

Under the Gold Dome



District 149 Legislative Update – Session Week Nine — 2016



Believe it or not, the 2016 legislative session is in the homestretch with the completion of week nine. Last week was eventful as we began to consider the many Senate bills successful in making the Crossover Day deadline. With just a few days left, we are working frantically to ensure we pass legislation for the benefit of our Georgia citizens.

Property Insurance Laws Expanded

Georgia's business friendly climate continues to thrive with the unanimous passage of Senate Bill 137. SB 137 which would expand current Georgia property insurance laws, allowing corporations specifically described as one or two family residential buildings to collect insurance coverage when a building is completely destroyed by fire. The legislation would also update value policy law to include corporations and other legal entities owned by multiple individuals. Currently, comprehensive fire insurance is only available to individuals renting property; however, SB 137 would extend the same protections to our growing business population.

Consumer and Provider Protection Act

Another pro-business bill given final approval in the House this week was Senate Bill 158, the "Consumer and Provider Protection Act." This act deals with rental preferred provider healthcare networks in Georgia. A rental preferred provider healthcare network, or rental network, is a preferred provider network that contracts with a health insurer to provide access to the terms and conditions of its contract with the provider's discount, and then sells that contract to another network without the provider's knowledge or consent. If enacted into law SB 158 establishes the following:

- Framework for rental preferred provider healthcare networks in Georgia to increase transparency for health care providers and consumers.
- Requires anyone conducting business as a rental preferred provider network in Georgia to register with the Commissioner of Insurance within 30 days of beginning their work, allowing the Commissioner to regulate this practice.
- Rental preferred providers would no longer be allowed to access network provider's discounts without a contract stating the terms of the agreement
- Networks would be required to create a webpage to let networks know who they are selling to in an effort to promote transparency.

Currently, 15 states and the Federal Health Employee Benefit System have regulations on rental preferred provider networks offering increased protections to their healthcare providers and more information for consumers. The passage of SB 158 would make Georgia the 16th state offering the same protections.

Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training

Senate Bill 279, which expands the current voting membership of the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) Council to 22 members passed unanimously this week. The Georgia P.O.S.T. Council is responsible for administering the regulatory process, setting the standards for training and certification, and providing essential technical assistance to the law enforcement community. P.O.S.T. also provides Georgians with qualified, professionally trained, ethical and competent peace officers and criminal justice professionals.

P.O.S.T. continued....

Georgia State Patrol, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Georgia Department of Corrections, deputy sheriffs, county police, municipal police, and campus police are a few of the many examples of peace officers in our state. The legislation provides the member additions of the commissioner of juvenile justice or their designee and the commissioner of natural resources or their designee. The additional inputs from these new members will be crucial as we continue to lead the nation in innovative solutions to criminal justice reform and ensure heightened public safety standards in Georgia.

Senate Approves 2017 Fiscal Year Budget

We are one step closer to fulfilling our constitutionally mandated duty of preparing a balanced budget as the Senate approved House Bill 751, the 2017 Fiscal Year budget. The Senate version of the 2017 budget varies slightly from the original version that was passed by our body, prompting the creation of a conference committee this week. If the Senate and House cannot agree on amendments or bill changes from the other chamber, a conference committee is appointed. The conference committee is usually made up of 3 members from each chamber that will try and negotiate terms of the bill. Once an agreement is met, the committee then presents both chambers with a Conference Committee Report. If the conference committee legislation is approved by both chambers, it is then sent to the governor's desk for consideration. I look forward to hearing the final recommendations of the conference committee appointed this week for HB 751 and seeing a final budget proposal for FY2017.

Among other happenings under the Gold Dome, last week was also qualifying week for those wishing to seek state and federal office. I am pleased to announce that I qualified for reelection to continue my service of representing House District 149! As we move towards the primary election on May 24th, I humbly ask for your support. It is such an honor to serve you and I promise, I will continue to work hard on your behalf. If you ever need anything at all, please reach out to me. Your input is very important to me as I consider many important votes. As the close of the 2016 legislative session draws near, I thank you for the kind words of encouragement and support you have given throughout my time in office. Casey and I have enjoyed our time in Atlanta but we look forward to making our way home to see everyone. Again, thank you for allowing me the privilege working on your behalf. God bless each and every one of you and may God continue to bless the great state of Georgia!



Jimmy Pruett
Georgia House of Representatives, District 149