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# This Week in the Senate

## March 21 - 25, 2016



### The Senate Has Adjourned

A half-hour after midnight, early on Friday morning, we closed the books on the 2016 Legislative Session. There were 85 bills on the calendar for Days 39 and 40, and with all the special orders amending bills between the two chambers, we are still sorting through what passed and was lost. The Governor will have until May 3 to sign or veto the bills that passed both the Senate and House.

When I was a freshman member of the minority party, I always thought that, given the chance, my party would put an end to the last minute chaos that dominates each and every session of the General Assembly. Frankly, I am disappointed we have not done better in improving the process.

This is not to say this Session has been without significant accomplishment. We passed a balanced budget that directs more funding to road and bridge construction. We passed important economic development legislation that should stimulate job growth and keep Georgia the number one place to do business.

I want to say a special word of thanks to the hardworking members of the Senate staff. To the administrative assistants, aides, interns, the crew in the Secretary of Senate's office and the hard working professionals who staff our Budget, Research and Press Offices, THANK YOU. You have made our jobs as legislators easier and contributed to better quality decisions.

**Sen. David J. Shafer**

*President Pro Tempore, Georgia State Senate*

## TUESDAY, MARCH 22

### Expanding Education Loan Availability to National Guardsmen

House Bill 1072, carried by Sen. Hunter Hill (R – Atlanta), would allow active duty members of the Georgia National Guard who currently receive HOPE Scholarship funding the ability to also receive service cancelable educational loans. Current law prohibits members of the National Guard from receiving service cancelable loans. The bill passed 52 to 0. – **HB 1072**

### Real Estate Broker Requirements

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga) carried House Bill 869. The bill requires real estate brokers to establish procedures for reviewing all listing contracts produced by the firm's associates, and also adds accepted offers to buy, sell, lease or exchange property to the list of contracts needing review. The legislation would also require brokers to provide closing statements in a timely manner and keep copies of closing

statements for at least three years after the transaction. The bill passed by a vote of 51 to 0. – **HB 869**

### **Income Tax Credit for Job Creation**

House Bill 922, carried by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R – White), would create an income tax credit for any taxpayer who creates 50 “new quality jobs.” Qualifying jobs would need to allow for a 30-hour work week and pay at least 110 percent of the county’s average wage. The bill also permits a taxpayer to receive an income tax credit for working a job at a disregarded entity (such as an LLC or a partnership), which the taxpayer owns or in which they act as a partner. The bill passed 53 to 0. – **HB 922**



### **Insurance Discount For Work Based Learning**

Carried by Sen. Burt Jones (R – Jackson), House Bill 402 would give an employer, who is actively providing work based learning opportunities for students under 16, a five percent discount on their workers’ compensation policy. Employers must re-certify as providers every year and comply with State Board of Education regulations for work based learning. The bill passed 49 to 0. – **HB 402**



### **Licensing and Driving Privileges for Individuals Arrested for DUI**

Sen. Bill Cowsert (R – Athens) carried House Bill 205. The bill would prohibit a police officer from withdrawing official DUI incident reports submitted to the Department of Driver Services (DDS). Police officers would also be prohibited from taking any action that is normally at the discretion of the prosecutor or entering into a joint agreement on the behalf of DDS. The bill passed 38 to 14. – **HB 205**



### **Tax Exemption of Property Awarded for “Year’s Support”**

Current Georgia law requires that in the case of the death of a spouse, a widow or widower could apply for a “year’s support” in the form of the deceased’s property which is tax exempt. House Bill 547, carried by Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro), would amend current law to specify that only the homestead would be exempt from property taxes and not all property. The bill passed 48 to 0. – **HB 547**



### **Pilot Program Merging Federal, State and Local Funds**

Sen. JaNice VanNess (R – Conyers) carried House Bill 659. The bill would allow the Department of Education to begin a pilot program to allow local school systems the ability to merge federal, state and local funds to support school-wide programs. The bill would also permit the Department of Education to allow local participating school systems to waive current financial reporting requirements. Under this bill, Georgia schools and school systems would be required to make financial information available to the public. The bill passed 50 to 4. – **HB 659**



