

Under the Gold Dome



District 149 Legislative Update– July 2015



Hello friends of District 149! The last month has been busy for the state of Georgia! Not only did July 1st mark the beginning of a new fiscal year for our state, but it is also when most laws passed during the previous session go into effect for our Georgia citizens. Below is a quick reference of a few laws that went into effect on July 1st.

Transportation funding: The sales tax on gasoline was converted to a per-gallon excise tax and will not fluctuate with the sale amount. The law imposes a \$5 nightly tax on hotel/motel rooms and a \$200 yearly user fee on electric vehicles while eliminating the tax credit for purchasing them. Air lines will no longer be exempt from the sales tax on jet fuel. The funding act is expected to raise nearly a billion dollars that will go directly to Georgia's transportation and infrastructure needs.

Fireworks legalization: New business and industry has popped up around the Peach State due to this change. Fireworks are now taxed, and shops selling them will be regularly inspected by local and state fire marshals. There is a possibility that this issue will return during the 2016 session to look at aspects of the current law that may need changing.

Solar financing available: Third party solar panel financing is now available for homeowners, small businesses and nonprofits. This law allows private companies to own the rooftop panels, paying the property owner with electricity while selling the rest to the local electric utility.

Abuse Crackdown: There were numerous laws passed during the 2015 session which are intended to crack down on abuse offenders against children and the elderly. Three sexual abuse laws were passed. The first extends the statute of limitations for prosecution to the former child victim's age to 25. The second law extends the period in which a former child victim can sue a perpetrator. The third outlaws lewd texting and emailing of photographs. In an effort to cut down child abuse and neglect Georgia has created a statewide registry of convicted child abuse offenders. The registry is expected to be helpful for our social workers who will now be able to better track when offenders move from county to county. We also passed legislation protecting our aging community. Prosecutors will now be able to charge suspects with racketeering for physical abuse or financial exploitation of the elderly or disabled.

Speed trap elimination: The law is designed to discourage revenue-producing speed traps. Local law enforcement agencies receiving more than 35 percent of their budget from traffic citations, within 20 mph of speed limits, will have a more difficult time winning court challenges.

Tests for pregnant women: Health care providers are now required to test women in the final three months of pregnancy for HIV and syphilis. Women have the right to refuse the tests.

Driver's licenses: The state can now issue licenses with black-and-white photos. Driver's licenses will also be non-revocable for most non-driving offences. The law also allows for temporary licenses in certain circumstances.

Van seat belts: All vehicles that seat 15 passengers or fewer must include seat belts that passengers will be required to wear. The new requirement also changes the capacity limits to include church vans and small buses.

Feral hogs: The law removes certain restrictions on hunting feral hogs. This is great news for our farmers as these animals are known for damaging crops. Transporting and Feral hog will now require a state-issued permit.

Veterans: Employers can now give preferences to military veterans in hiring and promoting.

State mammal: The white-tailed deer is now Georgia's official state mammal.

As always, it is a pleasure to serve you and the citizens of District 149. If you ever need anything at all, please feel free to contact me at anytime. God bless you and may God continue to bless our great state!

