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This Week in the Senate

January 8-11, 2018



The Senate Convenes in 2018

The Georgia Senate convened on Monday, January 8, 2018, for the beginning of the second session of the 154th Georgia General Assembly. The new session arrived with leadership changes and three new members: Senators Kay Kirkpatrick (R – Marietta), Jen Jordan (D – Atlanta) and Nikema Williams (D – Atlanta). Additionally, the Senate will be welcoming a new member next week: Brian Strickland (R – McDonough), who won a special election on Tuesday, January 9, 2018, will be sworn in once the election returns are certified.

This week also saw Senator David Shafer (R – Duluth) resign the office of President Pro Tempore, an office he dutifully served since 2013, allowing my election to that role.

It is an honor to serve as President Pro Tempore. I am incredibly thankful for the support I have received in this undertaking – from my family and friends, as well as from my constituents and especially my colleagues. The job of Pro Tempore is one that will come with differences of opinions, yet I know that our chamber can have our disagreements without being disagreeable. For this reason, I am confident we will be able to pass meaningful legislation for all Georgians, regardless of the obstacles.

Additional leadership changes were made in both the Majority and Democratic Caucuses. Senator Lindsey Tippins (R – Marietta) was elected as the Majority Caucus Vice Chairman and Senator Harold Jones II (D – Augusta) was elected as the Democratic Whip. The Committee on Assignments completed standing committee assignments and announced several chairman changes – Senator John Albers (R – Roswell) will chair the Senate Public Safety Committee, Senator Frank Ginn (R – Danielsville) will chair the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee, Senator Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) will chair the Senate Natural Resources and the Environment Committee, Senator Greg Kirk (R – Americus) will chair the Senate State and Local Governmental Operations Committee, and Senator Ben Watson (R – Savannah) will chair the Senate Veterans, Military and Homeland Security Committee. In his second session as a senator – Senator Matt Brass (R – Newnan) – will chair a standing committee for the first time in his legislative career as he presides over the Senate Reapportionment and Redistricting Committee.

Additionally, the Senate Committee on Assignments announced key committee assignments for two members of the Democratic Caucus – Senator David Lucas (D – Macon) will serve as a member of the Appropriations Committee and Senator Michael ‘Doc’ Rhett (D – Marietta) will serve as a member of the Judiciary Committee.

On Thursday, January 11, 2018, Governor Nathan Deal outlined his budget recommendations in his last “State of the State” address. The Appropriations Committees will hold joint budget hearings starting next Tuesday, January 16, 2018. I look forward to working with Governor Deal, my colleagues in the Senate and our counterparts in the House as we tackle the important issue of passing a fiscally responsible budget.

Senator Butch Miller
President Pro Tempore, Georgia Senate

MONDAY, JANUARY 8

Sen. Butch Miller Elected as Senate President Pro Tempore

Members of the Senate unanimously elected Sen. Butch Miller (R – Gainesville) as the President Pro Tempore for the second session of the 154th Georgia General Assembly. Sen. Miller is succeeding Sen. David Shafer (R – Duluth), who was elected President Pro Tempore in 2013 and will continue to serve as a Georgia State Senator. This is Sen. Miller's first term as President Pro Tempore after being elected to the State Senate in 2010. He will be the 69th person to serve as President Pro Tempore.



Senate Welcomes Atlanta Football Host Committee

Sen. Bill Cowsert (R – Athens) sponsored Senate Resolution 580, which recognizes the importance of the Atlanta Football Host Committee for bringing the College Football Playoff National Championship to the state of Georgia. This is the first time the city of Atlanta has hosted a college football national championship game. – *SR 580*

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9



Senate Celebrates Annual “Dalton Day”

Sen. Chuck Payne (R – Dalton) celebrated the annual “Dalton Day” at the Capitol by presenting each member of the Senate with a commemorative doormat. This year's doormat dons the University of Georgia logo in honor of the Bulldogs most recent football season. Their victories brought the Bulldogs to Atlanta for the College Football Playoff National Championship Game. The city of Dalton is well known across the country for its carpet and rug production.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10

Clayton State University Day

Senate Resolution 583, sponsored by Sen. Gail Davenport (D – Jonesboro), recognizes January 10, 2018, as Clayton State Day at the Capitol. SR 583 commends Clayton State University for its excellence in public education, affordability and the school's ability to prepare students for their chosen careers. Clayton State University was established in 1969. – *SR 583*



THURSDAY, JANUARY 11

Legislative Calendar Set Through Day 11

Sen. Bill Cowser (R – Athens) presented House Resolution 870, which sets the legislative schedule for the first 11 legislative days of the 2018 Legislative Session. This schedule allows for a joint budget meeting on January 16 and 17, after the observation of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday on January 15. Legislative day 11 is scheduled for January 29. - *HR 870*

2018 State of the State Address

On Thursday, Governor Nathan Deal gave his eighth and final “State of the State” address to the Georgia General Assembly. Governor Deal addressed topics such as higher education, in which he proposed a \$1 million increase to enhance the Technical College System of Georgia’s welding program. In addition, Governor Deal has included a \$22.9 million proposal to fund the Commission on Children’s Mental Health, a post created by the Governor’s office last June. Governor Deal also cited that in the past five years, Georgia has been named the number one place to do business.



Budget hearings will be held on **TUESDAY, JANUARY 16 AND WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17**
in Room 341 of the Georgia State Capitol.

The Georgia Senate will reconvene at **10:00a.m. on**
THURSDAY, JANUARY 18.