### **Comprehensive Education Reform**

Sen. Lindsey Tippins (R – Marietta) carried House Bill 959, which would update what constitutes a conflict of interest or ethics violation for local school board members when discussing non-confidential matters. The bill

also exempts students enrolled in dual-college credit courses or Advanced Placement courses from being required to take an End of Course Test in the same subject matter. The bill also contains provisions detailing how College and Career Academies may be founded, as well as provisions authorizing how high school diplomas are awarded to students earning credit through a Technical College. The bill passed 53 to 0. – **HB 959**

### **Use of Electroshock Weapons**

Sen. Josh McKoon (R – Columbus) carried House Bill 792. This bill would allow anyone over the age of 18 who is enrolled in a public college or university to carry an electroshock weapon in any building or property owned by the school. The bill states that any use of the weapon must be in self-defense. The bill passed 43 to 12. – **HB 792**

### **Clarifying Regulations of Gun Possession, Licensing and Immunity**

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) carried House Bill 1060. This bill would clarify regulations relating to gun possession, licensing and immunity. The bill clarifies definitions of gun possession in places of worship, school safety zones and law enforcement. It would also allow Georgia to recognize an out-of-state carry license for 90 days and restrict financial discrimination against firearm dealers. The bill also streamlines the appeals process for someone denied a Weapons Carry License. The bill passed 37 to 18. – **HB 1060**

### **Grand Jury Policies for Investigating Deadly Force by a Police Officer**

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton) carried House Bill 941, which would change the method by which a grand jury investigates the use of deadly force by a police officer. The bill revises the time frame regarding notification of the evidence hearing, mandates the presence of a court reporter during the full hearing and requires the grand jury to issue a public report regardless of whether or not an indictment is requested. HB 941 also provides requirements for indictment for criminal offenses that occurred while on-duty and changes provisions for indictment related to unprofessional conduct. The bill passed 51 to 3. – **HB 941**

### **Increased Penalties for Criminal Gang Activity**

Sen. Judson Hill (R – Marietta) carried House Bill 874 in the Senate. HB 874 updates Georgia Law to increase penalties for gang-related terroristic threats, terroristic acts or criminal behavior. The legislation also clarifies evidence protocols and penalties for criminal gang activity, including acts committed with the intention of retaliation or intimidation. The bill passed by a vote of 38 to 15. – **HB 874**

### **Tax Credits for Donated Land**

Sen. Tommie Williams (R – Lyons) carried House Bill 1014. This bill would extend the application period for an income tax exemption on real property donated for the use of conservation from December 31, 2016, to December 31, 2021. This bill also requires a program activity report containing information such as total acreage of donated land, the value of qualified donations and the total number of tax credits granted. The bill passed 53 to 0. – **HB 1014**

### **Watercraft Ad Valorem Tax Exemptions**

Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville) carried House Bill 769. This bill would extend ad valorem tax exemptions for dealer-owned watercraft and all-terrain vehicles. Current law limits these exemptions to January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2019. The legislation removes the sunset date and creates a permanent exemption for watercraft and all-terrain vehicles held in dealer inventory. The bill passed 36 to 17. – **HB 769**

### **Sales Tax Exemption for Food Sold to Charity**

Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville) carried House Bill 763. This bill would extend the sales tax exemption for selling food or food ingredients to qualified food banks and related nonprofits until June 30, 2021. Food banks or nonprofits seeking this tax exemption must report to the Department of Revenue the number of individuals served, amount of donated food and the total sales tax exemption amount for each year. The Department of Revenue will report this information each year to the respective chairs of the House Ways and Means Committee

and the Senate Finance Committee. This bill passed by a vote of 53 to 0.  
– **HB 763**

