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This Week in the Senate

February 7 - February 10, 2017



Senate Passed FY17 Amended Budget

The Senate reconvened on Tuesday for Day 13 of the Session and a busy week back. A number of distinguished guests joined us in the Senate Chamber, including a group of the brave men and women who serve as firefighters and trauma care providers throughout the state. It was an honor to recognize these brave individuals who answer the call no matter the time of day or night.

On Tuesday, the Senate unanimously passed Senate Bill 4. Sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford), SB 4 would create the Georgia Mental Health Treatment Task Force and is one of six Senate Majority Caucus priorities.

On Wednesday, Sen. Lee Anderson (R – Grovetown) presented the first bill of his Senate career, Senate Bill 78, a Department of Agriculture bill dealing with the “adulteration” of food. Sen. Anderson endured a thorough but good natured examination which revealed his extensive knowledge of meat smoking practices, bovine reproductive physiology and the meaning of words like “promulgate.” SB 78 passed unanimously.

We took up the amended budget on Thursday. House Bill 43, which makes changes to the Fiscal Year 2017 State Budget we adopted last year, includes \$27 million for law enforcement pay raises, a per diem increase for foster parents and \$50 million for the creation of the new Georgia Cyber Range in Augusta. Because of the confluence of educational and military facilities, Augusta has emerged as a center of our country’s battle against cyber terrorism. Also, on Thursday, I welcomed the members of my Legislative Advisory Committee to the Capitol. Led by co-chairs Matt Reeves and Shawn Still, this capable group of men and women from my Senate District in North Fulton and Gwinnett has been an important source of ideas to me.

We ended the week with bills dealing with emergency medical services for those suffering mental illness, the scope of practice of dental hygienists and firearm carrying rights for retired public safety officers. Under the new adjournment resolution, we will reconvene on Tuesday, February 14 for Legislative Day 17. I hope you enjoy the weekend. If you have any questions, comments or ideas, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sen. David J. Shafer
President Pro Tempore, Georgia Senate

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Enhancing Mental Health Treatment in Georgia

Senate Bill 4, sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford), would create the Georgia Mental Health Treatment Task Force. The taskforce will ensure that the state’s health system is providing proper and essential mental health services. They will assess all aspects of the state’s approach toward mental health treatment. SB 4 passed by a vote of 44 to 0. –**SB 4**

Rural Hospital Tax Credit

Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge) sponsored Senate Bill 14, which would grant limited liability corporations (LLC), shareholders of “S” corporations or members of partnerships the right to receive an income tax credit equal to 70 percent or \$10,000, whichever is less. This bill pertains to donations that are made to rural hospital organizations. SB 14 passed by a vote of 41 to 5. –**SB 14**

Recognizing Robert Singletary’s Retirement

Senate Resolution 69, sponsored by Sen. Larry Walker (R – Perry), recognizes Robert Singletary’s retirement from the Warner Robins Fire Department. Singleton began his career with the Warner Robins Fire Department in 1982 where he served as Fire Chief for the last 17 years. –**SR 69**

Augusta’s Interfaith Coalition Day at the Capitol

Sen. Harold Jones II (D – Augusta) introduced Senate Resolution 100 recognizing February 7, 2017, as Augusta’s Interfaith Coalition Day at the Capitol. Augusta’s Interfaith Coalition is a community service group that works to ensure that voters are informed about local issues and celebrates religious freedom by championing individual rights, promoting policies that protect both religion and democracy, and uniting diverse voices to challenge extremism and complacency. –**SR 100**



The Capitol Celebrates 100 years of the Girl Scout Cookie Program

Sen. Elena Parent (D – Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 129 celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scout Cookie Program. The Girl Scout Cookie Program began in 1917 and has evolved into one of the most powerful and successful financial literacy tools in the world for girls. During the last 100 years, Girl Scouts have demonstrated their leadership and philanthropic spirit by using their cookie earnings to make a positive impact within their communities. –**SR 129**

Trauma Awareness Day at the Capitol

Sen. John F. Kennedy (R – Macon) sponsored Senate Resolution 145 recognizing February 7, 2017, as Trauma Awareness Day at the Capitol. SR 145 commends Georgia’s trauma professionals, the Georgia Trauma Commission (GTC), the Georgia Trauma Foundation (GTF) and the Georgia Society of the American College of Surgeons (GSACS) for their dedication of working together to equip Georgia citizens with the proper knowledge on how to “Stop the Bleed” in the event they witness a massive bleeding situation. Trauma is the leading cause of death for people under the age of 44 and the fourth leading cause of death for all ages. –**SR 145**

