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This Week in the Senate

March 7 - 11, 2016



Finalizing the FY 2017 Budget

The Senate fulfilled its constitutional obligation this week by passing the Fiscal Year 2017 General Budget. The \$23.7 billion budget was built on approximately 4.3 percent revenue growth over the amended revenue estimate for Fiscal Year 2016. The increased revenue is an encouraging sign of a recovering economy but no excuse for relaxing the fiscal vigilance we displayed during the recent recession. I appreciate the tremendous work of our Senate Appropriations Chairman Jack Hill and the very capable staff of the Senate Budget and Evaluation Office.

Senate committees were quite busy this week, with some agendas listing 10 or more bills. The last day of the 2016 Legislative Session is just under two weeks away. The last day for House bills to move out of committee and be eligible for a Senate floor vote is Wednesday, March 16.

As a point of personal privilege, I was proud this week to recognize three outstanding Georgia high school students. Jason Park, a student at Northview High School in Duluth, won first prize in my annual scholarship essay contest. TK Nguyen of Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science and Technology in Lawrenceville and Lindsey Sauls of Pierce County High School in Blackshear placed second and third, respectively. These students all wrote wonderful essays about an inspiring person in America's history and received college scholarships from privately raised funds. I wish them each the very best.

Sen. David J. Shafer

President Pro Tempore, Georgia State Senate

MONDAY, MARCH 7

Operation of Watercraft while Under the Influence

Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega) carried House Bill 172. The bill would alter the current definition of a watercraft “vessel” to allow alcohol to be consumed on a homemade or inflatable raft. The bill passed with a vote of 49 to 1. – **HB 172**

Grace Period for Campaign Contribution and Financial Disclosure Reports

Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge) carried House Bill 370 to establish a grace period for certain elected officials to re-file campaign contribution reports and financial statements to the Transparency and Finance Commission. The bill passed with a vote of 47 to 6. – **HB 370**

Honoring Detective Robert Shane Wilson

The Senate honored the life and memory of Detective Robert Shane Wilson with Senate Resolution 938. Detective Wilson served the Doraville Police Department

for four years before his untimely death at the hands of a drunk driver while responding to an emergency. Jim Hanson, a retired DeKalb police officer and Wilson's stepfather, joined Sen. Steve Henson (D - Tucker) to thank the Senate for recognizing his son. – **SR 938**



Commending the Georgia Southern University Eagles

The Senate commended the Georgia Southern University (GSU) football team with Senate Resolution 1081, sponsored by Sen. Jack Hill (R – Reidsville). The GSU Eagles won the Sun Belt Football Conference Championship and finished with an overall season record of 9 to 3 in 2014 before winning their first FBS bowl game in 2015 season. – **SR 1081**

Honoring Sheriff Roger D. Garrison

Sen. Brandon Beach (R – Alpharetta) introduced Senate Resolution 905 honoring Sheriff Roger D. Garrison for his many years of public service to the state and Cherokee County. Elected in 1982, Garrison is Cherokee County's longest serving sheriff and has raised almost \$500,000 to benefit local social service organizations. – **SR 905**



Congratulating David Shafer Essay Scholarship Contest Winners

Sen. David Shafer (R – Duluth) sponsored Senate Resolution 1105 to congratulate the winners of the David Shafer Essay Scholarship Contest. This year's contest received 204 submissions and asked students to write about a person in American history who exemplified core values such as patriotism, fairness and citizenship. – **SR 1105**



TUESDAY, MARCH 8

Creation of a Film Production Wildlife Permit

Sen. Frank Ginn (R – Danielsville) carried House Bill 840, which would create a permit to allow the use of certain wild animals for film production and also revise the definition of the term "feral hog." Producers must obtain a permit if wild animals not previously held in captivity are used in the TV or film production. The Department of Natural Resources is tasked with overseeing permit applications and enforcement of the permit. The bill passed with a vote of 42 to 11. – **HB 840**

Prohibiting Payment for Unsolicited Goods

Sen. JaNice VanNess (R – Conyers) carried House Bill 697, which would prohibit requiring payment for goods after the expiration of a trial period if the goods were provided free of charge. Consumers must provide affirmative consent in order to continue receiving the product and to be charged accordingly. The bill passed with a vote of 50 to 0. – **HB 697**

Honoring Gerrian Hawes

Sen. Valencia Seay (D - Riverdale) sponsored Senate Resolution 682 to commend the life and work of Gerrian Hawes. After serving eight years in the military, Hawes began publishing *We Are Clayton*, a magazine focused on empowering Clayton County women. Hawes currently sits on the Arts Clayton Board of Directors and the Morrow Business and Tourism Board of Directors. – **SR 682**