### **Regulations on the Use of Financial Transaction Cards**

House Bill 949, carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton), would add locally elected officials and tax commissioners to a list of those who could be charged for the illegal use of financial transaction cards. The bill also adds these positions to the list of state constitutional officers and places the same use limitations as elected officials on government purchasing cards. The bill would also require constitutional officers to create specific policies in order to use government purchasing cards . HB 949 passed by a vote of 47 to 0.  
– **HB 949**

### **Contract Indemnification Clauses**

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton) carried House Bill 943, which would prohibit blanket indemnification clauses for engineering, architectural or land surveying services to ensure the small business owner is protected from being forced to sign an unconscionable contract. The legislation also ensures injured parties have access to all potentially responsible parties. HB 943 passed by a vote of 52 to 0. – **HB 943**

### **Pharmaceutical Wholesale, Manufacturing and Distribution**

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton) carried House Bill 926, which would require third party logistics providers to register with the Georgia State Board of Pharmacy. The legislation also limits the compounding of nonpatient specific sterile drugs to outsourcing facilities, provides a licensure exception for out-of-state firms and third-party logistics providers in certain situations, clarifies definitions and allows the issue of temporary licenses in emergency situations. The bill passed 53 to 0. – **HB 926**

### **The Georgia Seed Development Commission**

Sen. Ellis Black (R – Valdosta) carried House Bill 1030. This bill would change the composition of the Commission by requiring appointees to be either licensed professionals or otherwise involved in the production, conditioning or marketing of agricultural products within the state. The bill passed with a vote of 53 to 2. – **HB 1030**

### **Establishing the Judicial Qualifications Commission**

Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge) carried House Bill 808, which passed by a vote of 37 to 18. This bill would establish a new Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC) and provides for its membership and duties including the power to discipline, remove and cause involuntary retirement of judges. HB 808 provides that all papers and proceedings of the JQC remain confidential until an issuance of public reprimand, censure, suspension, retirement or removal by the Supreme Court. – **HB 808**

### **Judicial Qualifications Commission Resolution**

Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge) carried House Resolution 1113. This resolution proposes an amendment to the Georgia Constitution abolishing the current Judicial Qualifications Commission and grants the General As-



sembly the authority to create and provide for a new Judicial Qualifications Commission by general law. HR 1113 passed by a vote of 38 to 18. – **HR 1113**

### **Incorporation of the City of South Fulton**

Sen. Donzella James (D – Atlanta) carried House Bill 514. This bill would propose and outline the incorporation of the City of South Fulton. This legislation establishes the city’s government structure and corporate limits. The bill must first be approved by local voters in a November referendum before a two-year transition period is carried out for the transition of various government functions from Fulton County to the City of South Fulton. The bill passed 48 to 10. – **HB 514**

### **Appellate Jurisdiction Reform Act of 2016**

House Bill 927 would increase the size of the Georgia Supreme Court from seven members to nine. This bill would also transfer appellate jurisdiction over some cases, like those involving wills, divorce and land titles, from the Supreme Court to the Court of Appeals. It allows for both courts to appoint law school graduates who have not yet passed the bar exam as Law Assistants. The bill was carried by Sen. Bill Cowser (R – Athens) and passed 36 to 18. – **HB 927**

### **The USG and TCSG “Carry Forward” Bill**

House Bill 745, also known as the “Carry Forward” bill, would extend the University System of Georgia’s (USG) and the Technical College System of Georgia’s (TCSG) ability to write off small amounts due to the state, as well as carry forward certain fees and revenue, through July 1, 2021. The bill passed by a vote of 50 to 0 and was carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton). – **HB 745**

### **Taxation of Energy Used for Agriculture**

Sen. Bill Heath (R – Bremen) carried House Bill 822. The bill would revise the current Georgia Code section referring to the taxation of “energy used in agriculture.” HB 822 changes the definition of “energy used in agriculture” to refer to all taxes, not just state taxes. The bill passed 50 to 0. – **HB 822**

### **Georgia Seal of Biliteracy**

House Bill 879, carried by Sen. JaNice VanNess (R - Conyers), passed 50 to 0. This bill would create the Georgia Seal of Biliteracy for the high school diplomas of students who demonstrate proficiency in a language in addition to English. Students can qualify based on their GPA or performance on AP/IB testing in the foreign language. – **HB 879**

