



Georgia State Senate Press Office Staff

Jennifer Yarber
Director

Ines Owens
Sr. Communications Specialist

Brittany Wagner
Communications Specialist

Brett Johnson
Broadcast Specialist

Gabriella Coffman
Communications Associate

Andrew Allison
2016 Legislative Aide

Jacob Hamilton
2016 Legislative Aide

Tyna Duckett
Photographer

201 Coverdell Legislative Office Building
18 Capitol Square S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30303
404.656.0028

FOLLOW US



fb.com/GeorgiaStateSenate



@gasenatepress



@gasenatepress



GeorgiaStateSenate

This Week in the Senate

February 22 - 26, 2016



Leading Up to Crossover Day

The Senate worked hard all five days of this week; taking up Senate Bills before the Day 30 “crossover” deadline this coming Monday.

The Senate took action on a wide range of matters. We passed Senate Bill 331 by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R – White) protecting victims of rape. We passed Senate Bill 258 by Sen. Fran Millar (R – Dunwoody) protecting property owners from tax valuation increases during tax appeals.

We passed Senate Bill 327 by Sen. Judson Hill (R - Marietta) supporting Israel against corporate boycotts.

In a masterful performance, Sen. Larry Walker III (R - Perry) presented his first bill in the well. Senate Bill 337 helps the families of veterans by keeping their places on waiting lists for health services during deployments. Our congratulations go out to him in this important effort on behalf of our veterans.

Following Crossover Day, our attention will turn to the many bills that have come over from the State House. The only constitutional requirement left for the General Assembly is the passage of the General Budget for Fiscal Year 2017, which is moving through the Senate Appropriations Committee process.

Sen. David J. Shafer

President Pro Tempore, Georgia State Senate

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Continued Involuntary Treatment of a Person with a Mental Illness

Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge) introduced Senate Bill 271. This bill would allow mental health facilities to involuntarily recommit a patient with a previously scheduled release date, if the patient is considered unsafe. The bill passed 46 to 5. – **SB 271**

Enhancing Free Speech Protections

Sen. Michael Williams (R – Cumming) sponsored Senate Bill 275. The bill would prohibit counties, municipalities or any other government body from establishing policies that restrict free speech within their guidelines. The bill passed with a vote of 52 to 1. – **SB 275**

Removing Caps on Daily Bingo Winnings

Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonga) sponsored Senate Bill 316 to remove the current cap on daily bingo winnings of \$1,500. The bill retains the weekly bingo winning limit of \$3,000. The measure was passed 39 to 14. – **SB 316**

Military Family Health Protection Act

Sen. Larry Walker (R – Perry) brought his first piece of legislation before the Chamber, Senate Bill 337. The bill would allow families of military personnel eligible for medical services, even when the service member and their dependents remain stationed outside of the state of Georgia. The bill passed 52 to 0. – **SB 337**



Funding Local College and Career Academies

Sen. Lindsey Tippins (R – Marietta) sponsored Senate Bill 348. The legislation would allow local school systems to create a college and career academy as part of a contract to act as a strategic waivers school system or charter school. The bill passed 52 to 0. – **SB 348**



Kappa Alpha Psi Day

Sen. Emanuel Jones (D – Decatur) honored the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity by sponsoring Senate Resolution 1013. Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. was founded in 1911 in Bloomington, Illinois, and currently has more than 130,000 members worldwide. Sen. Jones was joined by National Kappa Alpha Psi President Thomas L. Battle, Jr. to celebrate the fraternity's promotion of intellectual achievement and community service. – **SR 1013**



Job Creators Network Day

Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell) recognized the Job Creators Network for their devotion to free enterprise and entrepreneurship by sponsoring Senate Resolution 980. The Job Creators Network is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to educating individuals on basic public policy in order to prevent government overreach. Job Creators Network President Alfredo Ortiz commended Georgia for its attractive business climate. – **SR 980**



Anesthesiologist Assistants of Georgia Recognized

Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome) introduced Senate Resolution 982 to praise the work of Georgia's anesthesiologist assistants. In Georgia alone, there are approximately 900 licensed anesthesia assistants. Sen. Hufstetler was joined by representatives of the Anesthesiology Association of Georgia who commended the state for its commitment to quality healthcare. – **SR 982**



Clark Atlanta University Day

Sen. Horacena Tate (D – Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 1015 in recognition of Clark Atlanta University Day at the Capitol. Clark Atlanta University was founded in 1988 and currently enrolls more than 2,500 undergraduates. – **SR 1015**

