



Georgia Senate Press Office Staff

Ines Owens
Director

Elisabeth Fletcher
Communications Specialist

Andrew Allison
Broadcast Specialist

Annie Wimbush
Communications Associate

Austin Haygood
Broadcast Associate

Pierce Ostwalt
2018 Legislative Aide

Chelsey Shirley
2018 Legislative Aide

Sabbitha Hames
2018 Legislative Intern

Amanda Kemp
2018 Legislative Intern

Keenan Rogers
2018 Senate Photographer

201 Coverdell Legislative Office Building
18 Capitol Square S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30303
p: 404.656.0028

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This Week in the Senate

February 5 - 8, 2018



Nearing Crossover Day

This week, we neared the halfway mark for the session, as we completed legislative day 18. During the week, we were busy with Appropriations Subcommittee and standing committee meetings. We also passed 11 bills on the Senate Floor. One of the 11 was the compromise on House Bill 159, also known as the adoption bill.

After tireless work, numerous meetings and compromises on both sides, the House and Senate came to an agreement on HB 159. I want to commend my colleagues, our friends across the hall, staff and all stakeholders who came together to update Georgia's

adoption code. We showed that we can all work together and put our differences aside to ensure that Georgia's children and families come first instead of political games and gain. This legislation is now on its way to the Governor for his signature and I look forward to HB 159 becoming law and Georgia's children being placed in loving, caring homes.

The Senate also debated and voted on 10 other pieces of legislation. On Tuesday, Sen. Tonya Anderson (D – Lithonia) presented her first bill in the chamber – Senate Bill 333. This legislation addresses payments by state and local governments for deferred compensation plans for their employees.

On Wednesday, also named “Senate Health Day,” we heard three bills addressing health care access and needs for Georgia's citizens. Two of the measures sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford), Senate Bills 118 and 352, address, respectively, increasing the age (to 12 years old) for treatment coverage by private insurers for children diagnosed with autism; and creating a new commission and position of executive director to address Georgia's opioid epidemic. Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge) sponsored Senate Bill 357, also known as the HEALTH Act, which would create two new programs: the Health Coordination and Innovation Council of the State of Georgia and the Health System Innovation Center. All of these measures will have a positive impact on health care access and improvements throughout the state. It is more important now than ever that we address the opioid epidemic head on and I believe Senate Bills 352 and 357 are steps in the right direction.

Along with debating legislation, we had several special guests in the chamber from around the state. I was happy to host the Georgia Science Teachers Association on Tuesday and to honor Captain Reuben Black on the Senate Floor on Wednesday. Cpt. Black is a native of Gainesville, Georgia who has worked diligently to organize and participate in over 90 interventions with individuals suffering from substance abuse problems. He has also trained members in the community on how to respond to drug overdoses and designed the teaching plan for training officers and getting Naloxone kits to agencies. Cpt. Black's commitment to saving lives is truly commendable and it was an honor to have him in the Senate Chamber with us.

As we get closer to Crossover Day – February 28 – the pace of committee work and debates on the Senate Floor will pick up. I look forward to working with members in the Senate and our friends in the House to continue our hard work.

Senator Butch Miller
President Pro Tempore, Georgia Senate

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5

Keeping Lottery Winners Anonymous

Senate Bill 331, sponsored by Sen. Steve Henson (D – Stone Mountain), would allow lottery prize winners to remain anonymous if the prize amount is \$250,000 or greater. Winners would be able to remain confidential if the individual requests anonymity. SB 331 passed with a vote of 51-4. – **SB 331**

Senate Approves Adoption Bill Changes

Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro) carried House Bill 159 which would update the adoption code in Georgia. HB 159 would ensure the adoption age for adults remains at 25, but lowers the age to 21 in the case of relative adoptions. Georgia's current adoption code states a birth mother has 10 days to "undo" the placement of the child with someone else. Under HB 159, the code is amended to a revocation period of four days. The Senate and House also suggest a joint study committee to analyze a birth mother's living expenses when paid through private attorney adoptions. HB 159 passed with a vote of 53-2. – **HB 159**



Revising Provisions for the Department of Revenue Relating to Tax Liens

House Bill 661, carried by Sen. William Ligon (R – Brunswick), would eliminate the Department of Revenue's certificate of clearance and require the clerk of the superior court to file tax liens in the county where the property is located. HB 661 passed with a vote of 55-0. – **HB 661**