### **Revising Eligibility Requirements for Zell Miller and HOPE Scholarships**

House Bill 798, carried by Sen. Marty Harbin (R – Tyrone), would update HOPE Scholarship and Zell Miller Scholarship eligibility. The bill allows students who did not graduate from an eligible high school or home study program to receive the scholarships by meeting minimum standardized testing scores and other academic requirements. The bill passed by a vote of 52 to 9. – **HB 798**

### **Waiver of Sovereign Immunity**

House Bill 59 was carried by Sen. Josh McKoon (R – Columbus) and passed 53 to 0. The bill would allow a defense of sovereign immunity to be waived when a party is seeking a declaratory judgment, injunctive relief or conventional quiet title against the state or any of its political subdivisions in a Georgia court. – **HB 59**

### **Prohibiting Penalization of Insurance Agents for Information Disclosure**

Carried by Sen. Marty Harbin (R – Tyrone), House Bill 193 would prohibit insurance companies from penalizing insurance agents for informing policyholders of alternatives to the surrender of a life insurance policy. The bill passed 52 to 0. – **HB 193**

### **Police Video Retention Practices**

House Bill 976, carried by Sen. P.K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville), passed 48 to 7. The bill would establish how long police video from a body or vehicle cameras will be retained and how the public can gain access to video files. Videos showing an arrest, vehicle accident, use of force or are part of a criminal investigation will be retained for 30 months. All other media must be kept on file for 180 days. The bill also creates a \$12 fee for the copying of requested law enforcement video. – **HB 976**



### **Adopted Child and Biological Parent Records**

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) carried House Bill 1070. A two-part bill, the first part of this bill would permit the agencies under the Department of Human Services (DHS) to utilize department records for decision making and administrative purposes. According to the bill the DHS must give special permission before information can be shared. The second part of the bill contains language from the Supporting and Strengthening Families Act. The bill passed 52 to 1. – **HB 1070**



### **Increasing Outstanding Bond Limits**

House Bill 773, carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton), would increase the outstanding bond limit for the Georgia Housing and Finance Authority (GHFA). Currently, GHFA is prohibited from having more than \$1.3 billion in bonds and notes for its single-family residential housing program. HB 773 increases that amount up to \$3 billion; however, bonds and notes issued to refund outstanding bonds and notes are not included in this total. The bill passed by a vote of 44 to 9. – **HB 773**



### **Drug Repository Program**

Sen. Ben Watson (R – Savannah) carried House Bill 897, which creates a drug repository program through the Georgia Department of Health. The bill allows donated over-the-counter prescriptions to be accepted and dispensed to someone who qualifies under the definition of an “eligible patient.” It also repeals the previous “Utilization of Unused Prescription Drugs Act.” The bill passed by a vote of 55 to 0. – **HB 897**



### **Vaccine Protocol Agreement for Hospitals and Health Systems**

House Bill 1043, carried by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome), requires a pharmacist or nurse to take an appropriate case history, as opposed to a complete case history, before administering the influenza vaccine. This includes determining whether the patient has had a physical exam within the past year. It also creates an exemption allowing hospitals and health systems to administer the flu vaccine. The bill passed with a vote of 55 to 0. – **HB 1043**



### **Expanding Conservation Use Properties**

Owners of agricultural or environmentally sensitive land currently qualify for lower rated property value assessments if the land is utilized as farmland and not for commercial purposes. House Bill 987, carried by Sen. Bill Heath (R – Bremen), would create new rules to allow for the transfer of such land to relatives of the current owner as well as new rules for how the land may

be utilized with not-for-profit events where no profit is earned. The bill passed with a vote of 33 to 21. – **HB 987**

### **Conference Committee Reports**

The Senate approved the following conference committee reports:

HB 751

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## **THURSDAY, MARCH 24**

### **Health Plan Tax Exemption**

Sen. Larry Walker (R – Perry) carried House Bill 866. The bill would exempt those covered under multiple employer self-insured health plans from paying premium taxes. The bill passed the Senate with a vote of 49 to 3. – **HB 866**

### **Defining Low THC Oil**

Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome) carried House Bill 783. This bill would revise the definition of low THC oil as an oil that contains cannabinoids with no more than five percent weight of normal cannabinoid psychoactive substances. The bill would also clarify which drugs are considered Schedule I and Schedule IV, and adds others to the list of dangerous drugs deemed to have no medical use. The bill passed 52 to 1. – **HB 783**

### **Transferring Ownership of Special Deposits**

Sen. P.K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville) carried House Bill 883, which would allow the Insurance Commissioner to transfer ownership of all special deposits within their control to an in-state liquidator. The bill provides that the Commissioner may require the liquidator to sign a contract defining how deposits will be handled. The bill would also repeal reciprocity provisions to treat all out of state insurers the same as ones operating in Georgia. HB 883 passed the Senate with a vote of 51 to 1. – **HB 883**

### **Retaining Prescription Information for Law Enforcement**

Sen. Fran Millar (R – Atlanta) carried House Bill 900. This bill would allow the Georgia Drug and Narcotics Agency to retain prescription information on Schedule II, III, IV and V controlled substances for two years, an increase from the current one year. The bill would also allow the agency to distribute the information to both law enforcement to issue search warrants and pharmacists to determine misuse and abuse of prescription medicine. HB 900 passed 51 to 0. – **HB 900**

### **Regulating Motorcycle Handlebars**

Current law states that motorcycle handlebars must not exceed 15 inches above the driver's seat. House Bill 166, carried by Sen. Greg Kirk (R – Americus), extends that requirement to 25 inches. The bill passed 45 to 4. – **HB 166**

### **Implementing Community Services for Elderly**

Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge) carried House Bill 1085, which would give the Department of Community Health (DCH) responsibility for implementing community-based services for the elderly. The bill requires the DCH to establish a community care unit and prepare an annual community care service plan for the State Plan for Medical Assistance. The bill passed by a vote of 51 to 0. – **HB 1085**

### **Retirement Benefits for Previous Service of Law Enforcement Officers**

House Bill 605, carried by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome), would allow members of the Georgia Judicial Retirement System to, upon retirement, utilize prior part-time service to vest retirement benefits. The bill also adjusts how prior part time service is calculated for Georgia Judicial Retirement System members. The bill passed 45 to 5. – **HB 605**

### **Extending Driver's License Expiration Dates**

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) carried House Bill 806. Current Georgia Law requires driver's license owners to

renew their license every five years. The bill would extend the expiration date for all driver's licenses and identification cards to eight years from the issuing date on the owner's birthday. This measure also requires that any conviction report received by the Department of Driver Services in a specific time frame will be listed on that person's driving record. The bill passed 47 to 2. – **HB 806**

### **Unemployment Compensation and Trust Fund Data Sharing**

House Bill 904, carried by Sen. P.K. Martin (R - Lawrenceville), delays planned unemployment compensation tax rate increase by phasing it in and extending sunset dates related to variations from the standard rate of employment security contributions and administrative assessments. The bill also authorizes the Georgia Department of Labor to share specific data with the Department of Revenue to help prevent fraud and misuse of the Unemployment Trust Fund. The bill passed 55 to 0. – **HB 904**

### **Revenue Commissioner Tax Digest Authority**

Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville) carried House Bill 364. This bill would provide the Revenue Commissioner with the authority to strike items found on a county tax digest which are found to be illegal. If previously stricken illegal property reappears on the tax digest in following years, the revenue commissioner will revoke qualified local government status of the county for three years. The bill also protects taxpayers by issuing refunds in the event property was listed on the digest and taxed erroneously. The bill passed 48 to 0. – **HB 364**

