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# This Week in the Senate

## February 16 - 19, 2016



### Working Towards Crossover Day

The Senate took its final step in finalizing the amended Fiscal Year 2016 Budget by approving the House's amendment to the Senate substitute. Gov. Deal has already signed this bill, and our focus has now shifted to the General Fiscal Year 2017 Budget.

House Bill 757, a bill protecting the free exercise of religious beliefs, received Senate approval today. The legislation protects pastors, ministers and other ordained individuals from being forced to perform marriage ceremonies that contradict closely held religious beliefs. The bill was merged earlier in the week with Senate Bill 284, also known as the First Amendment Defense Act, which prevents state and local governments from taking punitive action against faith based organizations or individuals because of beliefs with respect to lawful marriage.

The Senate will be in session all five days next week as we move toward the Crossover Day deadline. Senate bills must be introduced by Tuesday, February 23, and favorably reported out of committee by Thursday, February 25, in order to have time to be considered this session.

**Sen. David J. Shafer**

*President Pro Tempore, Georgia State Senate*

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16

### Allowing Physician Assistants to Prescribe Schedule II Substances

Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome) introduced Senate Bill 115. SB 115 would allow physician assistants, who are authorized by a physician, to prescribe schedule II substances to patients. Schedule II substances include drugs such as Adderall and Vicodin. The bill passed 50 to 1. – **SB 115**

### Rental Network Regulation

Senate Bill 158 sponsored by Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge) passed by a vote of 54 to 0. SB 158 requires greater transparency from health insurance providers by requiring health insurance rental networks to register with the Insurance Commissioner. This bill would not apply to Medicaid, Medicare or select other programs. – **SB 158**

### Restrictions on Becoming an Insurance Agent Restrictions

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton) sponsored Senate Bill 290, which explicitly prohibits certain individuals from becoming insurance agents. The restriction would apply to attorneys acting in a capacity to advise clients on insurance matters, and also employees of credit or character reporting firms who report to insurers. The bill passed 51 to 0. – **SB 290**

### **Foreign Issued Driver's Licenses Treated as Valid**

Sen. Ben Watson (R – Savannah) introduced Senate Bill 320, which updates Georgia law to recognize foreign issued driver's licenses as valid in the state of Georgia. This bill changes existing law, which previously required drivers to have an international driving permit. The bill passed 51 to 0. – **SB 320**

### **100th Anniversary of the Georgia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives**

Sen. Mike Dugan (R – Carrollton) recognized the 100th anniversary of the Georgia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives with Senate Resolution 935. Sen. Dugan was joined by Daniel Jackson, President and CEO of the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce. The two explained the importance of chambers of commerce as engines of economic development throughout the state. – **SR 935**

### **Public Health Nurses Recognized**

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) commended the work of public health nurses and the vital services they provide to communities throughout our state with Senate Resolution 848. Sen. Unterman presented the resolution to Georgia's Chief Public Health Nurse, Carole Jakeway. – **SR 848**

### **Recognizing the Philanthropic Educational Organization Sisterhood**

Sen. Fran Millar (R – Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 906 to recognize the Philanthropic Educational Organization (PEO) Sisterhood and their 66 local chapters. PEO empowers women through education funding and has approximately 2,300 members throughout the state. – **SR 906**

### **Literacy Day**

Sen. Nan Orrock (D – Atlanta) introduced Senate Resolution 896 recognizing February 16, 2016, as Literacy Day at the Capitol. Sen. Orrock was joined by Austin Dickson, the Executive Director for Literacy Action Inc., to discuss illiteracy and the steps Georgia is taking to spread awareness and education. – **SR 896**

### **Senate Welcomes Congressman Sanford Bishop**

Congressman Sanford Bishop (D – GA) visited and presented remarks to the Senate Chamber. Rep. Bishop previously served in the Georgia House from 1977 until 1990 and in the Georgia Senate from 1991 to 1992. Rep. Bishop was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1993



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## **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17**

### **Scope of Practice for Licensed Professional Counselors**

Sen. Lester Jackson (D – Savannah) sponsored Senate Bill 319, which updates the definition of “professional counseling” for Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs). SB 319 changes the scope of practice by giving LPCs the ability to diagnose emotional and mental conditions, along with evaluating and recommending treatment. The bill passed with a vote of 51 to 0. – **SB 319**