Firefighter Recognition Day at the Capitol

Senate Resolution 157, sponsored by Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla), recognizes February 7, 2017, as Firefighter Recognition Day at the Capitol. Georgia has over 30,000 firefighters that risk their lives daily to provide emergency services to their communities. The Senate commends the outstanding service of these brave citizens. –**SR 157**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Repealing a Registration Requirement for those Handling Organic Food

Currently, no product may be labeled “organic” unless the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDOA), or an entity on behalf of GDOA certifies it. On Wednesday, the Senate passed Senate Bill 69, sponsored by Sen. John Wilkinson (R – Toccoa), which would repeal a provision that requires those who produce, process, distribute or handle any organic product to register with the GDOA. These entities must still register with the USDA. SB 69 passed with a vote of 53 to 0. –**SB 69**

Authorizing the Commissioner of Agriculture to Issue a Variance or Waiver

Senate Bill 78, sponsored by Sen. Lee Anderson (R – Grovetown), would allow the Commissioner of Agriculture to issue a variance or waiver on a rule that the Commissioner issued, specifically on the adulteration and misbranding of food. Whoever seeks the waiver must demonstrate that the rule can be achieved through other means; and that the strict application of the rule would cause undue hardship. However, under SB 78, the Commissioner would not have authority to issue a variance or waiver that would pose a health threat to the public. SB 78 passed with a vote of 53 to 0. –**SB 78**

4-H Day and Commending 4-H Leadership

Sen. Ellis Black (R – Valdosta) introduced Senate Resolution 37 which establishes February 8, 2017, as 4-H Day at the Capitol. The resolution also commends State 4-H President James Hancock, Director and State 4-H Leader Arch D. Smith and others for their community leadership and various accomplishments. 4-H members consistently demonstrate the ability and leadership necessary to be champions and serve as outstanding representatives and officers of the young people of Georgia. –**SR 37**

Congratulating John Milledge Academy Trojans Football Team

Senate Resolution 45, sponsored by Sen. Burt Jones (R – Jackson), congratulates the John Milledge Academy Trojans football team for winning the 2016 Georgia Independent School Association Class AAA State Championship. Through perseverance and iron determination, the John Milledge Academy Trojans closed out their historic 14-0 season by defeating Gatewood 17-0. –**SR 45**



Veterinary Medicine Day

Sen. John Wilkinson (R – Toccoa) introduced Senate Resolution 79 which establishes February 8, 2017, as Veterinary Medicine Day at the Capitol. Georgia’s veterinarians use their scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health, the relief of animal suffering and the conservation of livestock resources. Those working in this field demonstrate great compassion, understanding and kindness for the animals in their care, and their dedication and commitment is appreciated and acknowledged. –*SR 79*

Stop Violence Against Women Day

Senate Resolution 83, sponsored by Sen. Elena Parent (D – Atlanta), recognizes February 8, 2017, as Stop Violence Against Women Day at the state Capitol. Domestic violence is a leading cause of injury to American women of every age, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, race and religion, and witnessing such violence can have a devastating emotional effect on children. The dedicated efforts of the professionals and volunteers who make it their mission to stop violence against women are hereby commended. –*SR 83*



Commending Karin Slaughter

Sen. Elena Parent (D – Atlanta) introduced Senate Resolution 84 commending Karin Slaughter for her outstanding public service. Slaughter’s significant organizational and leadership talents, her remarkable patience and diplomacy, her keen sense of vision and her sensitivity to the needs of the of this state have earned her the respect and admiration of her colleagues, associates and DeKalb County citizens. –*SR 84*

Georgia Young Farmers Day

Senate Resolution 113, sponsored by Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla), commends the Georgia Young Farmers Association and recognizes February 8, 2017, as Young Farmers Day at the state Capitol. The Georgia Young Farmers Association was founded in 1970 to serve as the primary adult education delivery system for young Georgian farmers and is now the nation’s largest affiliate. Members of the association benefit from hands-on instruction provided by association teachers, which allows them to learn how to increase farming efficiency and productivity. –*SR 113*

Prostate Cancer Awareness Day and Kurt Gelfand

Sen. Bill Cowsert (R – Athens) introduced Senate Resolution 155, which recognizes February 6, 2017, as Prostate Cancer Awareness Day. SR 155 commends Kurt Gelfand, a cancer survivor who started the “Save Our Dads” campaign. This year, 241,000 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in the United States and 31,000 of those men will likely lose their lives to the disease. Screening men and catching prostate cancer early usually saves lives, but sometimes the cancer is detected too late. –*SR 155*



Georgia CORE Day

Senate Resolution 166, sponsored by Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge), recognized February 8, 2017, as Georgia CORE (Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education) Day at the Capitol. Georgia CORE is a public-private partnership in Atlanta which works to provide high quality, patient-centered and cost-efficient cancer care to Georgians. The partnership uses its research network of leading oncology practices, hospitals and academic centers to provide care to two-thirds of all new cancer cases in the state. –*SR 166*

