

Under the Gold Dome



District 149 Legislative Update– August 2015



Did you know that Agriculture is Georgia's largest and oldest industry? According to the UGA Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development, Agriculture contributes approximately \$72.5 billion annually to our state economy. In fact, one in seven Georgians work in agriculture, forestry or related fields. It was reported in 2012 that Georgia had approximately 42,257 farms, encompassing 9.6 million acres of land. Georgia is not only known for our Peaches, but we also lay claim to being ranked as top producers in chicken, blueberries, peanuts and pecans. While it is no secret the Georgia's AG industry plays a huge role in our state's economic well being, many citizens don't realize how hard we work on the state level to ensure this industry is well taken care of.

The Georgia General Assembly passed numerous pieces of legislation, including a number of budget items in 2015 to make sure our farm communities have the tools they need to succeed. The 2016 Fiscal Year Budget has approximately \$23 million set aside for various AG projects around the state. Below are a few items that we passed last session for the benefit of our states Agriculture Industry.

Agriculture Legislation

- **House Bill 123** - Adds registered, tagged trailers to the list of haulers requiring adequate tie-downs as in chains on trailers for security of load.
- **House Bill 199** - Creates uniform state-wide notification system by loggers to local governments for entrance and exit dates regarding harvesting operations
- **House Bill 255** - Requires the State to consider Green Building certifications that include the use of Georgia Forest products in state construction
- **House Bill 292** - Links state tax law back up with federal law (Federal Tax Section 179) and raises deduction from \$250,000 to \$500,000.
- **House Bill 461** - Tightens metal theft laws currently in place. Adds vehicle batteries to list of protected metals after a rash of school bus battery thefts and limits the sale of metal from grave-sites and cemeteries to funeral home operators or cemetery owners
- **House Bill 475** - Loosens hunting restrictions on feral hogs. Also allows for night and vehicle hunting and limits transportation of live hogs.
- **House Resolution 744** - Creates a Study Committee to make recommendations regarding drone application for Agriculture.

As your Representative and a strong advocate for our AG industry, I am proud of all we do to support the farmers in our state. Our farm communities do so much for Georgia and I will do everything in my power to ensure they have the support they need in order to be successful. As always, it is a true pleasure to serve you and if you ever need anything at all, please let me know. Thank you for allowing me to represent your needs in Atlanta and I look forward to seeing you as I continue to make my way around our district. God bless you and may God continue to bless the great state of Georgia!