Commending Coach Napoleon B. Cobb

Sen. Emanuel Jones (D - Decatur) introduced Senate Resolution 473 to commend Coach Napoleon B. Cobb. Throughout his lengthy career as a track and field coach, Cobb led his teams a national championship, 13 county

championships and 10 state championships. He also coached 22 college All-American athletes and three Olympic medal winners. Cobb was inducted into the Track and Field Hall of Fame in 2002. – **SR 473**

Recognizing the Georgia Athletic Trainers' Association

Sen. Donzella James (D - Atlanta) introduced Senate Resolution 992, which recognizes the Georgia Athletic Trainers' Association (GATA). GATA brings together rehabilitation clinics and over 1,000 licensed athletic trainers from the professional, college and high school levels to ensure that Georgia's athletes have access to the appropriate resources. – **SR 992**



Recognizing the Brain Injury Association of Georgia

Sen. Donzella James (D - Atlanta) introduced Senate Resolution 1012 to recognize the Brain Injury Association of Georgia. A nonprofit organization dedicated to raising brain injury awareness, The Brain Injury Association of Georgia advocates for prevention efforts and helping the families of those affected by brain injury. – **SR 1012**



Recognizing Georgia's Green Ribbon Schools

Sen. P.K. Martin (R - Lawrenceville) introduced Senate Resolutions 1121, 1122, 1123 and 1124 to recognize four Green Ribbon schools in Georgia. Green Ribbon Schools are part of a U.S. Department of Education initiative designed to recognize school districts that reduce environmental impacts, promote careers in STEM fields and improve student and faculty health. The schools recognized were Paideia School, Lanier High School, Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School and Kinchafoonee Primary School, respectively. – **SR 1121, SR 1122, SR 1123 & SR 1124**



THURSDAY, MARCH 10

Georgia Firefighters' Pension Fund

Sen. Freddie Powell Sims (D – Dawson) carried House Bill 844. This bill outlines the process for legal claims against the Georgia Firefighters' Pension Fund. The bill establishes that these claims are under the jurisdiction of the superior court of the Georgia Firefighters' Pension Fund Board of Trustees. The bill passed with a vote of 52 to 0. – **HB 844**

Fiscal Year 2017 Budget

Sen. Jack Hill (R – Reidsville) carried House Bill 751, the Fiscal Year 2017 General Budget. The 2017 budget sets approximately \$23.7 billion in state funding from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017. The largest state budget since the 2008 recession, the Senate increased funding for road projects and maintenance, significant improvements to the state's public safety infrastructure and a 3 percent salary increase for non-licensed school employees, including bus drivers and nurses. The bill passed with a vote of 53 to 2 and has been assigned to conference committee. – **HB 751**

Recognizing Kennesaw State University

Sen. Lindsey Tippins (R – Marietta) sponsored Senate Resolutions 1135 and 1136 to commend Kennesaw State University (KSU) for its excellence in sports and academics. In its inaugural football season, KSU finished with a winning record of 6 to 5, and a 5 to 1 home field record. Sen. Tippins also honored three KSU students for winning three of the top annual awards from the Georgia Society of Professional Engineers. – **SR 1135, 1136**

Congratulating Derreck Kayongo

The Senate congratulated Derreck Kayongo for his appointment as the new CEO of the Center for Civil and Human Rights with Senate Resolution 998, sponsored by Sen. Nan Orrock (D – Atlanta). A former refugee of the Ugandan civil war and tireless human rights advocate, Kayongo assisted in founding the Global Soap Project. The Project has distributed over five million recycled bars of soap to refugees and victims of humanitarian crises worldwide. – **SR 998**



Commending Eddie B. Tucker

Sen. Ellis Black (R – Valdosta) sponsored Senate Resolution 909 commending Eddie B. Tucker and his more than 50 years of service to the Clyattville community. Tucker and his family have hosted an annual community dinner for over 400 attendees since the early 1990's. Tucker's son, Jerome, joined Sen. Black and praised his father's cooperative spirit and family values. – **SR 909**



Honoring the Life of Julian Bond

The Senate honored the life of former Georgia State Representative and Senator Julian Bond with Senate Resolution 832, sponsored by Sen. Vincent Fort (D – Atlanta). A tireless advocate for Civil Rights, Bond helped found the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, organized the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus and served as chairman of the NAACP from 1998 to 2009. – **SR 832**



Recognizing Damacia Howard

Sen. Donzella James (D – Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 1047 recognizing Damacia Howard for her success at the Georgia Cyber Academy and for receiving the 2016 Prudential Spirit of Community Award. Presented to those who go above and beyond in service to their community, Howard earned this award through her dedication in collecting thousands of books for students in Africa. – **SR 1047**



Recognizing the Atlanta Chapter of the National Alumnae Association of Spelman College

The Senate recognized the Atlanta Chapter of the National Alumnae Association of Spelman College (NAASC) with Senate Resolution 1076 sponsored by Sen. Gail Davenport (D – Jonesboro). Founded in 1914, the Atlanta Chapter of the NAASC is dedicated to the ideals of sisterhood and community service. – **SR 1076**

Congressman Hank Johnson Visits

U.S. Rep. Hank Johnson (D - GA) visited the Senate Chamber to share words of encouragement and inspiration. He spoke to the Senate about providing leadership to constituents who are looking for a peaceful and prosperous life. U.S. Rep. Johnson has represented Georgia's 4th Congressional District since 2007.