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9

A Freeze on Renewal Fees for Hunting Licenses

Sen. Bill Heath (R – Bremen) sponsored Senate Bill 48, which would put a freeze on fees for renewing hunting licenses before they expire. Licenses that are affected will be resident and non-resident annual big game licenses, and resident annual and two-year licenses. Senate Bill 48 passed by a vote of 53 to 1. – **SB 48**

Persons Requiring Involuntary Treatment

Sen. P.K. Martin IV (R – Lawrenceville) sponsored Senate Bill 52 which would eliminate the sunset date on a provision in current Georgia law authorizing licensed professional counselors (LPCs) to perform emergency examinations and certifications of those who need involuntary treatment. Senate Bill 52 passed by a vote of 51 to 3. – **SB 52**

Supplemental Budget

Sen. Jack Hill (R – Reidsville) carried House Bill 43, the amended Fiscal Year 2017 Budget. The 2017 amended budget includes a state fund revenue estimate of around \$24 billion. The bill passed with a vote of 53 to 1 and was transmitted to the House immediately. – **HB 43**

Business Partner of The Year

Sen. Bruce Thompson (R – White) introduced Senate Resolution 171, which honored Voestalpine Automotive Body Parts Inc. for being named the 2016 College and Career Academy Business Partner of the year. Voestalpine Automotive is located in Bartow County and provides students with both real life and world-class apprenticeship opportunities allowing students to thrive in the manufacturing industry. – **SR 171**

2016 College and Career Academy of the Year

Sen. Jack Hill (R – Reidsville) sponsored Senate Resolution 170, recognizing Effingham County as the 2016 College and Career Academy of the Year. With more than 50 educational and community partnerships, over 900 students and a 100 percent graduation rate Effingham leaders have drastically increased student achievement, and continue to lead students into the 21st century. – **SR 170**

Georgia Southern University Day

Sen. Jack Hill (R – Reidsville) sponsored Senate Resolution 141, saluting Georgia Southern University (GSU) and recognizing President Jaimie Hebert, Wildlife Center Director Steve Hein and the university bald eagle, Freedom. The University hosts more than 100 programs of study at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral level. GSU boasts nearly 20,000 current students, 2,000 faculty and staff and nearly 70,000 alumni. As GSU's thirteenth president, Jaimie Hebert thanked the Senate for recognizing all of their accomplishments. – **SR 141**



President Pro Tem Shafer Welcomes Legislative Advisory Committee to Capitol

Sen. David Shafer (R – Duluth) welcomed the members of his Legislative Advisory Committee to the state Capitol for meetings. Led by co-chairs Matt Reeves and Shawn Still, this capable group of men and women from Senate District 48 in North Fulton and Gwinnett serve an important source of ideas to Sen. Shafer.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Dental Hygienists Performing Delegable Duties

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) sponsored Senate Bill 12 authorizing licensed dental hygienists to act in the place of a licensed dentist if he or she is absent. However, before performing dental duties, the dental hygienist must be given permission to do so by the dentist. The law currently states that a dentist must supervise the work of a dental hygienist while performing such duties. Senate Bill 12 was passed by substitute with a vote of 48 to 1. – **SB 12**

Weapons Carry for Retired Law Enforcement Officer

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) sponsored Senate Bill 18, which would allow any certified peace officer employed by any state entity, who retired in good standing, to retain their badge and weapon as compensation. SB 18 would also allow retired a Georgia resident who served as a law enforcement officers for at least 10 years to carry a handgun anywhere in the state. Senate Bill 18 was passed by substitute with a vote of 47 to 1. – **SB 18**

Emergency Medical Services Transport

Senate Bill 40, sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford), permits emergency medical services (EMS) personnel to decide to transport anyone that may need involuntary treatment to a hospital. Emergency personnel will not be held liable for any civil damages unless those damages are a result of deliberate negligence. Senate Bill 40 was passed by substitute as amended with a vote of 47 to 1. – **SB 40**

The Capitol Recognizes John Schuerholz

Sen. John F. Kennedy (R – Macon) introduced Senate Resolution 193, recognizing John Schuerholz for the great work he has done with the Atlanta Braves organization. Within his 26 years of service, Schuerholz had the opportunity to sit in the positions of general manager and executive vice president. Currently, he holds the title as vice chairman of the Braves organization. Schuerholz led the Braves to several titles including the 1995 World Series and he will be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2017. The Senate commends Schuerholz for his continuous hard work and dedication to the Atlanta Braves. – **SR 193**



The Georgia Senate will reconvene for **DAY 17** at 10:00 a.m. on **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14.**