



## Georgia State Senate Press Office Staff

**Jennifer Yarber**  
Director

**Adam Sweat**  
Sr. Communications Specialist

**Brittany Wagner**  
Communications Specialist

**Brett Johnson**  
Broadcast Specialist

**Gavriella 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

### FOLLOW US



fb.com/GeorgiaStateSenate



@gasenatepress



@gasenatepress



GeorgiaStateSenate

# This Week in the Senate

## March 2 - 6, 2015



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

The Senate worked diligently in committees and on the floor this week as we face a significant deadline next week--Crossover Day, which is the deadline for Senate bills to pass and "cross over" to the House, and vice versa.

We spent a great deal of time debating the Governor's Opportunity School District proposal on Thursday, ultimately passing a constitutional amendment, Senate Resolution 287, and its companion enabling legislation, Senate Bill 133. We also passed Senate Bill 129, the Georgia Religious Freedom Restoration Act, aligning Georgia law with federal law in the protection of religious freedom.

Sen. Ben Watson presented his first bill this week as a member of the State Senate and won successful passage of Senate Bill 101, which is related to marshland protection. Sen. P.K. Martin also made his first presentation and obtained passage of Senate Bill 108, which is legislation supported by the Commissioner of Insurance to improve solvency regulations.

Next week will be very busy in the days leading up to Crossover Day. I would like to thank the senators and staff for their cooperative efforts and hard work as we approach this important day.

### MONDAY, MARCH 2

#### Senate Approves Coastal Marshland Buffer

Senate Bill 101, sponsored by Sen. Ben Watson (R - Savannah), will establish a 25 foot coastal marshland buffer to protect the state coastline. SB 101 prohibits land-disturbing activities within the buffer and allows the Board of Natural Resources to adopt rules and regulations that provide an expedited process for erosion control. SB 101 passed with a vote of 43 to 8. - **SB 101**

#### Senate Supports Bill Providing Guidelines for Georgia Insurers

Sponsored by Sen. P.K. Martin (R - Lawrenceville), Senate Bill 108 passed with a vote of 42 to 12. SB 108 will require insurers to maintain a risk management agenda by completing an Own Risk and Solvency Assessment (ORSA). SB 108 requires insurers to analyze any foreseeable risks such as underwriting, credit, market, operational and liquidity. - **SB 108**

#### Senate Authorizes Toll Collection and Traffic Management Lanes

Senate Bill 125, sponsored by Sen. Brandon Beach (R - Alpharetta), passed with a vote of 53 to 2. SB 125 replaces both HOV and HOT lanes with "managed lanes," or lanes that regulate the flow of traffic. These lanes will have vehicle occupancy requirements, toll payments and certain vehicle restrictions. The toll fee will provide revenue for financing future construction projects. - **SB 125**

### Georgia's First Lady Sandra Deal Visits the Senate

First Lady Sandra Deal appeared in chamber to recognize March 2, 2015, as Read Across America Day. First Lady Deal introduced a new Pre-K book, *TJ's Discovery*, and spoke about her Read Across Georgia initiative aimed at increasing children's literacy. First Lady Deal encouraged senators to visit schools in their district to read to students.



### Senate Welcomes Congressman Buddy Carter

U.S. Rep. Buddy Carter (GA - 01) appeared in the chamber to update the Senate on his congressional endeavors in the U.S. House of Representatives. He explained how building and operating a cross-border pipeline could improve oil production for the nation. Carter thanked the Senate for their service to Georgia.

### Senate Welcomes Congressman Johnny Isakson

U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson (R - GA) addressed the chamber on the importance of improving transportation infrastructures in Georgia. U.S. Sen. Isakson also spoke about the importance of fiscal responsibility on both the federal and state levels. He thanked the Senate for their support in passing legislation to fund the Port of Savannah.