### **Workers Compensation Benefits for Firefighters Diagnosed with Cancer**

Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell) carried House Bill 216, which would allow firefighters diagnosed with cancer caused by their work as a firefighter, to be eligible for workers' compensation benefits. The bill also explains that occupational diseases cannot only be caused by exposure to a disease, but associated risk factors as well. The bill passed 49 to 0. – **HB 216**

### **Administration of Anesthesia by Certified Registered Nurses**

House Bill 212, carried by Sen. Greg Kirk (R – Americus), would allow pain management clinics and certified registered nurse anesthetists at these clinics, with a physician's order, to administer anesthesia. This bill is intended to clarify who can administer anesthesia or such services at pain management clinics. The bill passed 42 to 8. – **HB 212**

### **Expanding Georgia REAP Program**

Sen. Hunter Hill (R – Atlanta) carried House Bill 937. This bill would expand the Georgia Regional Economic Assistance Program, which helps support economically underdeveloped counties throughout the state, by allowing for a sales tax refund for new tourism attractions, or a sales tax refund on sales created by the economic project. The bill states that the Department of Community Affairs will contract with the project owners to determine the tax refund and the time frame for such a refund. The bill passed by a vote of 42 to 8. – **HB 937**



### **Refunding Wrongfully Collected Taxes**

Sen. David Shafer (R - Duluth) carried House Bill 960, which would create new policies for refunding taxes to allow for increased refunds and improve confidentiality. HB 960 changes the amount of interest accrued on wrongfully collected and past due tax amounts, and also directs Tax Tribunals to determine faults for delay on any wrongful collections appeals that are pending for more than two years. The bill passed with a vote of 54 to 0. – **HB 960**

### **Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for Fulfillment Centers**

House Bill 935, carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonga), would expand ad valorem tax exemptions to goods held by businesses that package, ship, store or process goods sold via phone or internet. The bill prohibits goods from being sold on fulfillment center property. Local and county governments must hold a referendum in order for the tax exemption to be enacted. The bill passed 53 to 1. – **HB 935**

### **State Licensing Boards and Military Spouses**

Sen. Ed Harbison (D – Columbus) carried House Bill 821. This bill would require state licensing boards to adopt new rules for distributing temporary licenses to military spouses or transitioning service members. This bill will allow family members of servicemen and women to retain their licenses while living in the state. The bill would specify a deadline of July 1, 2017 to adopt such rules. The bill passed 53 to 0. – **HB 821**

### **Comprehensive Child Abuse Reform**

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton) carried House Bill 905, which would enact new child abuse reforms. This includes the creation of Child Advocacy Centers to work with community and law enforcement to protect children, a fine for operating a Child Welfare Agency without a license and immunity for any individual who, in good faith, possesses illegal materials or images with the intent of reporting child abuse and related evidence within 72 hours of contact. HB 905 passed with a vote of 45 to 0. – **HB 905**

### **Repealing Population Requirements for County Boards of Health and Wellness**

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) carried House Bill 885, a clean-up bill intended to clarify Georgia code. This bill would repeal the option for counties with a population of 800,000 or more to create county boards of health and wellness by an ordinance. Under current Georgia law, all counties are already required to establish a county board of health. The bill passed 35 to 15. – **HB 885**

### **Annual Workers' Compensation Omnibus Bill**

House Bill 818, carried by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R - Dalton), is an annual omnibus bill that updates workers' compensation regulations. The bill clarifies an employer's responsibility to provide sufficient information to the State Board of Workers' Compensation, increases maximum weekly benefits for the fully and partially disabled and also increases maximum death benefits. HB 818 also expands the definition of insolvent insurer and requires the Self-insurers Guaranty Trust Fund to only invest in obligations granted by the U.S. Government. The bill passed by vote of 49 to 1. – **HB 818**

### **Tax Exemptions for 529 College Savings Plan Contributions**

Sen. Judson Hill (R – Marietta) carried House Bill 802, which would raise the amount married joint filers can deduct for contributions to a 529 college savings plan. This bill would raise the limit from \$2,000 per beneficiary to \$4,000. The bill passed the Senate 46 to 0. – **HB 802**

