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This Week in the Senate

February 8 - 12, 2016



Senate Version of FY 2016 Amended Budget Approved

The Senate approved its version of the amended Fiscal Year 2016 State Budget this week. Most significantly, the Amended Budget includes new revenue for transportation projects generated by the Transportation Funding Act of 2015. The budget now goes back to the House, which will either accept our changes or request a conference committee to resolve any outstanding differences.

House Bill 742, the annual “tax update” bill aligning state and federal tax law, was approved by the Senate this week and will now go to Governor Deal for his approval. The legislation brings Georgia’s tax code in line with recent changes to federal law. It also adds a permanent expense deduction that should encourage job creating investment by small business.

The Senate also approved Senate Bill 308, the Positive Alternatives to Abortion Act, which creates a grant making framework to support pregnancy resource centers. Abortion providers lobbied heavily against the bill, which passed 39 to 16 along largely party lines. Under the legislation, sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R - Buford), resource centers promoting healthy pregnancy and childbirth would be eligible for state grants.

The Georgia General Assembly is now halfway through its 40 day session. Only 10 legislative days remain until Crossover Day - the day by which a bill must “cross over” from one house to the other in time for both houses to consider it. Expect the pace to rapidly pick up as we approach this important deadline.

Sen. David J. Shafer

President Pro Tempore, Georgia State Senate

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Stronger Penalties for Pimping or Pandering

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) sponsored Senate Bill 278. SB 278 would impose stricter penalties on those convicted of pimping, pandering or housing a place of prostitution. It would additionally require those who have been convicted of pimping or pandering charges for the second time to be added to the National Sex Offender Registry. The bill passed 53 to 0. – **SB 278**

Creation of a Multi-Bank Pool

Sen. John F. Kennedy (R – Macon) introduced Senate Bill 283, which changes the current method for depositories to secure public funds in a multi-bank pooled method, rather than a single-bank method. The bill passed with a vote of 51 to 3. – **SB 283**

University of West Georgia Football Team Visits

Sen. Mike Dugan (R – Carrollton) sponsored Senate Resolution 810. The resolution honored the University of West Georgia's football team and their record-breaking 2015 season. Sen. Dugan was joined by members of the team and Coach Will Hall, who praised the team for their second appearance at the NCAA Division II Playoffs and for winning a sixth-straight Super Region 2 Championship. Sen. Dugan also recognized both his nephew and son as players on the West Georgia football team. – **SR 810**

Senate Welcomes Congressmen

Congressmen Tom Price (R – GA) and Rick Allen (R – GA) visited the Senate to commend the senators for their hard work and to recognize the role state legislators play in working with the federal government. Rep. Price was a member of the Georgia Senate from 1996 until 2005 when he ran for District 6 of the U.S. House of Representatives. Rep. Allen was elected to represent Georgia's 12th Congressional District in 2012.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9

New Procedure for Garnishment Proceedings

Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro) introduced Senate Bill 255, which restructures current law to modernize, reorganize and provide constitutional protections in garnishment proceedings. The bill also makes the language of the statute more coherent for citizens involved in the garnishment process. The bill passed 50 to 0. – **SB 255**



Updates to Advertisement Law

Sen. Brandon Beach (R – Alpharetta) introduced Senate Bill 307, which clarifies current Georgia law to include the term “multiple media display” in the definition of a commercial advertisement. The bill passed 53 to 0. – **SB 307**



State Tax Filing Deadlines Updated

Sen. Judson Hill (R – Marietta) carried House Bill 742, the annual IRS update bill, in the Senate. The bill updates Georgia's tax code by changing state filing deadlines to match those of federal returns, excluding S-Corporations. The bill passed 51 to 1. – **HB 742**



Mohawk Industries 2015 Business Partner of the Year

Senate Resolution 904, introduced by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton), commends Mohawk Industries as the 2015 Business Partner of the Year. The Senate celebrated the company's relationship with Gordon County College and Career Academy for connecting education and business to produce a skilled workforce. Sen. Bethel was joined by House Rules Chairman John Meadows (R – Calhoun). – **SR 904**

Houston County Career Academy 2015 College and Career Academy of the Year

Sen. Larry Walker (R – Perry) sponsored Senate Resolution 903. This resolution recognized Houston County Career Academy as the 2015 College and Career Academy of the Year. Sen. Walker was joined by Houston Academy Principal Sabrina Phelps. The Academy was recognized as the largest of its kind and the best in the state at Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle's Eighth Annual Business and Education Summit in November 2015. – **SR 903**



Honoring the Life of Dr. Thomas Edwin Seay

To honor the life and legacy of Dr. Thomas Edwin Seay, Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) introduced Senate Resolution 793. After earning his medical degree, Dr. Seay was a founding member and chairman of the Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education. Sen. Unterman was joined by members of Dr. Seay’s family. – **SR 793**

Skin Cancer Awareness Day

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) brought Senate Resolution 840 to the floor. SR 840 recognizes February 9, 2016, as Skin Cancer Awareness Day. Representatives from the Atlanta Dermatological Association, Georgia Association of Dermatologists and the Skin Cancer Awareness Foundation were present at the Capitol advocating for skin cancer awareness. The groups also provided free melanoma screenings throughout the day. – **SR 840**

Enhancing Outdoor Recreation

Sen. Bill Heath (R – Bremen) sponsored Senate Resolution 924. The resolution urges the United States Congress to pass legislation enhancing outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing as well as generally improving conservation efforts nationwide. The resolution also recognized environmental conservation as a bipartisan issue and the need for all legislators to work towards a common goal. – **SR 924**

