

Under the Gold Dome



District 149 Legislative Update - June 2015



Unlike the United States Congress, which meets in Washington, D.C. year round, Georgia is considered a part-time legislature. As a "part-time" legislator one of the most common questions I receive is, "what do you do for the rest of the year?" While a 40 day session does not sound like much, there is actually a ton of work that takes place year round in preparation for the next session. As your Representative, my top priority is to ensure that the policy we enact will make Georgia and District 149 the best place to live, work and play. I want Dodge, Telfair, Wheeler, Jeff Davis and Laurens Counties to be the type of place where future generations grow and thrive because opportunity isn't a question- but a certainty. That being said, I do my best to learn as much as I can about all legislation presented to me. I never like to vote on an issue unless I have a full understanding of what the results will be on all sides and even then, sometimes there are unintended consequences. In an effort to cut down on the unintended consequences, we will study issues in depth outside of the 40 day session time period. So what do we do the rest of the year? Besides handling constituent issues, touring our districts and participating on legislative panels, many of us serve on Study Committees.

Much like we are appointed to standing committees during our legislative terms, we may also be appointed to study committees in the off session season. Study committees are put in place to further discuss, research and hear expert opinion on the subject area that may be affected by a piece of legislation. Depending on the subject matter, committees are formed separately in the House and Senate. At times, joint study committees are put in place and member representatives from both chambers will participate in the discussion. These committees tackle complex issues and are often the "make it" or "break it" moment for future legislation.

This year there are a total of 24 study committees between the House and Senate. These committees are discussing a number of pressing issues from welfare fraud and air drone use to the future of Georgia's Hope Scholarship program. Appointments for the 2015 committees have not been made, but I look forward to serving if chosen to do so. For a full listing of 2015 study committees you can visit the Georgia General Assembly website. Committee meetings are open to the public and I encourage you to attend if there is a subject you are interested in learning more about!

Similar to our state study committees, there are also national study committees through the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). I am currently active on three NCSL study committees- Labor & Economic Development, Immigration Task Force and most recently I was selected to serve on the Unmanned Aircraft Systems study committee. These committees consist of as little of ten legislators nationwide, so it is an honor to be invited to participate. These committees research and recommend solutions to our United States Congressional leaders on how to handle certain issues. I look forward to working with my fellow committee members in researching thoughtful and good policy for our US citizens.

Over the last month I have had a great time making my way around the district! I have had the opportunity to serve on a number of panels discussing Georgia's 2015 legislative landscape while attending events in district 149. I also held a series of town hall meetings in May updating our residents on the 2015 political landscape. I appreciate all those that attended, offering insight and guidance on a number of issues facing our state. I will continue to keep you updated throughout the year on what is happening with the Georgia General Assembly and in the meantime, if you need anything at all, please feel free to reach out to me. As always, it is a pleasure to work on your behalf and an honor to do so. God bless the 149th District and God bless the great state of Georgia!