### Distinguished Older Georgian of the Year

Sponsored by Sen. Gail Davenport (D - Jonesboro), Senate Resolution 87 commended Chuck Ware for being selected as the Distinguished Older Georgian of the Year. Mr. Ware has spent over 20 years advocating for seniors through affiliations with AARP, the Aging Division Advisory Board, the Clayton County Aging Program Advisory Board and other groups. Mr. Ware is an active member of the board of directors for the Clayton County Meals on Wheels. - **SR 87**

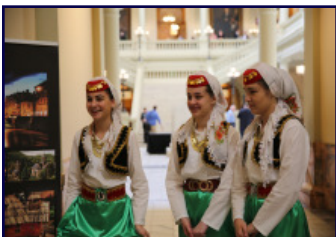
### Skin Cancer Awareness Day

Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) sponsored Senate Resolution 346 recognizing March 2, 2015, as Skin Cancer Awareness Day at the Capitol. Skin cancer is one of the most preventable, yet fatal forms of cancer. Skin cancer accounts for more than 50 percent of all cancers combined, including breast, lung and prostate cancer. Screening tests increase the chances of detecting certain cancers early and when they are most likely to be curable. - **SR 346**



### Rick Perkins Award

Senate Resolution 391, sponsored by Sen. Fran Millar (R - Atlanta), commended David Byers on being honored with the 2014 Rick Perkins Award for excellence in technical instruction. The award is given to a Georgia technical college instructor who demonstrates innovative teaching practices and exceptional leadership skills. Mr. Byers is an instructor in the dental hygiene program at Lanier Technical College. - **SR 391**



## TUESDAY, MARCH 3

### Development Authority Modification Act

Senate Bill 85, sponsored by Sen. Brandon Beach (R - Alpharetta), passed with a vote of 41 to 11. SB 85 redefines the term “project” in the Development Authorities Law to include land improvements and properties of nature used for the development of trade, commerce, industry and employment opportunities. - **SB 85**



### Digital Classroom Act

Sponsored by Sen. John Albers (R - Roswell), Senate Bill 89 passed with a vote of 45 to 8. This legislation will encourage all instructional material purchased by a local board of education to be in a digital or electronic format by July 1, 2020. SB 89 will aide funding for local boards of education based on appropriations by the State Board of Education. - **SB 89**

### New Motor Carrier Regulations

Senate Bill 100, sponsored by Sen. Tyler Harper (R - Ocilla), will create new regulations for motor carriers, amend registration and fee requirements. SB 100 will eliminate the previous law requiring a mandatory driver’s license suspension for non-moving violations. SB 100 passed with a vote of 47 to 6. - **SB 100**



### Commissioner of Insurance Removed from the State Depository Board

Sponsored by Sen. Mike Dugan (R - Carrollton), Senate Bill 104 passed with a vote of 52 to 0. SB 104 will remove the Commissioner of Insurance from the State Depository Board, and will replace the position with the State Chief Financial Officer. SB 104 will also remove the authority of the State Depository Board to name buildings and loan associations as state depositories. Under this legislation, banks, trust companies, and savings and loan associations insured by FDIC, will be eligible to be appointed as state depositories. - **SB 104**

### Commending Patricia S. King

Sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford), Senate Resolution 169 commended Patricia S. King of the Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services and Forensic Special Investigations Unit. Ms. King was a major contributor to the development of the 16-hour certification curriculum entitled, At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics. She also worked with legislators and law enforcement officials to assist with the passage of House Bill 78, a bill amended to protect disabled and elderly adults from abuse. - **SR 169**



### Former Sen. Leroy Reginald Johnson Honored

Senate Resolution 369, sponsored by Sen. Donzella James (D - Atlanta), honored former Sen. Leroy Reginald Johnson as part of Georgia’s “Living Black History.” Elected in 1962, Sen. Johnson became the first African-American to serve in the Georgia State Senate after reconstruction. He was a prominent attorney and advisor to many activists during Atlanta’s civil rights movement in the 1960s. - **SR 369**



Be sure to follow [@GASenatePress](https://twitter.com/GASenatePress) for live updates from the Senate floor!

### **Liberty Technology**

Sen. Marty Harbin (R - Tyrone) sponsored Senate Resolution 387 commended Liberty Technology on their support of Griffin, Ga. Through donations, volunteering and support of local non-profit organizations, Liberty Technology continues to have a positive impact on the local economy and residents of Griffin. Liberty Technology remains in partnership with companies such as Cisco, Apple, Microsoft, VMWare, EMC, Intuit and Lenovo. - **SR 387**

### **Councilwoman Hang Tran Honored**

Sponsored by Sen. Valencia Seay (D - Riverdale), Senate Resolution 175 commended Hang Tran on being the first Vietnamese-American woman elected to the Morrow City Council. The Vietnamese-American population in Morrow represents a quarter of the city's population. Morrow has the second largest Vietnamese community in the United States. Ms. Tran is a chemist for the United States Centers for Disease Control. - **SR 175**

