - Atlanta) and sponsored by Rep. Carl Rogers (R - Gainesville), House Bill 353 revises several parts of the Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Act, including the definitions of post-secondary degrees and tuition. The bill also adds an at-large member to the Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission, establishes a procedure for resolving disputes, and modifies the Tuition Guaranty Trust Fund. HB 353 passed with a vote of 41 to 3. - **HB 353**

Colquitt County Packers

Sen. Dean Burke (R - Bainbridge) sponsored Senate Resolution 58, which congratulates the Colquitt County Packers football team for winning the 2014 Class 6A State Championship. Members of the team and Head Coach Rush Propst were present in the chamber and thanked the Senate for the recognition. - **SR 58**

Senate Commends George P. Burdell

Senate Resolution 401, sponsored by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton), commended Georgia Tech legend George P. Burdell for being an outstanding citizen and a distinguished alum, as well as an active faculty member of the Georgia Institute of Technology. Burdell has received eight degrees from Georgia Tech and has taken every class offered at the institution. Dr. Bud Peterson, president of Georgia Tech, accepted the resolution on Burdell's behalf. - **SR 401**

Senate Commends the Emergency Management Association of Georgia

Sen. Tyler Harper (R - Ocilla) sponsored Senate Resolution 262, which commended the Emergency Management Association of Georgia (EMAG). EMAG serves its members by promoting professional development, providing networking opportunities and serving as an advocate for the profession of Emergency Management. Claude C. Craig, President of EMAG, thanked members for the recognition. - **SR 262**

Franklin County Middle School Technology Association

Senate Resolution 424, sponsored by Sen. John Wilkinson (R - Toccoa), commended the Franklin County Middle School Technology Student Association for their accomplishments at the 52nd annual Georgia Technology Student Association contest. Franklin County Middle School Technology Student Association Advisor, Dr. David Phillips, thanked members for the recognition. - **SR 424**

Georgia State University Men's Basketball Team

Senate Resolution 580, sponsored by Sen. Jeff Mullis (R - Chickamauga), commended the Georgia State University Men's Basketball Team for their championship season and outstanding performance at the 2015 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament. Coach Ron Hunter, along with the entire team and coaching staff, received a standing ovation from the Senate Chamber. - **SR 580**

Senate Honors the Life of Robert Forest "Bobby" Towns

Sponsored by Sen. Burt Jones (R - Jackson), Senate Resolution 358 honors the life and memory of Mr. Robert Forest "Bobby" Towns. Towns played football at the University of Georgia and went on to play in the NFL for the Cardinals and the Patriots. He officiated SEC football for 30 years and remained involved in the UGA Football program throughout his lifetime. - **SR 358**

Senate Commends Forsyth County Sheriff's Department

Senate Resolution 265, sponsored by Sen. Michael Williams (R - Cumming), commends the Forsyth County

Sheriff's Department for their courageous actions while responding to an armed attack launched against the Forsyth County courthouse in Cumming on June 6, 2014. Forsyth County Sheriff Duane Piper thanked members for the honor. - **SR 265**

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

Revision of the Georgia Physical Therapy Act

House Bill 505 allows licensed physical therapists to treat patients without a referral from a physician for eight visits or 21 days, whichever occurs first. The bill expands the authority of the State Board of Physical Therapy regarding their regulation over licensed physical therapists or licensed physical therapy assistants, and requires these professionals to obtain liability insurance. Carried by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R - Rome) and sponsored by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R - Marietta), HB 505 passed with a vote of 46 to 6. - **HB 505**

Solar Power Free-Marketing Act of 2015

Carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonge) and sponsored by Rep. Mike Dudgeon (R - Johns Creek), House Bill 57 allows property owners to engage directly with solar financing companies when purchasing and installing solar technology. Additionally, the bill prohibits electric service providers from interfering with the installation, operation or financing of solar technology. HB 57 passed unanimously. - **HB 57**