Recognizing the Cooperation Between Shriners Hospital for Children and Peachcare

Senate Resolution 835, introduced by Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell), acknowledges the Shriners Hospital for Children and the PeachCare for Kids Health Care Program for their dedication to providing care for sick or injured children. Shriners Hospital for Children provides care in the areas of spinal injuries, cleft lip, severe burns and orthopedics. Shriners Hospital also assists PeachCare for Kids in caring for over 200,000 children. – **SR 835**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Fiscal Year 2016 Amended Budget

Sen. Jack Hill (R – Reidsville) carried House Bill 750, the amended Fiscal Year 2016 Budget. The amended budget includes \$1.16 billion in revenue growth over the 2016 base budget; bringing the FY 2016 amended budget to nearly \$23 billion. The Senate directed much of this additional funding to the Department of Transportation for new construction and improved road and highway maintenance. The bill passed with a vote of 49 to 0 and was transmitted to the House immediately. – **HB 750**



Reducing Degree of Relation for Disqualification of Judges, Officers and Jurors

Senate Bill 262, authored by Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro), reduces the degree of blood relation before requiring the disqualification of judges, judicial officers and jurors. The bill reduces the degree of affinity from the sixth degree to the fourth. The bill passed with a vote of 47 to 1. – **SB 262.**



Commending Habersham County

Sen. John Wilkinson (R – Toccoa) sponsored Senate Resolution 814. This resolution was introduced to commend Habersham County for almost 200 years of service to the state and recognizing the county’s “Day at the Capitol.” Sen. Wilkinson was joined by Habersham County Chamber of Commerce Chairman David Foster. – **SR 814**



Recognizing Georgia State University’s Legislative Health Policy Program

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) sponsored Senate Resolution 721. Sen.

Unterman introduced the resolution to recognize Georgia State University's Legislative Health Policy Certificate Program and Advanced Health Policy Institute. Sponsored by the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, the program is a four-part course where legislators are instructed in areas of health policy including financing, coverage and access to care. Over 40 elected state officials have participated in at least one course. Sen. Greg Kirk (R – Americus) and Sen. Elena Parent (D – Atlanta) both earned certificates in the program. – **SR 721**

Honoring Nicholas Terry and Dusty Coker

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga) introduced Senate Resolution 837 to honor Cpl. Nicholas Terry and Patrol Officer Dusty Coker for going above and beyond the call of duty to save a man's life. Coker and Terry discovered a local house on fire and crawled through the fire to discover an unconscious man in his kitchen. Both officers assisted in pulling the victim from his home. – **SR 837**

Recognizing the Georgia Young Farmers Association

The Senate recognized February 10, 2016 as Young Farmers Day and commended the Georgia Young Farmers Association with Senate Resolution 822. The resolution was sponsored by Sen. John Wilkinson (R – Toccoa). Sen. Wilkinson was joined by Georgia Young Farmers Association President Derrick Wooten who thanked the Senate for their support of Georgia's future agricultural leaders. Sen. Wilkinson was also joined by former Georgia Young Farmers Association President Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla). – **SR 822**

Cordele-Crisp County Fish Fry

Sen. Greg Kirk (R – Americus) introduced Senate Resolution 923 recognizing this year's Cordele-Crisp County Fish Fry on February 10, 2016, and commending the fish fry team for their hard work. The Cordele-Crisp County Fish Fry is an annual event sponsored by the members of the City of Cordele and Crisp County. Urban and rural legislators got a taste of South Georgia with the fried catfish and hush puppies served at this delicious event. – **SR 923**

Acknowledging the Emory Scholars Program

The Senate recognized the Emory Scholars Program with Senate Resolution 918 sponsored by Sen. Elena Parent (D – Atlanta). The Emory Scholars Program was created in 1979 and has assisted over 180 scholars from 29 different states and 13 countries in attending Emory University. Two recipients of the scholarship spoke before the Senate and thanked them for their support of Georgia's future community leaders. – **SR 918**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Positive Alternatives for Pregnancy and Parenting Grant Program

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) introduced Senate Bill 308, which creates the Positive Alternatives for Pregnancy and Parenting Grant Program. Under the direction of the Department of Public Health, the program will award grants to nonprofit organizations providing pregnancy and parenting support services. The bill passed 39 to 16. – **SB 308**



Augusta State University

Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro) sponsored Senate Resolution 720. SR 720 recognized February 11, 2016, as Augusta University Day. Augusta University has 8,500 students currently enrolled and is the state's only public academic medical center and dental college. Sen. Stone was joined by Augusta University President Brooks Keel. – **SR 720**



Honoring Dr. Louise T. Ellison

The Senate honored Dr. Lois T. Ellison and acknowledged her 50 plus years of service to the Medical College of Georgia with Senate Resolution 927, sponsored by Sen. Ben Watson (R – Savannah). Dr. Ellison, 93, graduated from the

Medical College of Georgia in 1950. Dr. Ellison served as Provost of the College from 1974 to 1984, and is currently the college's medical historian in residence as well as Provost Emeritus and Principal of Medicine Emeritus. – **SR 927**

Recognizing Family and Consumer Science

Sen. Josh McKoon (R – Columbus) presented Senate Resolution 811. SR 811 recognized the importance of Family and Consumer Science and the skills it provides to make informed decisions about personal well-being, relationships and resources in order to achieve an optimal quality of life. Sen. McKoon noted the importance of Family and Consumer Science classes in the educational system. – **SR 811**



Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Awareness Day

The Senate recognized Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Awareness Day on February 11, 2016, with Senate Resolution 176. The resolution was sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford), who encouraged senators to continue advocating for the upcoming constitutional amendment “Safe Harbor Yes.” The constitutional amendment will create a dedicated funding source to provide safe houses and rehabilitation services for minor victims of sex trafficking. – **SR 176**



**The Georgia State Senate will reconvene at 10:00 a.m. on
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16.**