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees

Sen. Steve Henson (D – Tucker) introduced Senate Resolution 1003 to recognize the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSA). Sen. Henson welcomed IATSA local chapter President Ray Brown to discuss the impact of IATSA and Georgia's growing film and entertainment industry. – **SR 1003**

Emergency Medical Services Day

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) sponsored Senate Resolution 1023 to commend the hard work of Georgia's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel. Sen. Harper was joined by Kim Littleton of the Georgia Association of Emergency Medical Services to celebrate the life-saving work of EMS personnel throughout the state. – **SR 1023**

Sen. David Perdue Addresses the Chamber

United States Senator David Perdue (R – GA) visited the Senate chamber on Monday to commend the Senate for their dedication to improving the lives of Georgians. Prior to serving in the Senate, Sen. Perdue was the CEO of Dollar General and also served as the CEO of Reebok.



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Public Disclosure of State Documents

Sen. Mike Dugan (R – Carrollton) sponsored Senate Bill 323, which exempts state agencies from public disclosure of economic development projects until a binding commitment has been made. An economic development project is a plan or proposal to expand a business that hires more than 50 employees or spends more than \$50 million. The bill passed with a vote of 47 to 4. – **SB 323**



Recovering Costs of Impounded Animals

Sen. Michael Williams (R – Cumming) sponsored Senate Bill 356, which authorizes animal control agencies to bill animal owners being investigated for animal cruelty for impoundment of their animal. The charge is not intended to cover lost, stray or feral animals. The bill passed with a vote of 51 to 3. – **SB 356**



Granting Nonexclusive Easements

Sen. Rick Jeffares (R – McDonough) sponsored Senate Resolution 954, which grants nonexclusive easements for the construction, operation and maintenance of facilities and utilities on state or local property in several Georgia counties. The resolution passed with a vote of 53 to 0. – **SR 954**



Transferring Property Ownership to County Governments

Sen. Rick Jeffares (R – McDonough) sponsored Senate Resolution 955, which transfers property rights of state-owned land to certain local county governments. The resolution specifically identifies property in several local counties throughout the State. The resolution passed with a vote of 52 to 0. – **SR 955**



Senate Welcomes John Kasich

The Senate welcomed John Kasich as a special guest Tuesday. Kasich, the current Governor of Ohio, is a former U.S. Representative who served as Chairman of the House Budget Committee and was instrumental in passage of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

Senate Greets U.S. Representative Buddy Carter

The Senate welcomed back former State Senator and current U.S. Representative Buddy Carter (R – GA) to the Chamber on Tuesday. Carter served

in the Georgia House from 2006 to 2010 and in the Georgia Senate from 2010 to 2014. Carter thanked Senators for their continued efforts working with the federal government, noting the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project specifically.

World Tuberculosis Day

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) sponsored Senate Resolution 839 recognizing February 23, 2016, as World Tuberculosis Day and commending the Georgia Department of Public Health Epidemiology Section. According to the World Health Organization, tuberculosis is now the world's leading infectious killer. – **SR 839**

Senate Welcomes University of Georgia Head Football Coach Kirby Smart

The Senate welcomed newly named UGA Head Football Coach Kirby Smart, President Jere Morehead and Athletic Director Greg McGarity as special guests to the Senate chamber. Smart was named head coach in December 2015, and was previously defensive coordinator at the University of Alabama.

Future Farmers of America Day

The Senate recognized Future Farmers of America Day (FFA) at the Capitol on February 23, 2016, with Senate Resolution 887, sponsored by Sen. John Wilkinson (R – Toccoa). Georgia's FFA chapter is composed of nearly 39,000 current members and 310 school chapters, which makes it the third largest FFA association in the nation. The Georgia Chapter President Avery Duncan joined Sen. Wilkinson to thank senators for their continued impact on each FFA member in Georgia. – **SR 887**

Recognizing Paul A. Wood

Sen. Brandon Beach (R – Alpharetta) sponsored Senate Resolution 711 commending Paul A. Wood and commemorating his retirement. Paul A. Wood is a former U.S. Air Force Captain, who has served as Executive Director of Georgia EMC since 1997. Wood currently serves as chairman of the Georgia Tourism Foundation, is a member of the Department of Economic Development Board of Directors and serves on the Board of Governors of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. – **SR 711**

Commending Those With Type I Diabetes

The Senate commended individuals with Type I diabetes with Senate Resolution 1024, sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford). Type I diabetes is an autoimmune disease that affects nearly three million children and adults. Approximately 500 children are diagnosed annually in Georgia. – **SR 1024**