Unauthorized Practice of Law by Real Estate Brokers

House Bill 153, carried by Sen. Jesse Stone (R - Waynesboro) and sponsored by Rep. Tom Weldon (R - Ringgold), outlines what real estate brokers can and cannot do regarding the practice of law in a real estate transaction. The bill requires that all legal documents and actions regarding the listing, management, sale, purchase and other related areas of real estate passage or improvement be completed by an attorney. - **HB 153**

The End to Cyberbullying Act

House Bill 131, carried by Sen. Rick Jeffares (R - McDonough) and sponsored by Rep. Pam Dickerson (D - Conyers), revises the definition of bullying to include acts that occur through the use of electronic communication including cell phones, email, instant messaging and social media websites. This bill also applies to any act of bullying that originates on school property, in school vehicles, at school bus stops or during school related functions. HB 131 passed with a vote of 49 to 1. - **HB 131**

Voluntary Veterans' Preference Employment Policy Act

House Bill 443 allows employers to create and maintain a written veterans' preference employment policy to be applied uniformly to employment decisions regarding the hiring, promotion or retention of veterans during a reduction in force. HB 443 was carried by Sen. Hunter Hill (R - Atlanta) and sponsored by Rep. Katie Dempsey (R - Rome) and passed with a vote of 51 to 1. - **HB 443**

Georgia Business Act

House Bill 259, carried by Sen. Mike Dugan (R - Carrollton) and sponsored by Rep. Terry Rogers (R - Clarkesville), passed in a vote of 45 to 2. HB 259 adds an exemption to competitive bidding requirements for new automobiles manufactured in Georgia that weigh less than 12,500 pounds. The bill also increases the competitive bidding threshold to \$25,000. - **HB 259**

Real Estate Appraisal Management Companies

Carried by Sen. Brandon Beach (R - Alpharetta) and sponsored by Rep. Mandi Ballinger (R - Canton), House Bill 253 places restrictions on the payment of appraiser fees by real estate management companies. The bill also places further restrictions on federally related transactions. HB 253 passed unanimously. - **HB 253**

Nursing Home Violations

House Bill 342 passed in a vote of 48 to 4. Carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton) and sponsored by Rep.

Trey Kelley (R - Cedartown), HB 342 states that a nursing home cannot be considered negligent based solely on any violation of federal or state nursing home regulations. The bill also prohibits nursing homes from using competitor's inspection deficiencies in advertisements without listing when the inspection occurred. - **HB 342**



Georgia Council on Criminal Justice Reform Recommendations

House Bill 328, carried by Sen. John F. Kennedy (R - Macon) and sponsored by Rep. Chuck Efstrotation (R - Dacula), adds a new section to the Fair Business Practices Act of 1975 creating new requirements for agencies regarding the issuing of consumer reports. The bill also requires agencies to adhere to federal Fair Credit Reporting Act guidelines. The bill also sets parole standards for someone who has committed four or more felonies and creates the Council of Accountability Court Judges of Georgia. HB 328 passed by a vote of 45 to 3. - **HB 328**



Probation, Parolees, and Sentence Modification Reform

House Bill 310 establishes the Board of Community Supervision, the Department of Community Supervision and the Governor's Office of Transition, Support, and Re-entry. Carried by Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville) and sponsored by Rep. Alan Powell (R - Hartwell), this measure also creates and regulates the administrative report procedures pertaining to misdemeanor probation, among other provisions. Aimed at curbing recidivism, HB 310 was derived from the reform recommendations by the Georgia Council on Criminal Justice Reform and streamlines existing agencies for increased efficiency. House Bill 310 passed in a vote of 33 to 3. - **HB 310**



State Board of Cosmetology and Barbers

Carried by Sen. Frank Ginn (R - Danielsville) and sponsored by Rep. Jan Tankersley (R - Brooklet), House Bill 314 combines the State Board of Barbers and the State Board of Cosmetology to create the State Board of Cosmetology and Barbers. The bill also revises current law to ensure consistency between the two professions. - **HB 314**