### **Providing Credit Services to Firearm Dealers**

Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro) sponsored Senate Bill 282. The bill makes it unlawful for companies providing credit or financial services to discriminate against any person, business, public entity or trade association engaged in the lawful sale of firearms or ammunition. The bill passed with a vote of 39 to 14. – **SB 282**



### **Carrying of Firearms by Retired Law Enforcement Officers**

Sen. P.K. Martin IV (R – Lawrenceville) sponsored Senate Bill 270, which would exempt qualified retired law enforcement officers from firearms licensing and carry restrictions in Georgia. The bill also extends these benefits to former law enforcement officers who previously worked out-of-state, but are Georgia citizens. The bill passed with a vote of 54 to 0. – **SB 270**



### **Notification of Changes to Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment Form**

Senate Bill 305, sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford), would require the Department of Public Health to notify both the House and Senate Committees on Health and Human Services prior to making changes to its Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form. POLST forms are used as a reference by doctors in determining a patient's end of life decisions. The Department of Public Health must provide at least 60 days notice. The bill passed with a vote of 54 to 0. – **SB 305**



### **2016 Amended Budget Receives Final Passage**

Sen. Jack Hill (R – Reidsville) carried House Bill 750, the amended Fiscal Year 2016 Budget. The Senate agreed to HB 750 as amended by the House by a vote of 53 to 0; giving final passage to the nearly \$23 billion budget. – **HB 750**

### **State Restaurant Day**

The Senate recognized State Restaurant Day at the Capitol and commended the industry with Senate Resolution 886, sponsored by Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville). Georgia's restaurant industry includes nearly 17,000 food and drink vendors and employs approximately 421,000 individuals statewide. – **SR 886**



### **Gordon Lee Memorial High School Softball Team**

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga) congratulated the Gordon Lee Memorial High School softball team on their outstanding 2015 season with Senate Resolution 864. The Lady Trojans held a record of 37 to 2 and went on to win their first class AA state championship. Four of the team's members were selected to play on Georgia's All-Star Team, and senior pitcher Emily Armour was named AA Pitcher of the Year. – **SR 864**



### **Honoring the Life of Rana Elyse Mashburn**

Sponsored by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton), Senate Resolution 861 honors the life and memory of Rana Elyse Mashburn, who fought a courageous battle against Hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis, a rare immune system disease. Sen. Bethel was joined by Mashburn's mother, Kathy, who spoke of her daughter's bravery and faith. – **SR 861**

### **Commending Dalton State College Basketball Team**

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton) sponsored Senate Resolution 826 commending the Dalton State College men's basketball team on winning the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Division I Championship. The Dalton State College basketball team completed their second season with a 32 to 4 record. – **SR 826**



## **Congressman John Lewis Visits the Senate**

United States Rep. John Lewis (D – GA) visited the Senate and commended its members for never giving up in the face of adversity and working together. Rep. Lewis asked that senators learn to deliberate, discuss and compromise.

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## **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18**

### **Franchise Employee Clarification**

Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell) sponsored Senate Bill 277 to clarify that franchisees and employees of a franchisee are not considered employees of the franchisor. The bill passed with a vote of 39 to 14. – **SB 277**

### **Religious Expression at High School Athletic Events**

Sen. Burt Jones (R – Jackson) sponsored Senate Bill 309. This bill allows student athletes to express their personal religious beliefs during sporting events. SB 309 also enables high schools, who receive state funding, to participate in athletic competitions with schools outside of their designated conference. The bill passed with a vote of 39 to 16. – **SB 309**

### **Updated Definitions For Advanced Nurses and Nurse Practitioners**

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) sponsored Senate Bill 314 to modernize the roles and definitions of advanced practicing nurses and advanced practice registered nurses. The bill does not change licensing requirements, but updates the definitions and establishes a new code section for license applications and reinstatements. The bill also creates criminal penalties for fraudulent nursing practices. The bill passed with a vote of 55 to 0. – **SB 314**

