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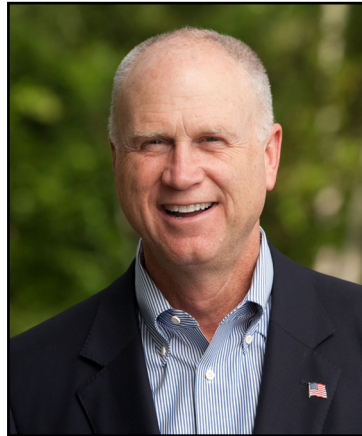
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 GeorgiaStateSenate

# This Week in the Senate

## February 19-22, 2019



### Twenty Days to Sine Die

The end of this week brings us to the halfway mark for the 2019 session. Today, we completed Legislative Day 20, ending a week filled with committee meetings and several votes in the Senate Chamber. We also made progress on our only constitutionally required duty, passing a balanced budget, with the passage of the Amended Fiscal Year 2019 Budget. In total, the Senate saw 12 pieces of legislation passed on the Senate floor, all of which have been sent to the House for consideration.

On Tuesday, the Senate once again stood in solidarity, unanimously passing Senate Bill 48, sponsored by

Senator P.K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville), which addresses the development of policies for identifying dyslexia in Georgia’s students by the State Board of Education. Under SB 48, all kindergarten students would be screened for dyslexia and a referral system would be put into place for first, second and third graders who display characteristics of dyslexia. This legislation is critical for our children’s education and their future. Early detection and intervention are important and I commend my Senate colleagues for addressing this critical issue. I want to thank Senator Zahra Karinshak (D – Duluth) and Senator Jen Jordan (D – Atlanta) for sharing their personal stories on how dyslexia has impacted their lives.

Another piece of legislation we passed was House Resolution 1 which honors the legacy of the 82nd Governor of Georgia, Nathan Deal, by naming the new State Appellate Judicial Complex the “Nathan Deal Judicial Center.” With the Senate’s support, this legislation received final passage. As a former Governor’s Administration Floor Leader, I cannot think of a better way to honor Governor Deal’s accomplishments as a leader and statesman. Governor Deal’s conservative allocations of funding, including increasing Georgia’s rainy day fund to more than \$2.5 billion and maintaining the state’s AAA bond rating, has led the state to boast a prosperous economy. The Complex will be completed in 2019, and I can’t think of a more deserving name to be dedicated to the building than the man who has dedicated his life to public service.

We also welcomed several guests this week recognizing them for their contributions to their local communities and our state. I had the honor of hosting a group of representatives from Georgia’s Emergency Medical Services (EMS) System. They were presented with Senate Resolution 200 which recognized February 21, 2019, as Emergency Medical Services Recognition Day the Capitol. These brave men and women provide essential life-saving services every day and we can never thank them enough. On Friday, I was joined by a member of our Hall County family in the chamber – Chief Randall K. Moon. My colleagues and I recognized and commended Chief Moon for his 29 years of service with the Oakwood Police Department. It was my honor to be joined by him in the Senate and to have our chamber recognize his courageous service.

With the remaining 20 days ahead, the pace will pick up even more. If you have any questions, concerns or feedback, please do not hesitate to reach out. Our office is always open and we are here to be of service.

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

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

### Chief Justice Melton Gives the State of the Judiciary Address

Senators joined their colleagues in the House for a joint session to hear the State of the Judiciary Address. Chief Justice Harold D. Melton of the Georgia Supreme Court gave his first ever address in which he characterized 2019 as a “year of new beginnings,” and described the state of the judiciary as “sturdy, stable and strong.” Chief Justice Melton took time to praise the General Assembly’s continued efforts toward criminal justice reform, highlighting the development of specialty courts and other programs that allow the law to “treat every person as an individual.”



### Congressman Jody Hice Visits Senate

Congressman Jody Hice (GA – 10) visited the Capitol on Tuesday. Congressman Hice congratulated Governor Brian P. Kemp and the Senate for maintaining Georgia’s status as the number one state in which to do business and for their continued influence on policy, especially criminal justice reform, at the federal level.

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

### Authorizing Telephone Cooperatives to Provide Broadband

Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega) sponsored Senate Bill 17 which would allow telephone nonprofit cooperatives in Statesboro, Metter, Newington and Rentz to provide broadband services to rural areas, either directly or indirectly, with a broadband affiliate. SB 17 passed with a vote of 55 to 0. – **SB 17**

### Setting Requirements for Dyslexia Screening and Preparation

Senate Bill 48, sponsored by Sen. P.K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville), would instruct the State Board of Education to develop policies that address dyslexia screening for all kindergarten students, referral for students with identified dyslexia characteristics in grades one to three, as well as screening for those who did not attend kindergarten or were not screened in kindergarten. SB 48 would also require the Georgia Department of Education to implement guidance and training in all schools regarding the teaching of students with dyslexia and require that all schools submit data to the Department regarding students with dyslexia. Additionally, this bill would require that the Professional Standards Commission create a dyslexia endorsement for teachers and include information regarding dyslexia in teacher preparation programs. Under SB 48, the State School Superintendent would establish a pilot program in dyslexia education. SB 48 passed with a vote of 55 to 0. – **SB 48**