FRIDAY, MARCH 11

Georgia Right to Try Act

Sen. Hunter Hill (R – Atlanta) carried House Bill 34, also known as the Georgia Right to Try Act. This bill would allow terminally ill patients to access physician-recommended investigational drugs and treatment. The patient must provide written informed consent and healthcare providers are not required to cover treatment costs. Caregivers cannot be held liable for the injury or death of a patient undergoing investigational treatment. The bill passed with a vote of 55 to 0. – **HB 34**



Creating Permanent Parenting Plans

Sen. Josh McKoon (R - Columbus) carried House Bill 52, which would require a permanent parenting plan to be created at the end of all child custody orders. Current law states that a separate court order exclusively devoted to the parenting plan must be created. The bill passed with a vote of 55 to 0. – **HB 52**



Utility Service Vehicles Added to Move Over Law

House Bill 767, carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega), would add utility service vehicles to the list of vehicles covered under Georgia's Spencer Pass Law, also known as the "move over" law. The law already instructs drivers to change lanes or reduce speed when approaching stationary maintenance and recovery vehicles parked on the side of the road. The bill also reduces the fine for violating this law from \$500 to \$250. The bill passed with a vote of 52 to 1. – **HB 767**



Pharmacy Shipping Methods

Sen. Ben Watson (R – Savannah) carried House Bill 886. This bill would allow pharmacies to mail prescription drugs to patients as long as they follow shipping methods approved by the manufacturer, the United States Pharmacopeia and the Food and Drug Administration. The bill passed with a vote of 50 to 0. – **HB 886**



Campus Carry Act

Sen. Jesse Stone (R - Waynesboro) carried House Bill 859, otherwise known as the Campus Carry Act. This bill would permit gun owners with a valid concealed weapons carry license to carry a concealed handgun in any building or real property owned or leased to a public college, university or other postsecondary institution. Concealed weapons cannot be carried onto property used for athletic sporting events or student housing, including fraternity and sorority houses. The bill passed with a vote of 37 to 17. – **HB 859**



Honoring John Phinizy Stevens

Sen. Bill Heath (R – Bremen) sponsored Senate Resolution 1072 honoring the life and memory of John Phinizy Stevens. Born in 1929, Stevens led a long and rewarding career as the Executive Vice President of the Government Division of Wachovia Bank. Stevens also participated in a number of other business associations, including the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and Georgia Bankers Association. – **SR 1072**

Recognizing CHRIS Kids Counseling Center

The Senate recognized CHRIS Kids for its years of service throughout the state with Senate Resolution 1078, sponsored by Sen. Fran Millar (R - Atlanta). CHRIS Kids Counseling Center provides school-based mental health resources for children and families in over 20 schools throughout the metro Atlanta area, and employs over 36 percent of certified trauma therapists in the state. – **SR 1078**

Commending South River Watershed Alliance

Sen. Burt Jones (R - Jackson) sponsored Senate Resolution 852 commending the South River Watershed Alliance for its efforts. The organization was specifically recognized for its work on the South River Trail, a 46-mile hiking trail that provides access to the South River for outdoor recreational activities. – **SR 852**

Honoring Major Gregory E. Barney

Sen. Valencia Seay (D - Riverdale) sponsored Senate Resolution 1068 honoring the life of Major Gregory E. Barney and his many years of service to the Riverdale community. Barney was the first African-American Interim Police Chief for the City of Riverdale, and also served as a sergeant, captain and major of the Riverdale Patrol. Barney was also assigned to Riverdale High School as a resource officer and positively impacted the lives of many students. – **SR 1068**

Commending Winners of the National History Day Group Documentary Competition

Sen. Fran Millar (R - Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 1169 to commend Liberty Schultz, Madison Kessel and Jessica Thompson for winning first place at the Georgia National History Day Senior Group Documentary Competition and second place at the national level. Receiving thousands of entries from across the country, National History Day is intended to foster student interest in American history and values. – **SR 1169**



**The Georgia State Senate will reconvene at 10:00 a.m. on
MONDAY, MARCH 14.**