### **Rules and Regulations for Rapid Flash Crosswalks**

House Bill 764, carried by Sen. Frank Ginn (R – Danielsville), would make it illegal to activate a rapid flash crosswalk signal if there is no intent to cross the roadway. The bill would also require drivers to stop for bicycle riders in the same manner that's required for pedestrians. The bill failed with a vote count of 28 to 15. – **HB 764**

### **Redeeming Property Sold at a Tax Sale**

Sen. William Ligon (R – Brunswick) carried House Bill 51. Under current law, owners of property sold at a tax sale may redeem, or buy back, their property from the sale by paying the redemption price, including taxes, premiums and other assessments. This bill provides for reimbursement of any additional costs, including rent or dues, that were incurred by tax-sale purchaser while the original owner attempts to redeem their property. The bill passed 52 to 1. – *HB 51*



### **Creditable Service for Law Enforcement Officers**

House Bill 690, carried by Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) would allow law enforcement officers to earn five years of creditable service towards their retirement for prior full-time work as an employee of a local governing authority. To be eligible, one must have been a member of the Employees' Retirement System for at least 10 years, held a position that has the power to enforce laws and make arrests and must have had duties which include preservation of public order, protection of life and property or the prevention, detection and investigation of crime. The bill passes 51 to 0. – *HB 690*



### **Redefining Banks and Banking as Financial Institutions**

House Bill 759, carried by Sen. P.K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville), changes the definition of banks and banking to also include “financial institutions” or “financial services.” This expansion is intended to allow institutions, with federally insured deposits, to give financial advice to its customers. The bill passed 43 to 0. – *HB 759*



### **Coverdell - Murphy Act**

Sen. Fran Millar (R – Atlanta) carried House Bill 853, otherwise known as the Coverdell-Murphy Act. This act would promote the establishment of remote treatment stroke centers to serve rural and underserved patients throughout the state, as well as establish comprehensive stroke centers to treat complex stroke patients. Under the bill, the Department of Public Health would also be authorized to establish one or more additional levels of stroke centers in Georgia and would be required to enforce certification of stroke centers throughout the state. The bill passed 54 to 0. – *HB 853*



### **Pharmacy Audit Bill of Rights**

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton) carried House Bill 916, also known as the Pharmacy Audit Bill of Rights. This bill would prevent the Department of Community Health (DCH) from recouping full payment for medical assistance if there is a simple clerical or record keeping error in a provider's reimbursement documentation. DCH would still be allowed to recoup payments overpaid to the provider. The bill also states that no state agency can create rules requiring full compensation for any clerical or record keeping errors. The bill passed the Senate with a vote of 52 to 1. – *HB 916*



### **Uniform Adult Guardianship and Conservatorship Proceedings Jurisdiction Act**

Sen. Charlie Bethel (R – Dalton) carried House Bill 954. Otherwise known as the “Uniform Adult Guardianship and Conservatorship Proceedings Ju-

isdiction Act,” this bill would allow Georgia courts to compel or lobby out-of-state courts to help facilitate transfers of guardianship or conservatorship in child custody cases. This bill would also allow Georgia courts to communicate, maintain records and respond to requests for assistance. The bill passed 50 to 0. – **HB 954**

### **Changes to GATE Card Policies**

Sen. Bill Heath (R – Bremen) carried House Bill 911. This bill would change current law to require agricultural producers produce \$5,000 in annual agricultural goods or services to qualify for a sales tax exemptions on agricultural production inputs, energy or machinery and equipment, also known as a GATE card. The bill also adds livestock to the list of agricultural products that qualify for an exemption and increases the lifespan of GATE cards from one year to three. The bill passed 48 to 6. – **HB 911**

### **New Recordation Standards for Real Estate Developers and Salesperson**

Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro) carried House Bill 1004. This bill would require real estate developers and salesmen to adopt new standards for the recordation of maps, plats and plans for real estate and personal property transactions. This bill is intended to modernize mapping and coordination standards and reflect technological advancements in GPS mapping. The bill passed 51 to 0. – **HB 1004**