### **Expanding the Quality Basic Education Act**

Sen. Lindsey Tippins (R – Marietta) sponsored Senate Bill 329. Under this bill, students would be awarded a high school diploma if they have completed college dual credit coursework and have earned certification to work in an “in-need” industry as defined by the Technical College System of Georgia. Additionally, SB 329 would expand HOPE scholarship eligibility to students meeting these requirements. The measure passed 56 to 0. – **SB 329**

### **Carroll County Day**

Sen. Mike Dugan (R – Carrollton) introduced Senate Resolution 795 recognizing February 18, 2016, as Carroll County Day at the Capitol. Sen. Dugan was joined by the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Daniel Jackson. Jackson spoke about how Carroll County is a leading driver of economic growth thanks to the University of West Georgia and West Georgia Technical College. – **SR 795**

### **Honoring the Family of Hosea Williams**

Sen. Vincent Fort (D – Atlanta) introduced Senate Resolution 686 to honor the life of Hosea Williams, an active participant in the civil rights movement and former Atlanta City Council and DeKalb County Commission member. Williams served the Georgia State Senate from 1974 until 1985. Sen. Fort was joined by Williams’ two daughters, who testified to the devotion and character exhibited by their father. – **SR 686**

### **Recognizing Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity**

Sen. Lester Jackson (D – Savannah) sponsored Senate Resolution 830 to recognize Alpha Phi Alpha Day at the





Capitol. Alpha Phi Alpha was founded by in 1906 at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Alpha Phi Alpha boasts several Georgia natives including Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Andrew Young. – **SR 830**

### **Commending Miss Georgia Peach Scholarship Pageant**

Sen. John F. Kennedy (R – Macon) sponsored Senate Resolution 987 commending the Miss Georgia Peach Scholarship Pageant and congratulating the 2015 Miss Georgia Peaches. The Miss Georgia Peach Scholarship Pageant was founded by the Pilot Club of Fort Valley to coincide with the famous Georgia Peach Festival. The annual pageant is held in June. – **SR 987**



## **FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19**

### **Superior Court Clerk Continuing Education**

Sen. P. K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville) sponsored Senate Bill 370. The legislation would expand the list of training institutions for superior court clerks by adding professional court management associations, accredited colleges and universities. Current Georgia law requires superior court clerks to exclusively complete classes at the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education of Georgia. The bill passed by a vote of 53 to 1. – **SB 370**



### **Pastor Protection and First Amendment Defense Act**

Carried by Sen. Greg Kirk (R – Americus) and sponsored in the House by Rep. Kevin Tanner (R – Dawsonville), House Bill 757 passed by a vote of 38 to 14. HB 757 protects a minister, cleric or religious practitioner who is authorized to perform marriages from being compelled to perform a marriage ceremony that goes against his or her religious beliefs. The bill also restricts state government from any discriminatory action against faith-based organizations based on sincerely held religious beliefs regarding the definition of marriage. – **HB 757**



### **Honoring Former Senator Ross Tolleson**

Sen. Larry Walker III (R – Perry) sponsored Senate Resolution 943 honoring former State Sen. Ross Tolleson. During his 13 years in the Senate, he served as a Chairman of the Senate Natural Resources and the Environment Committee, Vice Chairman of the Rules Committee, and held seats on the Appropriations and Transportation Committees. Tolleson retired from Georgia Senate in 2015. – **SR 943**



### **Recognizing Miss Apple Capital and Miss Teen Apple Capital**

Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega) recognized Miss Apple Capital Katherine McCauley and Miss Teen Apple Capital Kendall Chamberlain with Senate Resolution 957 and Senate Resolution 958. McCauley and Chamberlain will both represent Ellijay and the North Georgia area at the 2016 Miss Georgia Pageant, a preliminary to the Miss America Pageant. McCauley attended Kennesaw State University, where she raised more than \$700,000 for Children's Miracle Network through fundraising events. Chamberlain attends West Forsyth High School where she actively volunteers in her community and champions childhood cancer research. – **SR 957 & 958**



### **Recognizing Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity**

Senate Resolution 962, sponsored by Sen. Steve Henson (D – Tucker), recognized February 19, 2016, as Lambda Day at the Capitol. La Unidad Latina Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity was established in 1982 and is dedicated to establishing community leaders and innovators. The first Georgia chapter was founded at Georgia State University in 2010. – ***SR 962***

**The Georgia State Senate will reconvene at 10:00 a.m. on  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22.**