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This Week in the Senate

February 25-March 1, 2019



Crossover Day is Coming

During our seventh week here under the Gold Dome, the Senate passed 28 pieces of legislation. With just two legislative days before Crossover Day, committees regularly held meetings late into evening hours.

On Monday, we debated and voted on four pieces of legislation. One of these bills addresses a priority our chamber has worked on for over three years – expanding broadband access to all Georgians. The Senate unanimously passed Senate Bill 66 – “Streamlining Wireless Facilities and Antennas Act” – sponsored by Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonega), which would address the use of public rights of way by wireless providers. Under SB

66, the application process for 5G companies to collocate small wireless facilities (antennas) on existing or new poles would be streamlined and standardized. I want to commend Sen. Gooch for all of his hard work on not only SB 66 but also SB 2, which is currently in Rules, and SB 17, which already passed the Senate, expanding broadband across Georgia by increasing access to reliable internet services.

Another priority we addressed this week was the safety of our children and educators in our schools. On Wednesday, the Senate passed Senate Bill 15, the “Keeping Georgia’s Schools Safe Act.” This bill, sponsored by Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell), creates provisions for a site threat assessment to be completed every four years by Georgia’s public schools by a third-party agency, consisting of either Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) or a company trained by GEMA. The bill also outlines ways in which communication can be improved between schools, law enforcement and state safety departments. I want to thank Sen. Albers for his work during the interim on the Senate Study Committee on School Safety, the recommendations of which helped create SB 15. Keeping our children and educators safe at all times is critical, and I thank my Senate colleagues for passing this important measure.

On Thursday, one of our freshmen Senators presented his first bill in the chamber. Sen. Randy Robertson (R – Cataula) sponsored Senate Bill 149 which would eliminate the requirement that law enforcement officers must tow a vehicle when they have pulled it over for improper tag decals. During the floor debate, Sen. Robertson responded to several important questions as is customary for our freshmen senators. I congratulate Sen. Robertson on getting his first bill passed in the Senate and wish him the best of luck in the House.

In addition to the legislation we addressed in the chamber, I had two very special groups join us this week. On Tuesday, I presented Senate Resolution 191 to representatives from the Consulate-General of Japan celebrating the 45th anniversary of the establishment of the Japanese Consulate-General in Georgia. The Japanese Consulate-General works to strengthen the ties between Georgia and Japan by helping support Japanese citizens and companies in the southeast. On Thursday, I had the honor of welcoming Arthur Blank and the “Super Bowl LIII” Committee to the Senate. We presented Mr. Blank and members of the committee with Senate Resolution 61 which commends the Atlanta Super Bowl Host Committee and names Thursday, February 29, “Super Bowl LIII” Day at the Capitol.

Overall it was a very busy but productive week. Next week we will be in session on Monday and Tuesday before Crossover Day on Thursday. With only 15 legislative days left this session, I look forward to the Senate continuing our great work on behalf of our citizens and this great state.

Senator Butch Miller
President Pro Tempore, Georgia Senate

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Altering Revenue Bond Requirements and Voting Exemptions

Senate Bill 43, sponsored by Sen. Chuck Payne (R – Dalton), would add “transmission” to the list of acceptable uses of electric or gas revenue bonds. SB 43 would also allow governmental bodies with electric utilities worth \$300 million or more to be exempt from the current voting requirements regarding its authority to issue a bond certificate. SB 43 passed with a vote of 42 to 12. – **SB 43**



Deploying Broadband Services

Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlongea) sponsored Senate Bill 66 which addresses the use of public right of ways by wireless providers. SB 66 would streamline wireless broadband deployment by allowing for a standardized application process for 5G companies to collocate small wireless facilities (antennas) on existing or new poles. SB 66 passed with a vote of 53 to 0. – **SB 66**

Strengthening Financial Management of Local School Systems

Senate Bill 68, sponsored by Sen. Freddie Powell Sims (D – Dawson), would require the Office of Student Achievement to monitor the financial management of local school systems that repeatedly report audit irregularities or budget deficits. SB 68 would require those schools to submit a corrective action plan to the Georgia Department of Education. SB 68 would also require the State Board of Education to train newly elected school board members regarding the school system’s most recent audit. SB 68 passed with a vote of 53 to 1. – **SB 68**

Remitting Funds to the Peace Officers’ Annuity and Benefit Fund

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) sponsored Senate Bill 73 which would allow court clerks to allocate five dollars of the fee charged for pretrial intervention or diversion program costs to the Peace Officers’ Annuity and Benefit Fund. SB 73 passed with a vote of 54 to 0. – **SB 73**

Senator David Perdue Visits Senate

United States Sen. David Perdue (R – GA) visited the state Capitol on Monday where he commended the Georgia Senate’s hard work and thanked members for setting an example for their fellow legislators in Washington, D.C. He also thanked Senators for their work regarding Georgia’s ports, noting that Savannah is home to the only port in the United States that exports more than it imports.