Welcoming the Georgia Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants

Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome) sponsored Senate Resolution 650 welcoming the Georgia Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants to the Senate. This organization has become a primary resource for continuing education, job placement, student support, current anesthesia best practices and updates for Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants. – **SR 650**

Senate Wears Red to Bring Awareness to Women's Heart Health

Senate Resolution 677, sponsored by Sen. Valencia Seay (D – Riverdale), aims to bring awareness to women's heart health. Several members of the Senate wore red in recognition of the "Go Red for Women" campaign that advocates for preventative care and seeks to ensure women are educated on the early warning signs of strokes and cardiovascular diseases. – **SR 677**

Commending Bishop Reginald Jackson

Sen. Lester Jackson (D – Savannah) sponsored Senate Resolution 697 commending Bishop Reginald Jackson for his 35 years of service as a community leader and minister across the state of Georgia. He is the Bishop of the sixth district of the African Methodist Episcopal Church which encompasses more than 500 churches in the state. – **SR 697**



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Deferred Compensation Plans

Senate Bill 333, sponsored by Sen. Ellis Black (R – Valdosta) and presented by Sen. Tonya Anderson (D – Lithonia), would allow state or local government employers to pay the cost for their employees participating in a deferred compensation plan. SB 333 passed with a vote of 53-0. – **SB 333**

Veterans Drivers Licenses

Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell) carried House Bill 38 which states that anyone who has served in the United States military and was honorably discharged would be eligible to receive a driver's license with a veteran designation. The bill would also make licenses free of charge for veterans. HB 38 passed with a vote of 50-0. – **HB 38**

Commending Major General Crenshaw and the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Albany

Sen. Freddie Powell-Sims (D – Dawson) sponsored Senate Resolution 659 commending Major General Craig Crenshaw and the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Albany for its positive economic impact to the region, state and country. The base has an annual economic impact of \$1.5 billion in Georgia and is the region's largest employer. There are approximately 4,000 employees, including 350 active duty service members, working at the base. – **SR 659**



Girl Scout Day at the Capitol

Sen. Lester Jackson (D – Savannah) sponsored Senate Resolution 665 which recognizes February 6, 2018, as Girl Scout Day at the state Capitol. The Girl Scouts were founded in 1912 in Savannah, Georgia, by Juliette Gordon Low. Ms. Low broke conventions of the time by reaching across class, culture and ethnic boundaries to ensure that all girls had a place to grow and develop their talents and leadership skills. – **SR 665**

Honoring Georgia's Firefighters

Senate Resolution 675, sponsored by Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell), recognizes February 6, 2018, as Firefighters Recognition Day at the state Capitol. There are 900 fire departments across the state with more than 300,000 firefighters who dedicate their lives to saving citizens and their property. These individuals play an important role in maintaining firefighting standards and educating the public on fire prevention and suppression methods. – **SR 675**

Georgia Science Teachers Celebrated

Senate President Pro Tempore Butch Miller (R – Gainesville) sponsored Senate Resolution 696 which recognizes the Georgia Science Teachers Association (GSTA) for helping science teachers connect with each other, access information on important research and advocate for science education. GSTA is committed to educating and supporting science in Georgia's K-12 schools, colleges and universities. – **SR 696**



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Expanding Insurance Coverage for Autism

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) sponsored Senate Bill 118 which would require medical insurers to provide coverage for children age 12 years and younger who are receiving treatment for autism spectrum disorders. Current law only provides coverage for children ages six and below. SB 118 passed with a vote of 50-3. – **SB 118**

Senate Confronts Opioid Crisis

Senate Bill 352, sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford), would create the Commission on Substance Abuse and Recovery and an Executive Director of Substance Abuse, Addiction and Related Disorders. SB 352 would use a multifaceted education strategy to provide students with the resources needed to reject the threat of substance abuse. The bill would also create a partnership with providers and communities across Georgia to prohibit patient brokering. SB 352 passed with a vote of 53-0. – **SB 352**



HEALTH Act

Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge) sponsored Senate Bill 357, also known as the HEALTH Act, which would establish two new programs: the Health Coordination and Innovation Council of the State of Georgia and the Health System Innovation Center. The bill streamlines the functions of Georgia's health care system and breaks down silos among various state agencies, academic institutions and the private sector. SB 357 passed with a vote of 53-1. – **SB 357**