### **Georgia Green Ribbon Schools and School Districts of the Year**

Sen. Lindsey Tippins (R - Marietta) sponsored several Senate Resolutions commending Dr. M.H. Mason, Jr. Elementary School, Arcado Elementary School, Big Shanty Intermediate School, High Meadows School, the Cobb County School District and Cherokee County School District for being named recipients of the 2015 Georgia Green Ribbon Award. The Green Ribbon Award is given to schools, districts and institutions of higher education that exemplify practices that reduce negative environmental impact, practice effective environmental sustainability education and improve health and wellness. - **SR 372, 373, 374, 375, 376 & 377**

### **The City Schools of Decatur School Board Commended**

Senate Resolution 354, sponsored by Sen. Elena Parent (D - Atlanta), commended the City Schools of Decatur School Board and recognized the week of March 16-20, 2015, as School Board Appreciation Week in Georgia. Decatur City Schools had the highest system SAT composite score in Georgia for 2014 and continue to have one of the highest graduation rates in the state. - **SR 354**

---

## **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4**

### **Certification of Crisis Stabilization Units (CSUs)**

Senate Bill 131, sponsored by Sen. Mike Dugan (R - Carrollton), passed in a unanimous vote. Under current law, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) is authorized to license CSUs. SB 131 amends Georgia Code by removing all language related to licensing and replacing it with language indicating that DBHDD is authorized to certify CSUs. - **SB 131**

### **Board of Natural Resources Establish Reporting Requirements**

Sponsored by Sen. Tyler Harper (R - Ocilla), Senate Bill 112 removes provisions prohibiting the removal of deer carcasses unless certain reporting requirements have been met. The legislation also adds a new Code section requiring the Board of Natural Resources to establish harvest recording and reporting requirements for all game animals and game birds, including deer. SB 112 passed with a vote of 49 to 5. - **SB 112**

### **Exception to the Community Service Board Nurse Protocol Agreement**

Senate Bill 114 passed unanimously. Sponsored by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R - Rome), the bill creates an exception on the limits of nurse practitioners and physicians assistants practicing in any community service board. - **SB 114**

### **Water Professionals Appreciation Day**

Sponsored by Sen. Rick Jeffares (R - McDonough), Senate Bill 119 establishes the first Monday of May as Water Professionals Appreciation Day to recognize those who work to keep Georgia's water clean and safe. SB 119 passed by a vote of 46 to 3. - **SB 119**

### **Protect and Disclose Records Held by the Clerk of Superior Court**

Senate Bill 135 passed with a unanimous vote. Sponsored by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton), SB 135 confirms the Clerk of the Superior Court's duties to file and maintain all official records. It also allows the Clerk to store and archive records in another location or electronically through a contract with a third party. – **SB 135**



### **Internal Revenue Code Update**

House Bill 292, carried by Sen. Judson Hill (R - Marietta) and sponsored by Rep. David Knight (R - Griffin) passed unanimously. HB 292 incorporates several federal tax revenue code updates into Georgia's tax code. These updates include the Achieving a Better Life Act, the Tax Increase Prevention Act (TIPA), the 2014 Tribal Welfare Exclusion Act, the Philippines Charitable Giving Assistance Act, the 2015 Appropriations Act, the Airlines Bankruptcy Payments Rollover Act, the Cooperative and Small Employer Charity Pension Flexibility Act and the Highway and Transportation Act of 2014. – **HB 292**

### **Senate Welcomes Miss Georgia 2014**

Sen. Dean Burke (R - Bainbridge) sponsored Senate Resolution 188 recognized Maggie Bridges for her accomplishments since being crowned Miss Georgia 2014. Bridges, a lifelong Georgia resident and a student at Georgia Tech, has devoted her year as Miss Georgia to her platform of volunteerism by serving at the Ronald McDonald House, the HandsOn Network, Kids@Kollege and Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. Bridges was welcomed in the chamber and thanked members for the recognition. – **SR 188**



### **Children's Day**

Senate Resolution 338, sponsored by Sen. Gloria Butler (D - Stone Mountain) recognized March 4, 2015, as Children's Day at the State Capitol and commended agencies across the state for their commitment to improving the lives of Georgia's children. Culinary Arts students prepared a healthy snack for senators and staff; demonstrating the skills learned through the Hospitality and Tourism Career Pathway offered through the Georgia Department of Education. – **SR 338**