Senate Welcomes Congressman Austin Scott

Congressman Austin Scott (GA – 8) visited the Senate this week and thanked members for their dedication to the people of Georgia. He urged Senators to continue to exhibit decorum throughout this legislative session.



Recognizing Big Door Vineyards

Senate Resolution 25, sponsored by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R – White), commended Big Door Vineyards for its contributions to the economies of Bartow and Cherokee Counties. Big Door Vineyards opened in September of 2018 and its wines have been awarded on the state and national level. – **SR 25**

Delta Day at the Capitol

Sen. Gloria Butler (D – Stone Mountain) sponsored Senate Resolution 27 which commended Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and declared February 25 as Delta Day at the Capitol. Founded in 1913 at Howard University, Delta Sigma Theta is a predominately African-American organization that prides itself on its history of public service. – **SR 27**

Recognizing Annie Hinds and James Proctor

Sen. Lee Anderson (R – Grovetown) sponsored Senate Resolutions 126 and 127 which commended James Proctor and his special education teacher, Annie Hinds, for their accomplishments. In 2012, Mr. Proctor experienced a number of brain aneurysms which forced him to leave school temporarily. Under the guidance of Ms. Hinds, he was able to graduate from Grovetown High School in 2018. – **SR 126 & 127**

Commending Cathy E. Loving

Senate Resolution 147, sponsored by Sen. Valencia Seay (D – Riverdale), recognized Cathy E. Loving as a distinguished Georgian. The Senate celebrated Ms. Loving for opening the first Black History and School History museums in the United States, as well as for her 27-year-career in the Atlanta Public School system. – **SR 147**

Senate Welcomes Members of the Technical College System of Georgia

Senate Resolution 152, sponsored by Sen. John Wilkinson (R – Toccoa) and presented by Sen. Brian Strickland (R – McDonough), acknowledged the statewide impact of the Georgia Association for Career and Technical Education (CTE). The resolution also commended CTE educators who prepare students for their future careers. – **SR 152**

Celebrating Gordon Lee High School Softball Team

Sen. Jeff Mullis (R – Chickamauga) sponsored Senate Resolution 170 which recognized the Gordon Lee High School softball team for winning the 2018 Class A Georgia High School Association Fast Pitch State Championship. This is their ninth consecutive state championship. – **SR 170**

Welcoming Representatives from the University of West Georgia

Senate Resolutions 181 and 183, sponsored by Majority Leader Mike Dugan (R – Carrollton), recognized members of the 2019 University of West Georgia (UWG) Student Government Association and Blue Coat Ambassadors for their student leadership, as well as UWG President Kyle Marrero for his commitment to higher education. These two student organizations and President Marrero represent a school that is reaching record levels of enrollment growth and graduation rates. – **SR 181 & 183**



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Allowing Physicians and Patients to Enter into Direct Contracts

Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick (R – Marietta) sponsored Senate Bill 18 which would allow physicians to provide health care to a patient through a direct primary care agreement without being subject to insurance regulations. Senate Bill 18 passed with a vote of 55 to 0. – **SB 18**



“Patients First Act” Passes Senate

Senate Bill 106 or the “Patients First Act,” sponsored by Sen. Blake Tillery (R – Vidalia), would allow the Department of Community Health and the Governor to request the 1115 and 1332 Medicaid waivers from the federal government. SB 106 passed with a vote of 32 to 20. – **SB 106**

Issuing Telemedicine Licenses to Non-Georgia Doctors

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) sponsored Senate Bill 115 which would allow the Georgia Composite Medical Board to issue telemedicine licenses to doctors who do not reside in Georgia as long as they have a clean disciplinary record. Under SB 115, the doctor would report to the Board and comply with Georgia confidentiality and patient record laws. SB 115 passed with a vote of 54 to 0. – **SB 115**

