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This Week in the Senate

January 15-19, 2018



Business Moves Forward in the Senate

Senate Offices were closed on Monday to observe and celebrate the life and many great achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The positive impacts Dr. King had and continues to have on our nation will never be forgotten. Dr. King's leadership inspired not just Americans, but people around the world to continue fighting for what they believe is right and to never give up in times of adversity.

On Tuesday, the Senate and House Appropriations Committees held joint budget hearings that began with a presentation from Governor Nathan Deal. The rest of the meeting was dedicated to agency and department heads providing a breakdown of their budget proposals. The hearings were scheduled to continue on Wednesday but Mother Nature had different plans in mind.

In fact, on Wednesday and into Thursday, much of Georgia was covered with snow and ice, leading Governor Deal to declare a state of emergency for 83 counties. On behalf of the Senate, I would like to commend the Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency, public safety officials on the state and local level, firefighters, EMS and the numerous other men and women who assisted and continue to ensure our citizens remain safe, alert and alive during events like these. We thank you for your sacrifices and all that you do to ensure that our state, counties and cities can function as efficiently as possible. Your service is appreciated and we thank you!

I would also like to commend those colleagues of mine and Senate staff for braving the conditions on Wednesday, coming to the Capitol and doing what they can for their constituents and for the session – the people's work can't take a day off, even in two inches of snow and treacherous ice.

On Thursday, the Senate convened and took up a very important measure – House Bill 159. My good friend, Senator Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro), presented HB 159. It passed by a vote of 40-13. The Senate version of HB 159 will address the adoption and foster care crisis that is affecting Georgia. This legislation, as passed by the Senate, keeps first thing first: the health and well-being of birth moms, adoptive families, foster children and our precious unborn. Whereas the House version of HB 159 gave too much of a priority to private adoption attorneys, and failed to focus on the kinds of family values that we in the Senate believe are important, our now-tweaked version of HB 159 puts the right focus on Georgia families. We look forward to working with our counterparts across the hall to ensure the version of HB 159 that receives final passes is what is best for Georgia families.

Next week, we will begin hearings on legislation in many of our standing committees. If you have any questions, comments or ideas, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Senator Butch Miller
President Pro Tempore, Georgia Senate

MONDAY, JANUARY 15

Senate Recognizes MLK, Jr. Day

On Monday, the Senate recognized the birthday of one of Georgia's most revered citizens, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King lived most of his life on Auburn Avenue, just a few blocks away from the state Capitol and delivered messages of peace and equality from Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. Each year, the General Assembly takes this day to reflect on Dr. King's contributions to our state, as well as to the entire world.



TUESDAY, JANUARY 16

Joint Budget Hearings

The Senate and House Appropriations Committees held joint hearings focused on economic trends and forecasts in order to adequately appropriate funds for state services and agencies in the Amended FY18 and General FY19 budgets. Members first heard recommendations from Governor Deal and then received briefings from the heads of state agencies on their budgetary needs and proposals. More information on Governor Deal's budget recommendations for AFY 2018 and FY 2019 can be found online at opb.georgia.gov.

[CLICK HERE](#) for a direct link to the Governor's budget report for AFY 2018.

[CLICK HERE](#) for a direct link to the Governor's budget report for FY 2019.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17

State of Emergency

Due to a winter storm that affected most of Georgia, Governor Nathan Deal declared a State of Emergency for 83 counties. This declaration also closed down state government operations in the impacted areas for non-essential personnel.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18

Senate Passes Adoption Bill

House Bill 159, carried by Senator Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro), is a comprehensive update of Georgia's adoption laws. HB 159 would expand upon current state law which outlines who birth parents can delegate temporary caregiving authority to in times of a biological parent's inability to do so. The new law allows family members other than grandparents, ages 21 and above, to adopt siblings, and can give individuals designated by the parents the power-of-attorney over a child on a temporary basis. HB 159 includes provisions to recognize foreign adoptions, imposes a 72-hour waiting period before a birth mother can change her mind about the adoption and clarifies the rights of biological fathers. Additionally, the bill clarifies exclusive jurisdiction over adoptions, which would only lie with the superior courts and it codifies a 14-factor test to determine what is in the best interest of the child. HB 159 passed with a vote of 40-13. - **HB 159**



FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

Senate Celebrates Senator Matt Brass' 40th Birthday

Senator Matt Brass (R – Newnan) celebrated his 40th birthday on Friday, January 19, with Lt. Governor Casey Cagle welcoming him to “Club 40.” Sen. Brass, who represents District 28, was sworn into the Georgia State Senate in January 2017. He serves as the Chairman of the Reapportionment and Redistricting Committee and the Vice-Chairman of the Economic Development and Tourism Committee. Happy birthday Sen. Brass!



The Georgia Senate will reconvene at 10:00a.m. on
MONDAY, JANUARY 22.