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# This Week in the Senate

## March 12 - 15, 2018



### Positive Impacts for Georgia's Citizens

With only five legislative days and two weeks left in the 2018 Legislative Session, the Senate focused on committee meetings and debating 22 pieces of legislation. We also held "green door" meetings to address the Fiscal Year 2019 budget – House Bill 684 – which passed the House last week. Under the great leadership of Chairman Jack Hill (R – Reidsville), we have been carefully reviewing their proposals. Although passing a balanced budget is our only constitutional duty before we adjourn, we are taking the time to complete a thorough analysis of the budget to ensure taxpayer dollars are appropriated in a fiscally conservative manner.

On Thursday, the Senate debated and voted on nine pieces of legislation with topics including child support cases, insurance, elections and easements. While each of these pieces of legislation will positively impact the lives of Georgians, I was especially pleased to see the passage of one particular bill. House Bill 831, Georgia's Employment First Act, would allow people with disabilities the same working opportunities as others trying to enter the workforce. Under HB 831, supervisors would be trained on how to properly enable individuals with disabilities to perform their work responsibilities efficiently.

While under the Gold Dome, we do the best we can to ensure legislation we pass will have a positive impact on the daily lives of our constituents. We hear from local elected officials, stakeholders and constituents on how legislation will affect them and base our decisions on these conversations. More often than not, legislative ideas are brought to us by citizens who recognize a need for change. HB 831 is a prime example of how young people came together to bring the issue of individuals with disabilities gaining employment to the forefront of the Georgia General Assembly. My son, Charlie Miller, and other young adults worked tirelessly to bring HB 831 up for consideration to become law. It is truly an honor and also humbling to see the success Charlie and the other young adults who worked with him had with crafting this legislation. They represent what it's all about – making lives better for all Georgians. Their work ethic and success are truly encouraging. I am enthusiastic that this encouragement will be contagious as we work through the final two weeks of session. Thank you to Rep. Terry Rogers (R – Clarkesville), sponsor of the bill, Sen. Mike Dugan (R – Carrollton), the Senate carrier, our friends in the House and my colleagues in the Senate for their enthusiasm and support of this legislation that will change the lives of many across Georgia. I am proud to say that HB 831 passed with bipartisan support in the Senate and is now on its way to the Governor's desk for his signature.

As we work through our final five days of the session, please let me know if you have any questions about any passed or pending legislation that. Don't forget, my staff and I are here to help, and our door is always open.

**Senator Butch Miller**  
*President Pro Tempore, Georgia Senate*

## MONDAY, MARCH 12

### License Plate Data Collection

House Bill 79, carried by Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell), would require law enforcement to destroy license plate data collected by automated license plate reading systems 30 months after collection, unless related to an active case or investigation. HB 79 passed with a vote of 48-0. – **HB 79**

### Establishing the Georgia Veterans Service Foundation, Inc.

Sen. Ben Watson (R – Savannah) carried House Bill 422 which would authorize the Veterans Service Board to establish the Georgia Veterans Service Foundation, Inc. as a nonprofit foundation. The bill also outlines the foundation's duties, governance and funding. HB 422 passed with a vote of 52-0. – **HB 422**

### Establishing Self-Settled Spendthrift Trusts

House Bill 441, carried by Sen. Bill Cowsert (R – Athens), would establish qualified self-settled spendthrift trusts and define the rights and powers of all associated parties under Georgia law. The bill also specifies that assets within the trust are not exempt from legal restitution or court-ordered judgments. In addition, the transfer of assets to a trust may be considered a transfer to an insider. HB 441 passed with a vote of 41-11. – **HB 441**

### Removing Insurance Compliance Self-Evaluative Audits

Sen. Bruce Thompson (R – White) carried House Bill 592 which would permanently remove a sunset in Georgia's insurance code relating to self-evaluative audits. HB 592 passed with a vote of 52-0. – **HB 592**

### Amending Interstate Juvenile Supervision Appointments

House Bill 670, carried by Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro), would amend appointment procedure to the Georgia State Council for Interstate Juvenile Supervision by increasing the number of legislative branch representatives from one to two. Under HB 670, both the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate would appoint one legislative representative. HB 670 passed with a vote of 51-1. – **HB 670**

### Screening Department of Revenue Employees

Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome) carried House Bill 816 which would permit the Department of Revenue (DOR) to fingerprint and require criminal background checks as a condition of employment for all employees and prospective employees after January 1, 2019, who have not been previously screened in the last 10 years. Under HB 816, DOR contractors and subcontractors with access to confidential information are also subject to such provisions. HB 816 passed with a vote of 52-0. – **HB 816**

### Limiting Restrictions on Agricultural Burning

House Bill 885, carried by Sen. Frank Ginn (R – Danielsville), would amend the Georgia Air Quality Act by limiting state regulatory powers relating to the controlled burning of agricultural tracts or parcels of land greater than five acres for agricultural operations. This would apply so long as the burning is consistent with federal regulations and limited to vegetative material. HB 885 passed with a vote of 53-0. – **HB 885**