Renaming and Defining the Georgia Telemedicine Act

Senate Bill 118, sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford), would change the name of the “Georgia Telemedicine Act” to the “Georgia Telehealth Act” and would redefine “telemedicine.” This bill would require that insurance companies cover telehealth services. Additionally, SB 118 would prohibit insurers from encouraging enrollees to use telemedicine instead of in-person services. SB 118 passed with a vote of 50 to 0. – **SB 118**

“Margie’s Law” Passes Senate

Sen. Ben Watson (R – Savannah) carried House Bill 62, which would require health care facilities that conduct mammograms to notify the patient when their results show dense breast tissue. Additionally, HB 62 would require the mammogram results summary to include information regarding next steps and the reason for notification. HB 62 passed with a vote of 55 to 0. – **HB 62**

Celebrating the Lee County High School Football Team

Senate Resolution 149, sponsored by Sen. Greg Kirk (R – Americus), celebrated the Lee County High School Trojans football team for winning the 2018 GHSA AAAAAA State Football Championship. The Trojans thanked the Senate, noting that the promise of a Senate Resolution fueled their undefeated season. – **SR 149**



Building Owners and Managers Association of Georgia Day at the Capitol

Sen. Brian Strickland (R – McDonough) sponsored Senate Resolution 169 which commended the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) of Georgia and declared Tuesday, February 26, as BOMA Georgia Day at the Capitol. The BOMA of Georgia represents the commercial real estate industry which contributes \$5.5 billion to the state's economy. – **SR 169**

Honoring the Anniversary of the Consulate-General of Japan in the Southeast

Senate Resolution 191, sponsored by President Pro Tempore Butch Miller (R – Gainesville), celebrated the 45th anniversary of the establishment of the Japanese Consulate-General in Georgia. The Japanese Consulate-General works to strengthen the ties between Georgia and Japan by helping support Japanese citizens and companies in the southeast. – **SR 191**

Georgia Cattlemen's Association Day

Senate Resolution 236, sponsored by Sen. John Wilkinson (R – Toccoa), designated February 26 as Georgia Cattlemen's Association Day at the Capitol. The President and other leadership from the Georgia Cattlemen's Association visited the Senate, representing 15,000 cattle ranchers in Georgia whose work generates a \$4 billion economic impact. – **SR 236**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

"Keeping Georgia's Schools Safe Act" Passes Senate

Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell) sponsored Senate Bill 15 which would require public schools to conduct threat assessments every four years by a third-party agency, consisting of either Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) or a company trained by GEMA. Additionally, SB 15 would streamline communication efforts between schools and the relevant state intelligence agencies designated in the legislation. This bill would also require that schools use and promote a statewide mobile application to report suspicious activity or potential threats. SB 15 passed with a vote of 47 to 8. – **SB 15**

Creating Banking Improvement Zones

Senate Bill 20, sponsored by Sen. Michael Rhett (D – Marietta), would allow for the establishment of banking improvement zones in underserved areas as authorized by the Department of Community Affairs. Local governments within banking improvement zones would be able to deposit funds into the banks with an agreed upon fixed interest rate at or below the bank's two-year certificate of deposit rate. SB 20 passed with a vote of 55 to 0. – **SB 20**

Transferring of Titles Regarding TAVT

Sen. Tyler Harper (R – Ocilla) sponsored Senate Bill 65 which would allow an individual to transfer titles of vehicles between legal entities of which they own at least 50 percent without paying an additional title ad valorem tax. SB 65 passed with a vote of 54 to 0. – **SB 65**



Clarifying Hospital Authority Trusts' Use of Funds

Senate Bill 71, sponsored by Sen. Ben Watson (R – Savannah), would allow hospital authority trusts that do not run a medical facility to utilize existing funds towards both inpatient and outpatient services for the indigent. This bill clarifies that the use of a hospital authority's funds must go toward its original purpose and would allow trusts with more than \$20 million to invest 30 percent into mutual or investment funds. SB 71 passed with a vote of 51 to 0. – **SB 71**



Exempting Licensed Orthodontic Schools from State Authorization

Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome) sponsored Senate Bill 91 which would exempt licensed orthodontic schools from the Nonpublic Postsecondary Educational Commission application process. Schools would be exempt if they are accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation and a national agency recognized by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. SB 91 passed with a vote of 53 to 0. – **SB 91**

Seventh Annual Jackson-Butts County Day

Senate Resolution 93, sponsored by Sen. Burt Jones (R – Jackson), declared Wednesday, February 27, as Jackson-Butts County Day at the Capitol. The Senate welcomed distinguished guests including City of Jackson Mayor Kay Pippin. Butts County is home to Indian Springs State Park which Mayor Pippin described as a “clean, green and safe community.” – **SR 93**