### **Serving Citations for Violations of Property Condition Ordinances**

Sen. Fran Millar (R – Atlanta) carried House Bill 1025. This bill creates new policies for serving citations for the violation of property condition ordinances. The bill states that a citation or accusation of a violation must follow a three-step process including posting a copy of the citation on the property’s front door, mailing an accusation to the owner and filing the citation with the magistrate court. Current law requires citations to be issued personally to the owner of the property. The bill passed by a vote of 47 to 0. – **HB 1025**

### **Dedication of Roadway Intersections and Interchanges**

House Resolution 1052, carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega), would dedicate numerous bridges, roads, highways, intersections and interchanges throughout the state of Georgia. Nearly 40 different roads and bridges were dedicated within this resolution, which passed by a vote of 49 to 2. – **HR 1052**

### **Charter School Financial Management Certification Program**

Sen. Elena Parent (D – Atlanta) carried House Bill 895, which would direct the state Board of Education to establish a financial management certification program for charter school administration and fiscally or budget involved employees. Current law requires charter school leaders to attend annual training on school best practices and governance. This bill would also prohibit a charter school principal from also serving as the charter school's chief financial officer simultaneously. The bill passed 44 to 1. – **HB 895**

### **Special Education Video Monitoring Device Policies**

House Bill 614, carried by Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro), authorizes the Department of Education to create new policies for video monitoring devices placed in special education classrooms and to accept applications from local school systems for such use. The bill provides four guidelines that must be met at all schools before cameras can be used, including prior notice of monitoring to students’ parents or guardians and procedures to protect the confidentiality of student records. The bill also states that local school systems may request and accept gifts, grants and donations for such video devices. The bill passed 46 to 1. – **HB 614**

### **Reallocating Hotel and Motel Tax Revenue**

Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell) carried House Bill 408. This bill would reallocate revenue collected from the 1991 hotel and motel tax from bonds for the current Georgia Dome to tourism project development. The bill also specifies that Sandy Springs and Johns Creek will not participate in funding construction of the new National Football League stadium. This bill passed by a vote of 38 to 10. – **HB 408**

### **Repealing Requirements for Foreign and Alien Insurers**

Sen. Judson Hill (R – Marietta) carried House Bill 882 to repeal certain deposit requirements for foreign and alien insurers. The bill would authorize the use of direct physician service agreements in Georgia and also create a legal framework for their use. The bill passed 46 to 4. - **HB 882**

### **Tax Credits for Creating Jobs in Rural Areas**

Sen. Hunter Hill (R – Atlanta) carried House Bill 936. The bill ensures that available job creation tax credits in rural areas are measured against the average wage for each new job that is created and not an aggregate of the new jobs created. The bill passed 52 to 0. - **HB 936**

### **House Amendments to Senate Bills**

The Senate agreed to House amendments on the following bills/resolutions:

SB 18	SB 275	SB 350	SB 423	HB 779
SB 128	SB 302	SB 364	SR 863	HB 808
SB 158	SB 304	SB 367	SR 892	HB 811
SB 168	SB 307	SB 369	SR 954	HB 851
SB 184	SB 308	SB 377	SR 955	HB 879
SB 191	SB 316	SB 379	SR 1027	HB 887
SB 193	SB 319	SB 383	SR 1038	HB 910
SB 206	SB 320	SB 385	HB 59	HB 936
SB 208	SB 327	SB 388	HB 100	HB 937
SB 225	SB 331	SB 402	HB 229	HB 960
SB 255	SB 332	SB 416	HB 362	HB 962
SB 262	SB 346	SB 417	HB 555	
SB 270	SB 347	SB 420	HB 659	

### **Conference Committee Reports**

The Senate approved the following conference committee reports:

SB 64	HB 910
SB 199	HB 904
SB 258	HB 936
HB 205	HB 937
HB 727	HB 960
HB 887	HB 962

**The Georgia State Senate has **ADJOURNED SINE DIE!****