### **Greenbrier High School Golf Team**

Sen. Bill Jackson (R - Appling) sponsored Senate Resolution 62 which congratulated the 2014 Greenbrier High School golf team for winning the Class 5A State Golf Championship. The team had one of the best records in school history and completed the season with three tournament victories, one second place finish and two third place finishes. – **SR 62**

### **Former Atlanta Braves Pitcher John Smoltz Honored**

Sen. Brandon Beach (R - Alpharetta) sponsored Senate Resolution 154 recognizing and commending John Andrew Smoltz for his upcoming induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame. John Smoltz has played 21 seasons in Major League Baseball. He was traded to the Atlanta Braves in 1987 and is the only pitcher in history to top both 200 wins and 150 saves. He will be formally inducted to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY, in July. – **SR 154**



## **Genocide Prevention and Awareness Month**

Senate Resolution 361, sponsored by Sen. Elena Parent (D - Atlanta), recognizes April as Genocide Prevention and Awareness Month at the State Capitol. The goal of Genocide Prevention and Awareness Month is to educate the public about the history of previous and recent genocides and advocate for genocide prevention. Melanie Nelkin, co-founder and current chair of The Georgia Coalition to Prevent Genocide (GC2PG), spoke to the Senate and thanked members for their support. – **SR 361**

## **Senate Honors the Life and Memory of Linda Womack**

Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) sponsored Senate Resolution 418 honoring the life and legacy of lobbyist Linda Womack. Womack began her career in Washington D.C. and went on to work in governmental and public affairs for more than 40 years. For the past 15 years, she served as the director of state government affairs at Emory University. Womack passed away on February 28, 2015, and members of the Senate honored her life and memory with a moment of silence. – **SR 418**

---

## **THURSDAY, MARCH 5**

### **Opportunity School District Constitutional Amendment**

Senate Resolution 287, sponsored by Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville), passed with a vote of 38 to 15. SR 287 proposes a constitutional amendment establishing the “Opportunity School District” to be placed on the ballot for consideration by Georgia voters. If passed by the House, the amendment will appear on the 2016 general election ballot. – **SR 287**



### **Opportunity School District – Enabling Legislation**

Sponsored by Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville), Senate Bill 133 passed with a vote of 38 to 17. Upon ratification of a constitutional amendment in the November 2016 general election, SB 133 will establish a state-wide school district, known as the Opportunity School District (OSD), to intervene and improve failing schools in Georgia. The bill defines failing schools as those scoring below 60 for three years in a row on the College and Career Performance Index, which is Georgia’s current rating system for school performance. The Governor will appoint a superintendent, subject to the Senate’s confirmation, to oversee the OSD in its work to improve failing schools. Four intervention models are outlined in the legislation, allowing the OSD to either directly manage the schools, close them, partner with local school districts to run them or convert them into charter schools. – **SB 133**



### **Georgia Religious Freedom Restoration Act**

Senate Bill 129, sponsored by Sen. Josh McKoon (R – Columbus), passed in a vote of 37 to 15. SB 129, which was written to closely mirror the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act passed in 1993, restores a higher standard for the state government to restrict the free exercise of religion. It provides that the government has to show a compelling interest for why its policy should override an individual’s religious freedom. – **SB 129**

### **Extend St. Patrick’s Day Holiday Period**

Sponsored by Sen. Lester Jackson (D – Savannah), Senate Bill 103 allows the City of Savannah to include one Sunday in their annual the St. Patrick’s Day celebration. The legislation also provides all cities and counties in Georgia with the option to allow bars to sell alcohol on one Sunday each year, from 12:30 pm to midnight. SB 103 passed with a vote of 32 to 16. – **SB 103**



### **Senate Commends David Andrews**

Senate Resolution 261, sponsored by Sen. Brandon Beach (R – Alpharetta), commended David Andrews for his distinguished football career at the University of Georgia. Andrews was named a Top 10 prospect coming out of high school and went on to receive numerous awards for his leadership and contributions to the UGA team. Andrews thanked the Senate for the honor and recognition. – **SR 261**

### **Senate Commends International Women’s Think Tank**

Sponsored by Sen. Donzella James (D – Atlanta), Senate Resolution 5 commended the International Women’s Think Tank for its commitment to improving the status of women and girls in Georgia and across the world. Brenda Morant, founder of the International Women’s Think Tank, spoke to members of the Senate about the organization. – **SR 5**

**The Georgia State Senate will reconvene for **DAY 28**  
on Monday, March 9, at 10:00 a.m.**