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This Week in the Senate

January 25 - 29, 2016



Leading by Example in Georgia

The Senate and House of Representatives met in joint session this week to hear the annual State of the Judiciary Address from Chief Justice Hugh P. Thompson. Georgia has set the example for the rest of the nation in criminal justice reform thanks to Governor Deal's leadership; decreasing rates of both incarceration and recidivism. Chief Justice Thompson spoke about these reforms and the continuing deployment of technology to improve the efficiency of the courts.

Sen. Marty Harbin (R - Tyrone) presented his first bill to the Senate this week. Senate Bill 137 dealt with fire and dwelling policies on residential property, guaranteeing full payouts in the event of total loss by fire even if the property is titled other than individually.

The House approved the Amended Fiscal Year 2016 Budget this week. Next week, subcommittees of our Senate Appropriations Committee, under the leadership of Chairman Jack Hill (R - Reidsville), will begin meeting to carefully review their work. Our top priority is to make sure that tax dollars are being spent as wisely and efficiently as possible.

On a personal note, I was pleased to host a group of very important constituents from my district: the members of my Legislative Advisory Committee. I am grateful to Shawn Still and Matt Reeves for co-chairing this important group of advisors.

Sen. David J. Shafer

President Pro Tempore, Georgia State Senate

MONDAY, JANUARY 25

U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson Welcomed Back by the Senate

The Senate welcomed U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson (R - GA) as a special guest. Sen. Isakson addressed the Senate and commended all legislators for their hard work in improving Georgia's transportation infrastructure. Isakson said the expansion of the Savannah port would make the city a vital point of trade in the American economy. He also praised members of the Georgia National Guard and the U.S. military for their hard work and service to the nation.

Senate Celebrates National Guard Day

Sen. Mike Dugan (R - Carrollton) sponsored Senate Resolution 688, recognizing January 25, 2016, as National Guard Day. Adjutant General Joe Jarrard spoke to the Senate about the importance of military readiness and training, while Sen. Dugan lead Army recruit David Lyle, a 2014 high school graduate, in the Army's Oath of Enlistment. Members of the National Guard's Youth Challenge Academy, an at-risk youth program, also served as pages for the Senate. - **SR 688**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26

Human Trafficking Awareness Day

Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford) introduced Senate Resolution 794, marking January 26, 2016, as Human Trafficking Awareness Day at the Capitol. Sen. Unterman expressed appreciation for last year's passage of Senate Bill 8, also known as Rachel's Law, and spoke to the many ways the Senate can help eliminate human trafficking in Georgia. – **SR 794**

Senate Honors the Life of Dr. Ozias Pearson

Sen. Valencia Seay (D - Riverdale) introduced Senate Resolution 681, honoring the life and work of Dr. Ozias Pearson. Dr. Pearson was born on November 14, 1932, in Youngstown, Ohio, and worked throughout his life as a leader in the field of both collegiate and public education across the nation. He also served as Executive Director for Human Resources and Instructional Services for the Clayton County School District until his retirement in 1998. – **SR 681**

Senate Commemorates Mercer President William D. Underwood

The Senate adopted Senate Resolution 806, sponsored by Sen. John Kennedy (R – Macon), commending William D. Underwood for his exceptional work as Mercer University's 18th president. Mercer University is located in Macon and currently has more than 8,000 students enrolled. – **SR 806**



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27

State of the Judiciary Address

The Senate attended a joint session in the House chamber and welcomed the Supreme Court of Georgia's Chief Justice Hugh P. Thompson to give the State of the Judiciary Address. The main themes of the address included modernizing Georgia's justice system and encouraging arbitration in place of lengthy and expensive court cases. He also advised Georgia courts to review more questions regarding constitutional law, rather than civil or criminal.