Public Employees to Receive Paid Leave for Volunteer Purposes

With a vote of 45 to 2, Sen. Mike Dugan (R-Carrollton) carried HB 313 to passage. This measure authorizes state employees to take paid leave, up to eight hours annually, to promote education throughout Georgia. The allotted time must be spent providing academic support and increasing student achievement. HB 313 was sponsored by Rep. Robert Dickey (R - Musella). - **HB 313**

Public Employee Hazardous Chemical Protection and Right to Know Act

Carried by Sen. Mike Dugan (R - Carrollton) and sponsored by Rep. David Clark (R - Buford), House Bill 278 will transfer the enforcement of the Public Employee Hazardous Chemical Protection and Right to Know Act from the Department of Labor to the Office of the Safety Fire Commissioner. HB 278 also clarifies the Public Employee Hazardous Chemical Protection and Right to Know Act and removes certain redundant provisions. HB 278 passed unanimously. - **HB 278**



Carpet Sample Classification Revised

House Bill 277, carried by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R - White) and sponsored by

Rep. Bruce Broadrick (R - Dalton), will replace the term “carpet samples” with “floor covering samples.” Current law only allows the fair market value of “carpet samples” to be equal to 21.9 percent of the total raw material cost for taxation purposes. HB 277 will allow all “floor covering” items to be valued at 21.9 percent of the raw material cost. HB 277 passed with a vote of 48 to 1. - **HB 277**

Extension of the Angel Investor Tax Credit

Sen. Bill Cowsert (R - Athens) carried House Bill 237, which was sponsored by Rep. Bruce Williamson (R - Monroe). Current law allows an individual or entity to make a qualified investment directly to a qualified business in order to receive an income tax credit of 35 percent of the amount invested. The total aggregate amount of all tax credits provided to qualified investors or pass-through entities for investments cannot exceed \$5 million in a calendar year. These provisions will expire at the end of the 2015 calendar year. This bill retains the \$5 million tax credit cap and extends the tax credit for investments to be made through the 2018 calendar year. House Bill 237 passed with a vote of 48 to 3. - **HB 237**

Overhaul of Ad Valorem Taxation, Assessment and Appeal System

House Bill 202, carried by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R - White) and sponsored by Rep. Paul Battles (R - Cartersville), overhauls the process for ad valorem to streamline the process to appeal an ad valorem tax assessment and removes previously associated fees. The bill also clarifies how interest accrues on unpaid property taxes and the timeline for revising property tax assessments. HB 202 passed unanimously with a vote of 48 to 0. - **HB 202**

Creation of New Markets Jobs Tax Credit

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R- Dalton) led the passage of HB 439 through the Senate with a vote of 41 to 9. This legislation will create the New Markets Jobs Tax Credit which serves as an 11 percent tax credit against state insurance premium tax, retaliatory premium tax, income tax and corporate tax for entities that make non-real estate business investments in low-income areas. Furthermore, HB 439 limits the cumulative total qualified equity investments for the program to \$100 million and provides for an additional \$55 million in premium tax credits under the Invest Georgia Fund. This measure was sponsored by Rep. Jason Shaw (R- Lakeland) and, if signed into law, will go into effect on January 1, 2016. - **HB 439**

Ad Valorem Tax Exemption

Sen. Butch Miller (R - Gainesville) carried House Bill 457, which was sponsored by Rep. Lee Hawkins (R - Gainesville). Previous law provided an exemption to ad valorem taxes for dealers of watercrafts with a sunset provision that began on January 1, 2009, and ended on December 31, 2013. This legislation amends Title 48 by replacing the lapsed sunset provision with a new provision that will apply to all tax years beginning on and after January 1, 2016 and sunsets on December 31st, 2019. HB 457 will also exempt ad valorem taxation on watercrafts owned by dealers who plan to sell or resell. HB 457 passed with a vote of 43 to 5. - **HB 457**