Recognizing Georgia Public Policy Foundation

Sen. Hunter Hill (R – Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 919 recognizing the Georgia Public Policy Foundation for 25 years of research and education. The Georgia Public Policy Foundation was created in 1991 and conducts scholarly analysis of state public policy issues to educate citizens, policymakers and the media. – **SR 919**

Columbus State University Day

Sen. Ed Harbison (D – Columbus) sponsored Senate Resolution 928 recognizing February 23, 2016, as Columbus State University Day at the Capitol. Columbus State University accepted its largest freshman class this year and now enrolls almost 8,500 students. Sen. Harbison was joined by President Chris Markwood, who asked senators for their continued support of higher education initiatives. – **SR 928**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Establishing Hope Award Amounts

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton) sponsored Senate Bill 312, which awards 100 percent of the tuition costs to qualified students who choose to attend certain lower cost colleges and universities. HOPE may award up to \$2,000 to cover the full cost of tuition per semester up to 15 credit hours for these students. No HOPE award amount can exceed an individual's cost of tuition. The bill passed with a vote of 51 to 4. – **SB 312**

Dedicating Revenue of Excise Tax on Fireworks

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga) introduced Senate Bill 350, which would dedicate tax revenue derived from the sale of fireworks to fire safety, local law enforcement agencies, and trauma care. The bill passed 52 to 2. – **SB 350**



Proposing a Constitutional Amendment to Dedicate Fireworks Tax Revenue

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga) sponsored Senate Resolution 558, the constitutional amendment that enables Senate Bill 350. The resolution proposes that citizens of Georgia vote whether to dedicate the revenue or not. – **SR 558**

Recognizing the South Georgia-North Florida Fire Initiative

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) sponsored Senate Resolution 898 recognizing the South Georgia-North Florida Fire Initiative for winning the 2015 National Pulaski Award. The Initiative is a collection of organizations and private landowners dedicated to wildland fire management activities and wildlife conservation between the two states. – **SR 898**



Commending the Westminster Varsity Football Team

Sen. Hunter Hill (R – Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 867 recognizing the Westminster Schools' Varsity Football Team. The Westminster football team ended their 2015 season with an 11 to 4 record and won the AAA State Championship. – **SR 867**



Recognizing Christian Tetzlaff

The Senate recognized Christian Tetzlaff with Senate Resolution 880, sponsored by Sen. Fran Millar (R – Atlanta). Tetzlaff is the Technical College System of Georgia's Instructor of the Year, and is an instructor for motor-sports vehicle technology at Lanier Technical College. – **SR 880**



Commending Stephanie Jackson

Sen. Fran Miller (R - Atlanta) introduced Senate Resolution 881 to recognize the 2015 Georgia Occupational Award of Leadership (GOAL) award winner, Stephanie Jackson. Jackson was chosen from a pool of 24 TCSG college GOAL nominees and is a paralegal studies student from Georgia Piedmont Technical College. – **SR 881**

Recognizing Links Day and The Links, Inc.

Sponsored by Sen. Emanuel Jones (D – Decatur), Senate Resolution 818 recognizes Links Day at the Capitol. The Links, Inc. is an international nonprofit organization of influential decision makers and achievers who are women of color and have made a difference in their communities. – **SR 818**



Commending Reverend Yvonne Shaw

Sen. Donzella James (D – Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 825 to commend Reverend Yvonne Shaw for over 23 years of service to her local community. Rev. Shaw is currently an evangelist in Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, and also serves as a volunteer chaplain at Howard University.

Recognizing White County

The Senate recognized White County with Senate Resolution 877 sponsored by Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega). Sen. Gooch was joined by the Mayor of Helen Dona Burke who spoke to the many opportunities for outdoor recreation in the county such as access to the Appalachian Trail, Yonah Mountain and the Chattahoochee River. – **SR 877**

Valdosta State University Day

Sen. Ellis Black (R – Valdosta) sponsored Senate Resolution 968 to recognize February 24, 2016, as Valdosta State University Day at the Capitol. Sen. Black was joined by Interim President Dr. Cecil P. Stanton who spoke to the school's high academic and athletic success. Valdosta State University was founded in 1906 and currently enrolls over 9,000 students. – **SR 968**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Property Assessment Tax Ceiling

Sen. Fran Millar (R – Atlanta) sponsored Senate Bill 258. This bill would enact a bar on increasing initial value assessments of property for a taxable year after the initial assessment value during an appeal of such valuation. This bill also allows for the assessment value to be reduced as a result of appeal by the taxpayer. The bill passed with a vote of 51 to 0. – **SB 258**

