



*Jill C. Fike*  
*Director*

*Angie Fiese*  
*Deputy Director*

*Senate Research Office*  
*204 Paul D. Coverdell Legislative Office Building*  
*18 Capitol Square*  
*Atlanta, Georgia 30334*

*Telephone*  
*404.656.0015*

*Fax*  
*404.657.0929*

## **FINAL REPORT OF THE SENATE SENIOR TECHNOLOGY GAP STUDY COMMITTEE**

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

**Senator Valencia Seay, Chair**  
**District 35**

**Senator John Albers**  
**District 56**

**Senator Brandon Beach**  
**District 21**

**Senator Gloria Butler**  
**District 55**

**Senator Chuck Hufstetler**  
**District 52**

## Table of Contents

- INTRODUCTION.....1
- BACKGROUND.....1
- COMMITTEE FINDINGS.....2
  - Benefits
  - Training
  - Fraud Protection
- COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS.....2
- SIGNATURE PAGE.....3

### INTRODUCTION

The Senate Senior Technology Gap Study Committee (the "Committee") was created by Senate Resolution 881, which was adopted during the 2014 Legislative Session.

The Committee was composed of five members of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate. The Senators serving on the Committee were: Senator Valencia Seay, serving as Chair; Senator Gloria Butler; Senator John Albers; Senator Brandon Beach; and Senator Chuck Hufstetler.

Additional legislative staff assigned to the Committee was: Ms. Naomi Eubanks, Legislative Assistant to Senator Valencia Seay, and Mr. John Culverhouse of the Senate Research Office.

The Committee traveled to communities all across the state to meet with seniors and hear their concerns. The Committee met on four occasions. The first meeting was held at the Bartow County Senior Center on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The second meeting took place at the Carrie J. Mays Family Life Center in Augusta, Georgia on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The third meeting took place at the Macon/Bibb County Senior Center on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The fourth meeting was held at the Frank D. Chester Senior Center in Columbus Georgia on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

At each meeting, the Committee heard testimony from seniors in the community, as well as industry professionals interested in identifying and closing the technological gap faced by seniors in today's society. Presenters included: Mr. Gerald Huang with Comcast; Mr. Kevin Curtin with AT&T; Mr. Dave Pilgrem with AARP; Mr. Stan Shepherd with AT&T; Mr. Bob Davis with Verizon; Dr. James Bulot with the Georgia Department of Human Services; Mr. Chris Bennett with Verizon; Ms. Stacy Cole with Comcast; and Mr. Tobias Tillmon with AARP.

### BACKGROUND

Today's seniors are all too often reticent to use new technology. Often an underserved segment of the population, it is imperative that seniors not get left behind in the current technological revolution. With important services increasingly being offered online, it is important for Georgia's seniors to embrace technology as a part of their everyday lives. From important medical information, to keeping in touch with family and friends, technology can help keep seniors healthy and connected. Seniors are also choosing to own and live in their own homes, and technology helps keep them safe and connected. Unfortunately, seniors tend to be intimidated by technology, concerned with privacy and security, and a unaware of its many benefits. The Committee sought to identify these concerns while offering solutions and best practices when operating technology and maintaining an online presence.

## COMMITTEE FINDINGS

Meeting 1: The first meeting was held at the Bartow County Senior Center. Testimony was heard from David Pilgrim of AARP and Kevin Curtin of AT&T. Mr. Pilgrim discussed the Technology, Education and Knowledge (TEK) program offered by AARP. The TEK program provides hands-on workshops for seniors to learn how to use tablets and smartphones. Kevin Curtin with AT&T presented testimony on the importance of obtaining knowledge to use a smartphone. Mr. Curtin noted that 75 percent of Georgians no longer have landlines in their home and that smartphones are the wave of the future. He also spoke on the investments AT&T is making throughout the state to provide access to high speed internet and wireless connectivity.

Meetings 2, 3 and 4: The final three meetings were held in a town hall format. A lively question and answer session ensued at each meeting, and the Committee addressed the many concerns of seniors. Concerns expressed by seniors included privacy; fraud protection; affordability of smart phones; lack of training; and lack of connectivity in rural Georgia.

Testimony was heard at the third meeting from Tobias Tillman with AARP. Mr. Tillman spoke in detail regarding the many successes of the TEK workshop program offered by AARP. The TEK program focuses on one-on-one training designed to teach seniors how to use smartphones and tablets. Additionally, TEK workshops address social media, online safety, and staying connected, among other topics. TEK workshops are free of charge and open to anyone who registers to attend. Currently, TEK workshops are offered in Atlanta, Augusta and Macon.

### Benefits of Using Technology

- State Services are coming online (Division of Family and Child Services; Medicaid; Food Stamps; Welfare);
- Keeping up with family and friends;
- Texts messages used during times of natural disasters when phone calls may not be able to be placed;
- Cellular phones to be used during time of emergencies; and
- Applying for jobs online.

### Training for Seniors

- TEK program offered by AARP; and
- Senior Centers/Libraries

### Fraud Protection

- Identifying best practices to avoid fraud.

## COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage a partnership with the State, AARP, and industry leaders to provide TEK workshops to more Georgia communities.
- Encourage Comcast to expand Internet Essentials to address the needs of the senior population.
- Encourage a partnership with University System of Georgia for students to provide training for seniors and obtain course credit in the process.
- Draft legislation imposing increased consumer protections for seniors to prevent online fraud.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Valencia Seay". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Honorable Valencia Seay, Chair  
Senator, District 34