Boy Scouts of America Celebrated in Senate

Sen. John F. Kennedy (R – Macon) sponsored Senate Resolution 132 which commended the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and declared February 27 as Scouts BSA Day at the Capitol. Sen. Kennedy welcomed two Eagle Scouts who have earned all 138 merit badges to the Senate. BSA is an organization that is committed to youth character development and community service. – **SR 132**

Rural Health Day at the Capitol

Senate Resolution 201, sponsored by Sen. Jack Hill (R – Reidsville), celebrated the Georgia Rural Health Association and recognized February 27 as Rural Health Day at the Capitol. The Georgia Rural Health Association is a nonprofit that advocates for consumers and health care professionals in the state's 120 rural counties. – **SR 201**

Lupus Foundation of America and Lupus Advocacy

Sen. Donzella James (D – Atlanta) sponsored Senate Resolution 227 which declared February 27 as Lupus Advocacy Day at the Capitol. Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease that affects at least 1.5 million Americans and approximately 55,000 Georgians. – **SR 227**



Ambassador Pavel Shidlovsky Recognized by Senate

Senate Resolution 262, sponsored by Sen. Marty Harbin (R – Tyrone), welcomed the Ambassador of Belarus to the United States, Pavel Shidlovsky, to the Senate. Ambassador Shidlovsky has served in his position since 2014, fostering the relationship between the Republic of Belarus and the state of Georgia. – **SR 262**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Creating an Atlanta United License Plate

Sen. P.K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville) sponsored Senate Bill 8 which would create a license plate bearing the Atlanta United F.C. logo and the team's slogan, "Unite and Conquer." Funds accrued from the sale of this plate would support the Atlanta United Foundation. SB 8 passed with a vote of 53 to 1. – **SB 8**



Requiring Fuel Distributors to Electronically File Reports

Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome) sponsored Senate Bill 127 which would require motor fuel distributors to electronically file their monthly reports with the Department of Revenue. SB 127 passed with a vote of 53 to 0. – **SB 127**

Requiring Employers to Send Tax Forms to Employees and the Department of Revenue

Senate Bill 128, sponsored by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome), would clarify that employers are required to send a W-2 and 1099 form to both the relevant employee and the Department of Revenue by a stated deadline. This bill also specifies monetary penalties that would increase 30 days after the deadline. SB 128 passed with a vote of 53 to 0. – **SB 128**

Creating a Specialty License Plate Honoring Tuskegee University

Sen. David Lucas (D – Macon) sponsored Senate Bill 137 which would create a specialty license plate honoring Tuskegee University. The funds raised by the sale of the license plate would be given to the Atlanta Tuskegee Alumni Club, Inc. SB 137 passed with a vote of 54 to 1. – **SB 137**

Removing Towing Requirements for Law Enforcement

Senate Bill 149, sponsored by Sen. Randy Robertson (R – Cataula), would remove the requirement that law enforcement officers must tow a vehicle that has been pulled over for improper tag decals. SB 149 would subject drivers who have been cited for a tag violation to a maximum fine of \$50 as long as they demonstrate proof of tag decal revalidation by their assigned court date. SB 149 passed with a vote of 52 to 1. – **SB 149**



Revising Laws Regarding Domestic Insurers

Sen. P.K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville) sponsored Senate Bill 156 which would provide regulations regarding the division of a domestic insurer into two or more entities. SB 156 defines shareholder rights and protections after an insurer divides, the legal responsibilities of all relevant parties and regulatory oversight by the insurance commissioner. SB 156 passed with a vote of 53 to 1. – **SB 156**

Changing Requirements Regarding Property Taxes

House Bill 183, carried by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R – Rome), would clarify that taxpayers who fail to report their property value when filing their tax return can file a property tax appeal as long as the property taxes were paid the prior year. HB 183 passed with a vote of 55 to 0. – **HB 183**

Commending the “Super Bowl LIII” Host Committee

Senate Resolution 61, sponsored by President Pro Tempore Butch Miller (R – Gainesville), commended the Atlanta Super Bowl Host Committee and named January 29 “Super Bowl LIII” Day at the Capitol. February 3rd marked the third time that Atlanta has hosted the Super Bowl and the first time that it was held in Mercedes-Benz Stadium. – **SR 61**