Specialty License Plate for Georgia Pet Foundation

Sen. David Shafer (R – Duluth) sponsored Senate Bill 365, which creates a specialty license plate for the Georgia Pet Foundation to promote dog and cat sterilization programs. Revenue from the plates will be distributed to the Georgia Pet Foundation. The bill passed with a vote of 46 to 1. – **SB 365**

Provider Directory Improvement Act

Sen. P. K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville) sponsored Senate Bill 302, which would require health insurance carriers to provide and maintain accurate provider directories for network plans. The bill would require directories to contain detailed information on each provider, hospital and non-profit hospital. The directories must also include a description of the criteria the health carrier used to build its provider network and, if applicable, a description of the criteria the health carrier uses to rate their providers. The bill passed with a vote of 52 to 0. – **SB 302**

Parental Rights When Child Conceived by Rape

Senate Bill 311, sponsored by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R – White), passed with a vote of 49 to 0. SB 311 provides rape victims who conceive a child with a process to remove the offender parental rights. In Superior Court, through a presentation of clear and convincing evidence, the offender loses the ability to ever be legitimized as a parent and rights to visitation or guardianship. – **SB 311**

Enacting Recommendations of Georgia Council on Criminal Justice Reform

Sen. John F. Kennedy (R – Macon) sponsored Senate Bill 367, which enacts recommendations of the 2016 Georgia Council on Criminal Justice Reform. The bill provides for changes to procedures used in misdemeanor probation matters, and clarifies statutes under the First Offenders Act. The bill passed with a vote of 53 to 0. – **SB 367**

Removing Permit Sticker from Amusement Machine

Sen. David Lucas (R – Macon) sponsored Senate Bill 388, which would make removing a permit sticker from a coin operated amusement machine, without consent, a misdemeanor offense. The bill passed with a vote of 50 to 0. – **SB 388**

Creating Senate Study Committee on the Legislative Process

Sponsored by Sen. William Ligon (R – Brunswick), Senate Resolution 842 creates the Senate Study Committee on the Legislative Process. The resolution charges the committee with evaluating and determining a transparent

method of reviewing bills, amendments and conference committee reports. The goal of the committee is to promote citizen confidence in the Senate's legislative process. The resolution passed with a vote of 52 to 0. – **SR 842**

Commending Herman Cain

The Senate commended former 2012 presidential candidate and business owner Herman Cain with Senate Resolution 1045, sponsored by Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville). An Atlanta native, Cain graduated from Morehouse College in 1967 and went on to lead a successful business career in the private sector working for companies such as Coca-Cola, Pillsbury, the National Restaurant Association and Godfather's Pizza. Cain also hosts a radio talk show produced in Atlanta. – **SR 1045**



Commending the Georgia Science Teachers Association

Sen. David Lucas (D – Macon) sponsored Senate Resolution 709 commending the Georgia Science Teachers Association (GSTA) and celebrating Science Day at the state Capitol. The GSTA brings together more than 1,200 educators at its annual professional learning conference and publishes a monthly electronic newsletter for Georgia science teachers. – **SR 709**



Recognizing the South Fulton Chamber of Commerce

The Senate recognized the South Fulton Chamber of Commerce for its 69th anniversary with Senate Resolution 882, sponsored by Sen. Donzella James (D – Atlanta). The South Fulton Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1948. – **SR 882**

Lupus Awareness Day

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) sponsored Senate Resolution 907 recognizing February 25, 2016, as Lupus Awareness Day. Lupus is a lifelong autoimmune disease, which causes inflammation and tissue damage to virtually every organ system in the body. It strikes mostly women of childbearing age but can also affect men and children. Lupus affects approximately 55,000 Georgians. – **SR 907**



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Selection of Contracts with Providers of Professional Services

Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega) sponsored Senate Bill 366, which would allow the Georgia Department of Transportation to be able to select and contract based on lowest proposed price. The contractor must meet necessary requirements, but the qualifications-based method would no longer be the only authorized method. The bill passed with a vote of 47 to 3. – **SB 366**

Changes to Annual Performance Evaluations and Student Assessments

Sen. Lindsey Tippins (R – Marietta) sponsored Senate Bill 364 to change how public school teachers and leadership are evaluated. Student growth will now account for 30 percent of the evaluation, down from the original 50 percent. Multiple in-classroom observations are also required during the teacher evaluation process. The bill streamlines testing requirements and addresses end-of-grade assessments. This bill passed with a vote 45 to 0. – **SB 364**