### Changing Employee Retirement System Annuity Provisions

Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome) sponsored Senate Bill 55 which would allow Employee Retirement System (ERS) members to purchase Supplemental Guaranteed Lifetime Income (SGLI) annuities using their 401(k) or 457(b) funds. Members may purchase up to two SGLI annuities given that their retirement allowance does not exceed 90 percent of their highest month of earnable compensation. The legislation adds that there would be no post-retirement increases for SGLI annuities, and annuities can be suspended temporarily or permanently by the ERS Board of Trustees. SB 55 passed with a vote of 50 to 2. – **SB 55**

### **Program For Impaired Veterinarians**

Senate Bill 75, sponsored by Sen. Ellis Black (R – Valdosta), would authorize the State Board of Veterinary Medicine to create and conduct a health program for impaired veterinarians that would provide monitoring, rehabilitation and other services deemed pertinent by the Board. SB 75 passed with a vote of 54 to 0. – **SB 75**

### **Revising Outdoor Advertising Restriction Language**

Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonge) sponsored Senate Bill 79 which would remove the word “mechanical” from the phrase “mechanical multiple message signs” in current law which regulates outdoor advertisements on the interstate system, primary highways and other highways. SB 79 would define a multiple message sign as a sign, display or device which changes the message on the sign either electronically or by the rotation of panels or slats. SB 79 passed with a vote of 52 to 1. – **SB 79**

### **U.S. Representative Sanford Bishop Visits Senate**

Congressman Sanford Bishop (GA – 2) visited the Senate on Wednesday, where he credited his time as a state Senator for providing him with many lessons that he still employs today. He commended the Hurricane Michael recovery efforts, but called for continued relief for the impacted farms and rural communities. Congressman Bishop reiterated his focus on Georgia’s needs as he continues his duties at the United States Capitol.



### **Physician’s Day at the State Capitol**

Senate Resolution 139, sponsored by Sen. Ben Watson (R – Savannah), declared Wednesday, February 20, Physician’s Day at the Capitol. Georgia has more than 19,000 licensed physicians who provide health care services to citizens and grow the economies of communities all over the state. – **SR 139**

### **Recognizing Georgia’s Forestry Units**

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) sponsored Senate Resolutions 159 and 160 to commend three Georgia Forestry Units for being named Units of the Year. SR 159 commends the Oglethorpe County Forestry Unit for being named the Georgia Forestry Commission 2018 North Georgia Unit of the Year. SR 160 celebrates the Worth County and Decatur-Seminole County Forestry Units for being named Georgia Forestry Commission 2018 South Georgia Co-Units of the Year. – **SR 159 & 160**

### **Commending Grady Memorial Hospital’s PIVOT**

Senate Resolution 209, sponsored by Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick (R – Marietta), commends Grady Memorial Hospital for its commitment to improving health within and beyond the hospital, specifically through the new Program to Interrupt Violence through Outreach and Treatment (PIVOT). PIVOT is working to break the cycle of gun violence in Atlanta neighborhoods through social services, community policing, data sharing and assistance with housing and employment for participants. – **SR 209**



### **Celebrating Dentists at the Capitol**

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga) sponsored Senate Resolution 210 which recognizes February 20 as Dentist’s Day at the state Capitol. Additionally, the resolution declares Friday, February 22, Give-Kids-a-Smile Day in Georgia and dedicates the month of February as Children’s Dental Health Month in Georgia. – **SR 210**

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21

### C.J.'s Law Passes the Senate

Senate Bill 1, or "C.J.'s Law," sponsored by Sen. Elena Parent (D – Atlanta), would provide a felony penalty for drivers involved in a hit-and-run accident that causes serious bodily harm. The felony charge would constitute imprisonment for a minimum of one year and maximum of 10 years. SB 1 passed with a vote of 50 to 1. – **SB 1**

### Updating Georgia's Hunting Code

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) sponsored Senate Bill 72 which would remove the requirement to have a license for hunting in Wildlife Management Areas. Additionally, SB 72 would allow the use of air guns and air bows for hunting big game during certain hunting seasons and would remove the prohibition against the use of silencers and suppressors. SB 72 would remove the prohibition against baiting feral hogs within 50 yards of the property line, as long as it does not prevent hunting on an adjoining property. The bill would also allow the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to modify hunting seasons and bag limits on deer, raccoons, opossums and bears, and would replace the term "Conservation Ranger" with "Game Warden." SB 72 passed with a vote of 38 to 15. – **SB 72**