Recognizing Senator Dr. Donald Thomas

Senate Resolution 174, sponsored by Sen. Chuck Payne (R – Dalton), congratulated former Senator Dr. Donald Thomas on reaching his retirement after a 58 year medical career. Sen. Thomas devoted his political career in the General Assembly to improving public safety, helping to pass bills that required truck drivers to wear seatbelts and banned smoking in public buildings. – **SR 174**

Celebrating Atlanta United F.C.’s 2018 MLS Cup Win

Sen. P.K. Martin (R – Lawrenceville) sponsored Senate Resolution 224 which commended Atlanta United F.C. for its 2018 Major League Soccer Cup win. The team has broken records in average game attendance and are credited with Josef Martínez’s historic 31 goal season. – **SR 224**



FRIDAY, MARCH 1

Expanding the Statute of Frauds

Senate Bill 37, sponsored by Sen. William Ligon (R – White Oak), would clarify that an agreement to make an alteration, modification, repeal, revocation, rescission or cancellation to a contract under the statute of frauds must be made by both parties and in writing. SB 37 passed with a vote of 52 to 1. – **SB 37**

Limiting Self-Storage Unit Late Fees

Sen. Jesse Stone (R – Waynesboro) sponsored Senate Bill 97 which would cap the amount of late fees that a self-storage facility may charge at either 20 percent of the monthly rent or \$20 per month, whichever is greater. Additionally, the bill specifies that if the contract goes into default, the late fee would be included in what the facility can collect from its lien. SB 97 passed with a vote of 43 to 10. – **SB 97**

“Georgia Tax Credit Business Case Act” Passes Senate

Senate Bill 120, sponsored by Sen. John Albers (R – Roswell), would require the state auditor to perform an economic analysis on certain income tax credits and sales and use tax exemptions on a five-year rotating basis. SB 120 passed with a vote of 53 to 0. – **SB 120**

Modernizing the Insurance Code

Sen. Marty Harbin (R – Tyrone) sponsored Senate Bill 133 which would make updates to language in Georgia’s Insurance Code. SB 133 would also raise the maximum fee the Insurance Commissioner may charge, specifies the monetary penalties for misreported funds and adds a preexisting condition provision relating to short-term health insurance. SB 133 passed with a vote of 54 to 0. – **SB 133**

Expansion of Georgia Coroners Training Council's Duties

Senate Bill 154, sponsored by Sen. Steve Gooch (R – Dahlonge), would revise complaint procedures regarding coroners' conduct. SB 154 would extend the Georgia Coroners Training Council's duties to include reviewing complaints from outside parties and making recommendations concerning the retention, suspension or removal of a coroner from their position. SB 154 passed with a vote of 53 to 0. – **SB 154**

“Anti-Human Trafficking Protective Response Act” Unanimously Passes Senate

Sen. Brian Strickland (R – McDonough) sponsored Senate Bill 158 which would make changes to Georgia Code regarding sex trafficking. SB 158 includes increasing the penalties for those found guilty of sex trafficking and updates the age at which a victim of sex trafficking is defined as a minor. Senate Bill 158 passed with a vote of 54 to 0. – **SB 158**

Regulating Shellfish Farming in Georgia

Senate Bill 182, sponsored by Sen. William Ligon (R – White Oak), would authorize the Department of Natural Resources to provide the necessary rules and regulations to grow the shellfish industry by establishing the regulatory framework for farming shellfish in Georgia. The bill would outline the leasing process for shellfish farm locations, establish rules regarding the farming of certain species of oysters that may have diseases and outlines a process to regulate the harvesting of the shellfish. SB 182 passed with a vote of 54 to 0. – **SB 182**

Recognizing the School Social Workers Association of Georgia

Sen. Renee Unterman (R – Buford) sponsored Senate Resolution 161 which declared March 1 as School Social Workers Association of Georgia (SSWAG) Day at the Capitol. Founded in 1978, SSWAG advocates for the needs of all children by providing access to a variety of resources such as mental health counseling, intervening in school crises and providing education to homeless youth. – **SR 161**

Celebrating Zack Fowler

Senate Resolution 177, sponsored by Sen. Blake Tillery (R – Vidalia), commends Zack Fowler for his induction into the Georgia Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame. Mr. Fowler was recognized for his service as general manager of Vidalia Communications and his service in the United States Army. – **SR 177**



**The Georgia Senate will reconvene at 1:00 p.m. on
MONDAY, MARCH 4.**