Collection of Property Insurance Payouts

Senate Bill 137, sponsored by Sen. Marty Harbin (R - Tyrone), expands current Georgia law to allow corporations to collect full property insurance payouts when a single family or dual family residential unit is completely destroyed by fire. The bill passed unanimously. – **SB 137**

Georgia Civil Air Patrol Day

Members of the Georgia Civil Air Patrol were honored by the Senate for their allegiance and character with Senate Resolution 804, sponsored by Sen. Fran Millar (R – Atlanta). Sen. Millar also invited Lt. Col. Elise Wittword of the Georgia Civil Air Patrol to serve as Chaplain of the Day. – **SR 804**

Cartersville High School Football Team Recognized for State Championship

Sen. Bruce Thompson (R - White) recognized the Cartersville Hurricanes for winning the 2015 AAAA Football State Championship against Buford High School with Senate Resolution 796. Cartersville High School's senior class holds a 51 to 4 winning record, and the team was selected to be a part of the United States Honor Guard Tour of Champions. Cartersville head coach, Joey King, spoke of the integrity and character of his team. – **SR 796**

Sugarland's Kristian Bush Visits the Senate

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R - Chickamauga) welcomed Grammy award winning artist Kristian Bush to the Senate chamber. He is a member of the country music duo Sugarland, and released his first solo album *Southern Gravity* in April 2015. Bush earned a degree in creative writing from Emory University in Atlanta and was inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame in 2012. Sen. Mullis described Bush as one of many to join the "Year of Georgia Music" in 2016.



THURSDAY JANUARY 28

Awarding Service Weapons and Badges to Retiring Officers

Senate Bill 263, sponsored by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R – White), gives cities and counties the authority to award retiring P.O.S.T. certified law enforcement officers with their service weapon and badge upon their retirement or leaving duty due to disability. The bill passed 50 to 1. – **SB 263**

University of North Georgia Softball Team Honored for NCAA Championship

Sen. Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonega) sponsored Senate Resolution 728, honoring the University of North Georgia's (UNG) softball team for its 2015 NCAA Division II Championship. The UNG softball team had a record of 54 to 8 in 2015 and made its fourth appearance in seven years in the National College World Series. Coach Mike Davenport addressed the Senate and expressed his excitement over being ranked No. 1 in the 2016 pre-season polls. – **SR 728**



Senate Commends Fulton and Putnam County Charter School Systems

Sen. Burt Jones (R – Jackson) and Sen. Greg Kirk (R - Americus) sponsored legislation commending both the Fulton County Charter School System and the Putnam County Charter School System for their innovation in public school education. Fulton County Charter School System is the largest of Georgia's 33 charter systems and was named the 2015 Charter System of the Year. Putnam County Charter School System is the recipient of the 2015 Charter System Innovation Award, and Putnam County High School was named a Best High School by *U.S. News & World Report*. – **SR 816 & SR 817**



STEM Academy in Bartlett Recognized

Sen. Ben Watson (R – Savannah) introduced Senate Resolution 813, commending the STEM Academy in Bartlett for their Future of Education Technology Conference STEM Excellence Award. Principal Peter Lord addressed the assembly and thanked senators for their continued support of Georgia's children and future work force. – **SR 813**



Georgia's 2016 Teacher of the Year

Dr. Ernie Lee was honored at the Capitol for his hard work and dedicated service with Senate Resolution 831, sponsored by Sen. Lester Jackson (D – Savannah). Dr. Lee teaches Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate History and U.S. Government at Windsor Forrest High School in Savannah. Dr. Lee was a corporate lawyer for over 20 years before becoming an educator. As Georgia Teacher of the Year, Dr. Lee will lead workshops on issues such as building positive relationships with students, as well as sit on the board of the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. – **SR 831**



State Trooper Nathan Bradley Recognized

The Senate adopted Senate Resolution 792, sponsored by Sen. JaNice VanNess (R – Conyers), recognizing State Trooper Nathan Bradley for the compassion shown to four young children following the death of their parents in a car crash last Halloween. Trooper Bradley went above and beyond his call of duty in responding to the traffic accident. He provided company and compassion to the children while awaiting their grandmother's arrival from Florida. Trooper Bradley also led a charitable campaign that raised almost \$500,000 to be placed in a trust for the children. – **SR 792**



**The Georgia State Senate will reconvene at 10:00 a.m. on
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1.**