Commending Captain Reuben Black

Senate Resolution 601, sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Butch Miller (R – Gainesville), commends Gainesville native Captain Reuben Black for his work on the frontlines in the battle against Georgia's opioid epidemic. He has organized and participated in more than 90 interventions with individuals who have struggled with substance abuse. Cpt. Black served as the training coordinator for Project DAN, which trained more than 5,000 law enforcement and fire officers to respond to drug overdoses. – **SR 601**

City of Columbus Day at the Capitol

Sens. Ed Harbison (D – Columbus) and Josh McKoon (R – Columbus) sponsored Senate Resolution 615 recognizing February 7, 2018, as Columbus Day at the state Capitol. The city of Columbus was the first consolidated government in Georgia and the region is renowned for its whitewater rafting, natural landscapes and expansive defense entities. Columbus is home to numerous national and international institutions including Aflac, Fort Benning, Synovus and Total System Services. – **SR 615**



Senate Celebrates Fort Benning's Centennial Anniversary

Senate Resolution 616, sponsored by Sens. Ed Harbison (D – Columbus) and Josh McKoon (R – Columbus), celebrates the 100th anniversary of Fort Benning. The city of Columbus was selected as one of four prospective sites for a base to train WWI soldiers and on August 17, 1918, the general staff of the United States Army approved the recommendation of bringing an Infantry School of Arms to Columbus. The facility was formally christened as Camp Benning on October 19, 1918. – **SR 616**

Honoring Georgia Forestry Units of the Year

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) sponsored Senate Resolutions 626, 627 and 628 which recognize the Chattahoochee Georgia Forestry Unit as the Georgia Forestry Commission's 2017 District of the Year. In addition, the Bleckley-Pulaski Unit was named the South Georgia 2017 District of the Year and the Pike-Spalding-Lamar-Upson-Clayton Forestry Unit was named the North Georgia Forestry Commission's 2017 District of the Year. The mission of the Georgia Forestry Commission is to provide leadership, service and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forestry resources. – *SRs 626, 627, 628*



Recognizing Girls and Women in Sports

Senate Resolution 658, sponsored by Sen. Burt Jones (R – Jackson), recognizes February 7, 2018, as National Girls and Women in Sports Day at the state Capitol. The National Girls and Women in Sports Day began in 1987 as a day to remember former Olympic volleyball player, Flo Hyman, for her commitment to ensuring equality in women's sports. – *SR 658*

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Amending Public Retirement Systems

Senate Bill 197, sponsored by Sen. Ellis Black (R – Valdosta), would prohibit passage of any rule that would allow employees to obtain creditable service in any public retirement system unless they are already a member of the system or pay the actuarial cost. SB 197 passed with a vote of 52-0. – *SB 197*

Establishing Sunset Dates for Tax Credits

Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell) sponsored Senate Bill 328 which would create a sunset date of December 13, 2018, for three tax credits: the Qualified Transportation Tax Credit, Drivers Education Tax Credit and the Diesel Particulate Emission Reduction Technology Equipment Tax Credit. SB 328 passed with a vote of 47-6. – *SB 328*

Modifying Agency Rule Making Requirements

Senate Bill 338, sponsored by Sen. William Ligon (R – Brunswick), would allow the General Assembly greater oversight of the agency rule-making process during and outside of the legislative session. SB 338 would extend the existing statute of 30 legislative days to override an agency rule to the full 40 days of a legislative session in addition to requiring 60 total days of notice to the General Assembly by the agency for any rule changes. The bill also would permit votes made by telephone in standing committees, if Senate and House rules allow. SB 338 passed with a vote of 37-18. – *SB 338*

Commending Corporal Brian Adams

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) sponsored Senate Resolution 702 commending Corporal Brian Adams of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Law Enforcement Division on being named the 2017 Game Warden of the Year. Cpl. Adams has worked with the Georgia DNR since 1998 and has won numerous awards, including the 2007 Law Enforcement Life Saving Award, Region Ranger of the Year and Investigative Ranger of the Year in 2015. – *SR 702*

**The Georgia Senate will reconvene at 10:00a.m. on
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12.**