



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

Andrew Allison
2016 Legislative Aide

Jessie Powell
2016 Legislative Aide

Jacob Hamilton
2016 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 January 11 - 15, 2016



The Senate Convenes in 2016

The Georgia State Senate convened on Monday, January 11, for the 2016 legislative session with two new members—Sen. Larry Walker and Sen. JaNice Van Ness, who won special elections and were sworn into office late last year.

Governor Nathan Deal outlined his budget recommendations in Wednesday's "State of the State" address; with agency hearings begin next Tuesday. Governor Deal has proposed a 3% pay increase for teachers and an end to furlough days. His budget also reflects additional spending for transportation.

Governor Deal also unveiled his 10-year strategic plan for transportation. Under the provisions of House Bill 170 passed last year, the plan must be approved by the Senate and House Transportation Committees.

This week we also celebrated Korean-American Day with special presentations in the House and Senate Chambers, cultural displays in the Capitol and a ceremony with the Governor. On a personal note, I am proud to represent so many Korean American families in Johns Creek and Duluth in the Senate.

Sen. David J. Shafer

President Pro Tempore, Georgia State Senate

MONDAY, JANUARY 11

Lt. Gov. Cagle, President Pro Tem Shafer and Sec. of Senate Cook Welcome Senators

Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle and Senate President Pro Tempore David Shafer welcomed all 56 senators back for the first day of the 153rd Georgia General Assembly. Sec. of Senate David Cook greeted Sen. JaNice Van Ness (R - Conyers) and Sen. Larry Walker (R - Perry) to their first legislative session. Both won special elections on December 1, 2015, and were sworn in on December 18, 2015.

Legislative Calendar Set Through Day 13

Sen. Bill Cowsert (R - Athens) sponsored Senate Resolution 678, which sets the schedule for the first 13 days of the 2016 legislative session. The schedule allows for a day of budget hearings on January 19 after the observation of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday on January 18. Legislative Day 13 is scheduled for February 1. - **SR 678**

Georgia Music Stars Welcomed as Special Guests

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R - Chickamauga) welcomed Collective Soul band member and

Georgia Music Hall of Fame inductee Ed Roland, as well as Zac Brown Band founding member John Dreskill Hopkins as special guests to the Senate chamber. Sen. Mullis spoke about Georgia's rich and diverse musical history.



Miss America Betty Cantrell Addresses Senate

The Senate recognized Miss America Betty Cantrell, formerly Miss Georgia who spoke with Senate members as a special guest. A native of Warner Robins, Miss Cantrell graduated from Mercer University and won the Miss America pageant last September. On her Miss America tour, Cantrell actively advocates for Children's Miracle Network and her "Healthy Children, Strong America" campaign, and also serves as a Goodwill Ambassador.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12

Clayton State University Day at the Capitol

Sen. Gail Davenport (D - Jonesboro) sponsored Senate Resolution 685, making January 12, 2016, Clayton State University Day at the Capitol and recognizing Clayton State University for its outstanding efforts to provide students access to an affordable, quality education. Home to over 7,000 students, Clayton State University was ranked number one for best value in Georgia higher education by *James Magazine* for the second consecutive year.
- **SR 685**

Former Sen. Hardie Davis Visits Senate Chamber

Former senator and current mayor of Augusta, Hardie Davis, greeted his former colleagues as they began their second term of the 153rd Legislative Session of the Georgia General Assembly.

Happy 50th Birthday Lt. Gov. Cagle

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R - Chickamauga) recognized Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle and was joined by fellow senators to honor and celebrate him on his 50th birthday.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13

State of the State Address

Gov. Nathan Deal outlined his recommendations for the FY 2016 amended budget and FY 2017 general budget at the annual State of the State Address given in front of a joint session in the House chamber on January 13. His sixth address largely focused on education issues. Gov. Deal outlined an executive action to create a Teacher Advisory Committee that will oversee the implementation of education policy and a plan to raise wages of both teachers and other state employees in Georgia by three percent. He also briefly overviewed his criminal justice reforms.



Korean-American Day

Sen. David Shafer (R - Duluth) sponsored Senate Resolution 679 establishing January 13, 2016, as Korean-American Day at the Capitol. Sen. Shafer spoke to some of the important contributions made by Korean-Americans in the state of Georgia and the need for this day of recognition. - **SR 679**

City of Thomasville: Georgia's Rose City

Senate Resolution 687, sponsored by Sen. Dean Burke (R - Bainbridge), recognized the city of Thomasville as "Georgia's Rose City." Thomasville is located in south Georgia and is the county seat of Thomas County. - **SR 687**

National Guard Day

Sen. Mike Dugan (R - Carrollton) and others sponsored a resolution to establish January 25, 2016 as National Guard Day at the Capitol. Over 10,000 Georgia men and women currently serve in the Georgia National Guard.
- **SR 688**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14

Late Senator Mike Egan Honored

The late Sen. Mike Egan was honored with a moment of silence and prayer in the Senate chamber. The Georgia General Assembly convened an hour later to allow legislators and staff to attend a memorial service in his honor at the Capitol. Sen. Tommie Williams (R - Lyons) and Sen. Vincent Fort (D - Atlanta) also took points of personal privilege to speak of Sen. Egan's character and impact during his time in the Senate.

Georgia Forestry Northern Unit Commission of the Year

The Chair of the Senate Natural Resources and the Environment Committee, Sen. Frank Ginn (R - Danielsville), and other senators recognized and commended the Clayton-Pike-Lamar-Upson-Spalding Forestry Unit for winning the Georgia Commission of the Year. - **SR 695**



U.S. Rep. Lynn Westmoreland Welcomed by the Senate

The Senate welcomed U.S. Rep. Lynn Westmoreland (R - GA) as a special guest. Rep. Westmoreland addressed the Senate, encouraging both minority and majority senators to actively participate in the roles given to them by their constituents. He also cautioned leaders to not allow passivity through sessions but to engage in the process with their hearts; keeping in the forefront of their minds the people they serve. Rep. Westmoreland will not seek re-election to the United States House of Representatives in 2016.



FRIDAY, JANUARY 15

Senate Wins Trophy for Legislative Livestock Best in Show

Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black and Sen. John Wilkinson (R - Toccoa) presented the Senate with the trophy for "Best in Show" at the Legislative Livestock Showdown. The Georgia House and Senate annually meet at the Georgia National Fair in Perry to learn more about Georgia agriculture and the importance of programs such as 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA). This year, the Senate team was represented by Sens. John Wilkinson, Greg Kirk (R - Americus), Burt Jones (R - Jackson), Tyler Harper (R - Ocilla), Harold Jones (D - Augusta) and Renee Unterman (R - Buford).



Senate Welcomes Nigerian delegation

Sen. Gloria Butler (D - Stone Mountain) introduced a delegation from the African country of Nigeria. Chief Johnbull O. Ejovi, the leader of the delegation, addressed the Senate and thanked them for their hospitality. Sen. Butler visited Nigeria and learned about the country's progressing technological and social advances last November.

Budget hearings will be held on **TUESDAY, JANUARY 19,
in Room 341 of the Georgia State Capitol.**

**The Georgia State Senate will reconvene at 10:00 a.m. on
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20.**