### Passing the FY19 Amended Budget

House Bill 30, carried by Sen. Jack Hill (R – Reidsville), is the Amended Fiscal Year (AFY) 2019 Budget. The AFY 19 Budget totals \$26.9 billion. The largest portion of the budget is allocated to education at 53.7 percent, with the second largest percentage allocated to health care at 21.7 percent. HB 30 passed with a vote of 53 to 0. – **HB 30**



### Deputy First Class Rod Reeves Celebrated by Senate

Sen. Greg Dolezal (R – Cumming) sponsored Senate Resolution 100 which recognized and commended Deputy First Class Rod Reeves from the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office for the many sacrifices he has made for his community. Deputy Reeves recently returned to service after experiencing a severe car accident while in the line of duty. He is recognized by his peers for his devotion to duty, loyalty and his leadership skills. – **SR 100**

### Emergency Services Recognition Day at the Capitol

Senate Resolution 200, sponsored by President Pro Tempore Butch Miller (R – Gainesville), recognized February 21 as Emergency Services Recognition Day at the Capitol in celebration of the emergency medical services (EMS) system's 45th year of service. The Senate welcomed EMS professionals from across the state who respond to almost one million assistance calls annually. – **SR 200**



### Alpha Phi Alpha Day at the Capitol

Sen. Lester Jackson (D – Savannah) sponsored Senate Resolution 205 which declared February 21 as Alpha Phi Alpha Day at the Capitol. The Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, founded at Cornell University in 1906, was the first intercollegiate Greek-letter fraternity for African American men. – **SR 205**

## Recognizing Major Tommy Bradford

Senate Resolution 223, sponsored by Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga), commended Major Tommy Bradford who serves as Chief Deputy of the Dade County Sheriff’s Department. Major Bradford has served in key roles in law enforcement, such as a Special Operations Response Team Officer, Sergeant and Captain, during his 25 year career. – *SR 223*

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## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22

### Providing Immunity to Those who Rescue Animals from Locked Cars

Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick (R – Marietta) sponsored Senate Bill 32 which would add a provision to protect a person from civil penalties if they cause property damages while attempting to rescue an incapacitated or endangered animal in a locked vehicle. The bill would also protect the person from sustaining civil penalties if they fail to provide or arrange for the animal’s further medical treatment. This bill would require the person to contact emergency services upon rescue and wait for them to arrive for the immunity to apply. SB 32 passed with a vote of 43 to 4. – *SB 32*

### Funding Repairs and Updates for Educational Facilities after Natural Disasters

Senate Bill 67, sponsored by Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge), would allow school systems with buildings that are at least 20 years old and have been mostly destroyed by natural disaster or fire to receive regular funding to repair or replace damaged buildings. The bill also creates a pathway for schools to qualify for certain grants if the school system’s five-year revenue from SPLOST does not generate enough funds for the required updates or repairs. SB 67 passed with a vote of 41 to 0. – *SB 67*



### Providing a New Pathway to Become an Organ Donor

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) sponsored Senate Bill 99 which would allow those applying for a hunting, fishing or trapping license to also have the option to register to become an organ donor. The Department of Natural Resources would be responsible for providing the appropriate organizations with the information of the organ donor. SB 99 passed with a vote of 47 to 0. – *SB 99*

### Senate Agrees to Amended Fiscal Year 2019 Budget

House Bill 30, carried by Sen. Jack Hill (R – Reidsville), is the Fiscal Year 2019 Amended Budget. The Senate agreed to the Senate substitute as amended by the House of Representatives and passed HB 30 with a vote of 48-0. The bill was immediately transmitted to the House. – *HB 30*

### Naming the “Nathan Deal Judicial Center”

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga) carried House Resolution 1 which would name the forthcoming appellate judicial complex the “Nathan Deal Judicial Center.” After a long legal career, Nathan Deal served as the 82nd Governor of Georgia. Governor Deal dedicated his political career to economic growth and criminal justice reform. In his eight-year tenure, former Governor Deal led Georgia to be the number one state in which to do business. HR 1 passed with a vote of 39 to 2. – *HR 1*



### **Congratulating the Bainbridge Bearcats Football Team**

Senate Resolution 182, sponsored by Sen. Dean Burke (R – Bainbridge), congratulated Head Coach Jeff Littleton and the Bainbridge Bearcats football team for winning the 2018 GHSA AAAAA State Football Championship. – *SR 182*

### **Recognizing Police Chief Randy Moon**

President Pro Tempore Butch Miller (R – Gainesville) sponsored Senate Resolution 192 which recognized and commended Oakwood Chief of Police Randall K. Moon for his 29 years of service. Chief Moon not only serves his community as a police officer, but as a member of the advisory board for the Georgia Public Safety Training Center and as a lifetime member of the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. – *SR 192*



**The Georgia Senate will reconvene at 10:00 a.m. on  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25.**