### **Recognizing Judge Matthew McCord**

Sen. Emanuel Jones (D – Decatur) sponsored Senate Resolution 738 recognizing Judge Matthew McCord for his service as chief judge of the Stockbridge Municipal Court. In addition, he has served with the Georgia Judicial Council’s Misdemeanor Bail Reform Commission and is the president-elect of the Georgia Municipal Court Judges Council. – **SR 738**



### **Valdosta State University Day at the State Capitol**

Senate Resolution 787, sponsored by Sen. Ellis Black (R – Valdosta), recognizes March 12, 2018, as Valdosta State University Day at the state Capitol. With more than 11,000 undergraduate and graduate students, Valdosta State University works to provide the highest quality educational programs across more than 100 academic majors. – **SR 787**

### **Georgia’s School Superintendent of the Year**

Sen. Matt Brass (R – Newnan) sponsored Senate Resolution 804 honoring Dr. Steve Barker on being named Georgia’s 2018 School Superintendent of the Year. Dr. Barker serves as the Superintendent of the Coweta County School System. – **SR 804**

### **Genocide Prevention Awareness Month at the State Capitol**

Senate Resolution 922, sponsored by Sen. Elena Parent (D – Decatur), recognizes April 2018 as Genocide Prevention and Awareness Month at the state Capitol. The term genocide was coined by Raphael Lemkin to describe the coordinated plan of actions aimed at certain groups by disintegrating a group’s social institutions, culture, language, religion, physical or economic existence. – **SR 922**

### **Recognizing Jack Murphy Day**

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga) sponsored Senate Resolution 966 recognizing March 12, 2018, as Jack Murphy Day at the state Capitol. Murphy served as a state senator for the citizens of Forsyth County for 12 years in the Georgia General Assembly. – **SR 966**

### **St. Patrick’s Day Parade Committee**

Senate Resolution 979, sponsored by Sen. Ben Watson (R – Savannah), commends the members of the St. Patrick’s Day Parade Committee. The St. Patrick’s Day Parade, held in Savannah, Georgia, is one of the largest Irish celebrations in the U.S., with 2018 marking the 194th year of festivities. – **SR 979**



## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14

### Newborn Placement Signs

Sen. Brian Strickland (R – McDonough) carried House Bill 513 which would require signs to be placed at certain medical facilities, fire and police stations to indicate where a mother can leave a newborn child. HB 513 passed with a vote of 48-0. – **HB 513**

### Forestry Specialty License Plates

House Bill 695, carried by Sen. John F. Kennedy (R – Macon), would establish specialty license plates honoring and supporting the Georgia Forestry Foundation effective July 1, 2019. Under HB 695, a specialty license plate would also be created to support the Sickie Cell Foundation of Georgia, Inc. HB 695 passed with a vote of 50-0. – **HB 695**

### Waterfowl Specialty License Plates

Sen. Matt Brass (R – Newnan) carried House Bill 784 which would establish a specialty license plate to promote the conservation of waterfowl and their habitat. HB 784 passed with a vote of 50-0. – **HB 784**

### Annual Drug Updates

House Bill 830, carried by Sen. Greg Kirk (R – Americus), would update Georgia's drug classifications, including a list of Schedule I and Schedule II drugs, as well as a list of medications eligible to be prescribed by a physician. HB 830 passed with a vote of 48-0. – **HB 830**



### Reporting Freeport Tax Exemptions

Sen. Matt Brass (R – Newnan) carried House Bill 888 which would clarify definitions for manufacturers and provide an application for manufacturing companies to receive a freeport tax exemption. HB 888 would allow a postal meter date, set only by the postal service, to serve as the filing date for the freeport tax exemption application. HB 888 passed with a vote of 48-1. – **HB 888**

### Designating Perinatal Facilities

House Bill 909, carried by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome), would allow the Department of Public Health to develop a voluntary system to designate hospitals with suitable maternal and neonatal care as perinatal facilities. Hospitals would be able to apply for designations beginning in 2019. HB 909 passed with a vote of 51-0. – **HB 909**

### Law Enforcement Appreciation Day at the State Capitol

Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell) sponsored Senate Resolution 808 recognizing March 14, 2018, as Law Enforcement Appreciation Day. Law Enforcement Appreciation Day began in 2015 at the state Capitol, recognizing officers that serve in multiple agencies throughout the state. – **SR 808**

### Recognizing Ambassador Judith Varnai Shorer

Senate Resolution 1017, sponsored by Sen. Lester Jackson (D – Savannah), recognizes Judith Varnai Shorer for her service as the Consul General of Israel to the southeastern United States. Ambassador Shorer was appointed as the Consul General in July 2015 and works to continue the Israeli-Georgian relationship that is rooted in trade and innovation. – **SR 1017**