Georgia Forest Act

Sen. Brandon Beach (R - Alpharetta) carried House Bill 255, which was sponsored by Rep. Alan Powell (R - Hartwell). Current law requires that all construction or repair of any facility paid for by the state exclusively use Georgia forest products, if available. HB 255 adds “renovation” to the list of projects approved under the Georgia Forest Act. This legislation also adds a new subsection, which requires that whenever green building standards are applied to construction or operation of any state building, the standards must follow certain green building protocol. - **HB 255**

Schools Allowed to Administer Respiratory Drugs

House Bill 362, carried by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) and sponsored by Rep. Valerie Clark (R - Lawrenceville), authorizes public and private schools to stock and administer a pre-measured, single dose of levalbuterol sulfate or albuterol sulfate for treatment of asthma attacks or other similar respiratory distresses. The pre-measured doses must be administered by a licensed practitioner, and can be given to any student experiencing

respiratory distress, regardless if the child is prescribed the drug. HB 362 passed with a vote of 44 to 3. -**HB 362**

Public Employee Purchasing Programs

House Bill 551, carried by Sen. John Albers (R - Roswell) and sponsored by Rep. Buzz Brockway (R - Lawrenceville), will allow state and local government employees to purchase consumer offerings through an employee purchase program facilitated by and through the Department of Administrative Services. Under current law, state and local government employees may purchase personal computers and computer-related equipment through an employee purchase program facilitated through the Georgia Technology Authority. These purchases can be made through voluntary deductions from their paycheck. - **HB 551**

Licensing Requirements of Registered Professional Nurses

Sen. Ben Watson (R- Savannah) led the unanimous passage of HB 394, which adds clarifying language to the powers and responsibilities of the Georgia Board of Nursing. The measure will now allow nurses to be licensed in Georgia who “meet continuing competency requirements” set forth by the Board. A provision was added to allow Individuals who graduated from nursing programs outside of the United States to be eligible for licensure. Furthermore, the Board will no longer have the authority to issue temporary permits and applicants must complete further education if they have failed to pass the given examination within three years. HB 394 was sponsored by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R- Marietta). - **HB 394**

Deannexation and Annexation of an Island

HB 432, carried by Sen. Josh McKoon (R- Columbus) and sponsored by Rep. Brad Raffensperger (R- Johns Creek), allows an island to be deannexed from a city only if it is annexed by another on the same day. HB 432 passed with a vote of 48 to 0. - **HB 432**

Vaccine Protocol Agreements and Requirements

Carried by Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) and sponsored by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R – Marietta), House Bill 504 passed unanimously. Section I of HB 504 requires college students to have received a meningitis vaccine not more than five years before their admittance to a postsecondary institution. Section II allows nurses and physicians to administer flu, pneumonia and meningitis vaccines. It does not permit the administration of any vaccines of a live attenuated virus to a child under age 13 or a meningitis vaccine to any child under age 18. The legislation passed by a vote of 44 to 6. - **HB 504**

Protective Order Registry Act

House Bill 452 renames the “Family Violence and Stalking Protective Order Registry Act” to “Protective Order Registry Act.” It also adds that judicial orders prohibiting contact are considered protective orders in the registry. HB 452 passed with a vote of 52 to 0. The legislation was carried by Sen. Harold Jones (D - Augusta) and sponsored by Rep. Mandi Ballinger (R - Canton). - **HB 452**

Weapons Carry Law Clarifications

House Bill 492, carried by Sen. Frank Ginn (R - Danielsville) and sponsored by Rep. Rick Jasperse (R - Jasper), clarifies that non-licensed weapons holders cannot carry in government buildings, that a weapon cannot be carried at an active polling location, and that state laws regulating gun possession shall only come from the General Assembly. The bill passes with a vote of 45 to 6. - **HB 492**

**The Georgia State Senate will reconvene for DAY 39
on Tuesday, March 31, at 10:00 a.m.**