Sanctuary Policies

Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro) sponsored Senate Bill 69. The bill would require every state agency that

vides funding to a county or city government to certify that the local government receiving funds is not operating a sanctuary city for illegal immigrants. The bill passed with a vote of 49 to 2. – **SB 269**

Repealing Population Act

Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell) sponsored Senate Bill 274 to repeal the Georgia Population Act, which passed in 1953. The Georgia Population Act currently requires all counties with a population of 200,000 or more to commence their fiscal year on January 1 of each year and follow a specific budget process. This legislation passed the Senate with a vote of 48 to 0. – **SB 274**

Prohibiting State Contracts with Boycotters of Israel

Senator Judson Hill (R – Marietta) sponsored Senate Bill 327. The bill would prohibit the state from entering into contracts with an individual or company that is conducting a boycott of Israel. The contractor must also agree to not conduct a boycott for the duration of the contract. The bill passed with a vote of 45 to 6. – **SB 327**

Identification for Members of Judiciary

Sen. John F. Kennedy (R – Macon) sponsored Senate Bill 332 to create a photo ID card for judges in Georgia. The program will be overseen by the Administrative Office of the Courts. The bill passed with a vote of 47 to 0. – **SB 332**

Nonprofit Corporation Conversion

Sen. John F. Kennedy (R – Macon) sponsored Senate Bill 333, which would establish a process for nonprofits to efficiently change the location of incorporation. The bill defines how the change from a foreign to domestic corporation, or vice versa, does not mean the nonprofit has dissolved. The bill passed with a vote of 49 to 0. – **SB 333**

State Retirement Fund In State Chartered Banks

Sen. Ellis Black (R – Augusta) sponsored Senate Bill 335. This bill would allow state retirement funds to be invested in state chartered banks. Georgia law currently restricts investment of commingled retirement funds to banks and trusts regulated by the Department of the Treasury. This bill passed with a vote of 45 to 1. – **SB 335**

Property Rights of Religious Organizations

Senate Bill 345, sponsored by Sen. Hunter Hill (R – Atlanta), which would change how property is divided between a religious organization and a religious governing body. SB 345 adopts a standard of religious neutrality or objectivity when determining the property rights of religious organizations if the organization breaks away from its governing religious institution. The bill was passed by a vote of 46 to 0. – **SB 345**

Georgia Captive Insurance Company Act

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton) sponsored Senate Bill 347, also known as the Georgia Captive Insurance Company Act. The Act would modernize existing definitions of the Georgia Insurance Code and create new definitions of captive insurance companies. The bill passed the Senate 46 to 0. – **SB 347**

Regulation of the Sale and Use of Fireworks

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga) sponsored Senate Bill 369, which would create extended use times for



consumer fireworks to be set off on the days of January 1, July 3, July 4 and December 31. The bill would also allow the governor to restrict the use of fireworks in a declared time of drought. Illegally selling fireworks carries a \$2,500 fine. The bill passed 50 to 1. – **SB 369**

Reorganization of DeKalb County Government

Sen. Fran Millar (R – Atlanta) sponsored Senate Bill 378, which would reorganize the DeKalb County government and require voter approval in a November 2016 referendum. The bill would eliminate the CEO position and establish an eight member County Commission, seven of whom would be elected from districts within DeKalb County. The Commission Chair though, would be voted on by the county at-large. The bill also removes the two County Super Districts and splits the county into seven districts. The bill also defines commissioner salaries and roles. The bill passed 36 to 15. – **SB 378**

Sales Tax Exemption for Fire Districts

Senate Bill 379, sponsored by Sen. Frank Ginn (R – Danielsville), would grant government-supported fire departments a sales tax exemption when purchasing goods. Current law gives sales tax exemptions to different federal, state and local government bodies but not to local fire departments. This bill adds these departments to the list exempted from sales taxes. The bill passed with a vote of 46 to 0. – **SB 379**

Prohibiting Privatized Parking Enforcement Contracts

Sen. Vincent Fort (D – Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 809, which would propose a constitutional amendment to restrict city and county governments from contracting third party parking enforcement companies. The bill passed with a vote of 42 to 4. – **SR 809**

Tree Removal for Commercial Visibility

Sen. Frank Ginn (R – Danielsville) sponsored Senate Bill 383, which would permit the removal of roadside vegetation that obstructs the visibility of commercial buildings, signs or structures in a target view zone. The bill requires the local government to establish rules and ordinances for the issuing and renewal of permits to trim or remove trees in accordance with local zoning laws. The bill passed with a vote of 38 to 13. – **SB 383**

**The Georgia State Senate will reconvene at 10:00 a.m. on
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29 for CROSSOVER DAY.**