## THURSDAY, MARCH 15

### **Paternity Test Orders**

Sen. Greg Kirk (R – Americus) carried House Bill 344 which would allow individuals who are involved in the enforcement of child support to order a paternity test from the Department of Human Services. HB 344 passed with a vote of 51-0. – **HB 344**

### **Georgia Emergency Communications Authority Act**

House Bill 751, carried by Sen. John F. Kennedy (R – Macon), would create the Georgia Emergency Communications Authority within the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency. Under HB 751, the authority would collect and distribute 9-1-1 fees to local government 9-1-1 call centers. In addition, HB 751 would create a flat \$1.50 fee for all types of phone lines. HB 751 passed with a vote of 50-3. – **HB 751**

### **Allowing Insurance Divisions**

Sen. P.K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville) carried House Bill 754 which would provide the framework for the division of a domestic insurer into two or more resulting insurers. In addition, the bill defines shareholder rights and protections, the legal responsibilities of all relevant parties and regulatory oversight by the insurance commissioner. HB 754 passed with a vote of 51-0. – **HB 754**

### **Establishing the Rural Health Innovation System**

House Bill 769, carried by Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge), would establish the Rural Health System Innovation Center within the State Office of Rural Health. HB 769 would allow an exemption to be made regarding the certificate of need in certain cases, creates a grant program to incentivize physicians to practice in rural areas, increases a tax credit on donations to rural hospitals and simplifies the remote order entry process for pharmacies. HB 769 passed with a vote of 48-3. – **HB 769**



### **The Employment First Act**

Sen. Mike Dugan (R – Carrollton) carried House Bill 831 which would create the Employment First Georgia Council to adopt a competitive integrated employment policy for individuals with disabilities. HB 831 would also work to provide awareness and education of the Employment First Policy. HB 831 passed with a vote of 51-1. – **HB 831**

### **Revising the Georgia Commission on Hearing Impaired and Deaf Persons**

House Bill 844, carried by Sen. P.K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville), would rename the Georgia Commission on Hearing Impaired and Deaf Persons to the Georgia Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing. HB 844 would also create a task force to make recommendations for improvements in literacy for adolescent deaf individuals and would require the Georgia Technology Authority to establish a data-sharing process to be used to provide early educational intervention for deaf children. HB 844 passed with a vote of 49-0. – **HB 844**

### **Filling District Attorney Vacancies**

Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro) carried House Bill 907 which would revise state code relating to the appointment of a district attorney by the governor in cases where the district attorney vacates his or her seat early. Once appointed, the new district attorney would serve until January 1, of the year following the next statewide general election, if the election is more than six months after the date of the appointment. HB 907 passed with a vote of 49-2. – **HB 907**

### **Transferring Land from the DNR to GDOT**

House Resolution 1090, carried by Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega), would transfer two properties from the Department of Natural Resources to the Georgia Department of Transportation. Under HR 1090, the properties affected lie within the Bullard Creek Wildlife Management Area in Jeff Davis County and the Georgia Veterans Memorial State Park in Crisp County. HR 1090 passed with a vote of 50-0. – **HR 1090**



### **Authorizing Easements for State-Owned Properties**

Sen. Ed Harbison (D – Columbus) carried House Resolution 1104 which would authorize the grant of non-exclusive easements on state-owned properties in 22 Georgia counties. The easements are to be used for construction, operation and maintenance of facilities or properties owned by the state. HR 1104 passed with a vote of 47-0. – **HR 1104**

### **Recognizing the South Fulton Chamber of Commerce**

Senate Resolution 860, sponsored by Sen. Donzella James (D – Atlanta), recognizes the South Fulton Chamber of Commerce on its 71st anniversary. The South Fulton Chamber of Commerce works with seven municipalities on economic development, business retention and recruitment, health, environmental issues and education initiatives. – **SR 860**

### **Type 1 Diabetes Day at the State Capitol**

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) sponsored Senate Resolution 908 recognizing March 16, 2018, as Type 1 Diabetes Day at the state Capitol. Type 1 Diabetes affects both children and adults, with more than 8,000 children in Georgia living with the disease. – **SR 908**

### **Honoring Agnes Doster**

Senate Resolution 997, sponsored by Sen. Gloria Butler (D – Stone Mountain), honors the life of Agnes Doster and her service to the citizens of the state of Georgia. Ms. Doster worked in the Secretary of the Senate's Office for 40 years. – **SR 997**

### **Conference Committee Report**

The Senate approved the following conference committee report:

**SB 3** by a vote of 51-0.





## Senate Disagreements

The Senate disagreed to the House Substitute and insisted on the Senate position on the following:

SB 2



The Georgia Senate will reconvene at 10:00a.m. on  
**MONDAY, MARCH 19.**