

Under the Gold Dome



District 149 Legislative Update – Session Week 1 — 2016



Monday, January 11th was a hectic day in Atlanta, as legislators from across the state made their way to the Capitol to mark the beginning of 153rd Legislative Session of the Georgia General Assembly. It was great to see my legislative colleagues and friends, as we discussed plans to move our state forward. While I look forward to this session, forty days is not much time to discuss the issues, so it is important that we all work together and do what is best for our Georgia citizens.

State of the State

On Wednesday, January 13th Gov. Deal delivered his annual State of the State address which covered highlights of the last year and hopes for the new one. Gov. Deal noted that Georgia's economy is back on track and continuing to grow. As a result of removing the sales tax on energy manufacturing, this industry has produced 22,000 new manufacturing jobs, representing over \$900 million in added wages for Georgia families. Governor Deal also highlighted strides that we have made in technical education, making Georgia more desirable for companies that are searching for a qualified workforce. Education reform, healthcare costs, criminal justice reform and a pay raise for state employees are all issues that Governor Deal plans to focus on over the next couple of years.

Education Reform

Education reform has been a hot topic over the last year and the debate of how to best service the educational needs of our students will continue. During the State of the State, Governor Deal announced that recommendations from his appointed Education Reform Commission would not be put in place until 2017. That means, we will have ample opportunity to vet the final report, gain input and address questions and concerns from our education community. I am pleased to report that the state will allocate an additional \$300 million towards K-12 education this year. While the General Assembly has made improvements where education is concerned, there is still much work to be done.

Transportation Projects

Work on our states infrastructure continues as we make strides to improve Georgia's transportation system. Now that Georgia is the 8th most populated state in the nation, adequate transportation, and maintaining our roadways and bridges, is necessary for citizen safety and Georgia's economic development. The Department of Transportation has projects scheduled across the state in an attempt to relieve our congested and worn highways. Over the next 18 months we will see over 2,500 miles in roadway resurfacing, the replacement of 118 bridges, the widening of 36 roadways, hundreds of safety projects and a 20% increase in local government grants. Citizens can keep track of transportation projects around the state by visiting www.GAroads.org.

Committee Process

In the coming weeks, I will have a number of Committee meetings to attend. Committees serve a vital role in the legislative process in our state government. Once a bill is drafted and officially filed the bill is assigned to a committee. The committee will carefully review the bill and determine whether it's a good, clear bill. If it's passed out of committee, it will then go to the Rules Committee, which decides whether the bill will receive a vote from the House body. Every bill that moves through the legislature should be carefully reviewed by all Senate and House members, legislative counsel and most importantly, the people of Georgia that hold a special interest in the respective bill. The road from first draft to becoming law is long and challenging to ensure every bill we pass is in the best interest of all Georgians.

Committee Process Continued...

I will continue to serve as Chairman of the State Planning and Community Affairs Committee. In addition, I will serve on many more committees that are crucial to our area. Knowing the importance of the budget process, economic development and Georgia's healthcare issues, I am proud to serve on the Appropriations, Economic Development & Tourism, Health and Human Services, and Games, Fish & Parks Committees.

Budget Week

Tuesday, January 19th marks the beginning of what we refer to as "Budget Week". Despite the hundreds of bills that will be discussed over the next 40 days, the only thing that we are constitutionally required to do by law is pass a balanced budget. In the coming days I will be working with other members of the Appropriations Committee in deciding where state funds should be allocated. I will keep you informed on funding and projects that will take place in our region as we move through the budget process.

As we move through session, I will continue to update you on all that's happening Under the Gold Dome! Representing the people of our district is such an honor and I am so grateful that you have given me the opportunity to learn from you, to listen to you and most importantly, to serve you. If you ever need anything at all, please reach out to me at anytime. Thank you again for your support, words of encouragement and much needed prayers!

Jimmy Pruett



Georgia House of Representatives, District 149