

# Under the Gold Dome



District 149 Legislative Update – Session Week Five — 2016



Week five under the Gold Dome was hectic as we continue to make our way through the 2016 legislative session. Thursday, February 11th marked day 20 of 40 legislative days, meaning session is halfway over. Last week was a great week as we passed a number of measures receiving bi-partisan support addressing issues such as education, religious liberty, public safety and expedited licensing for military families.

## **House Bill 767**

The House unanimously passed House Bill 767 which adds utility service vehicles and workers in the fields of electric, natural gas, water, waste-water, cable, telephone, or telecommunication services to the list of those covered under Georgia's current Spencer Pass law, also known as Georgia's Move Over law. Originally passed in 2003, the Spencer Pass Law was enacted to reduce risks for public safety and emergency personnel as they performed roadside job duties. The law also requires drivers to make a lane change when approaching any stationary towing, recovery or highway maintenance vehicle parked on the shoulder of the highway. If changing lanes is impossible, or unsafe, the driver is required to slow down to a speed less than the posted limit and be prepared to stop. Violators would now be subject to a fine of up to \$250. It is our hope that by including utility workers in the law, additional lives will be saved. I am passionate in ensuring the safety of those who service citizens in our community and I am pleased that this measure now moves to the Senate for further consideration.

## **House Bill 757- Pastor Protection Act**

As a number of religious liberty measures are under consideration within the General Assembly, The Pastor Protection Act, House Bill 757, was the first to be passed out of the House last week with unanimous support. The Pastor Protection Act protects members of the clergy from performing or participating in any marriage which violates their faith. The bill also protects churches, synagogues, other places of worship and religious organizations from being required by state or local government to host an event which violates their religious beliefs. Further, the legislation will protect private businesses from any ordinance which might require them to be open on a day of rest (Saturday or Sunday). I am in support of preserving religious liberty for our Georgia citizens and I believe this bill will help that effort.

## **Education Measures**

In an effort to increase funding transparency within our school systems, two bills were passed out of the House last week. With over half of the state budget going towards education, it is critical for us to continue an open dialogue with local school districts in order to understand additional funding needs.

*Education Measures Continued....*

The first of two measures came in the form of [House Bill 739](#). HB 739 would give the State Board of Education the option to establish a committee to study and recommend instructional materials and content. The legislation also allows local boards of education to implement a review process for any locally approved instructional material. Further any instructional material approved by State or local boards, must be posted on their website for public view. Content will also be available for individual review upon request. We are hopeful this process will further local control and parental involvement within our education system.

The second education measure passed to further transparency within our education systems was [House Bill 659](#). HB 659 requires each local school board and state charter school to make financial information available for public access. If passed into law, local boards would be required to publicly post financial information for each individual school in their district. State charter schools would also be required to post financial information. Further, each school and district would be required to send the information to the Department of Education, to be compiled by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement where the information will be published on its website as well. The bill requires schools to post costs of the following:

- All materials and equipment
- Staff salaries and benefit expenditures
- Professional development, including annual training and tuition
- Facility maintenance
- Small capital projects

New construction or major renovation on a cost-per-square-foot basis for each individual school

Similar to schools, local boards of education would also be required to publicly post the following:

- Annual budget
- Available audits
- Ratio of expenditures to revenues
- Total dollar amount of local property tax revenue the school system is authorized to collect
- Total program mill levy

Total dollar amount of all other tax revenue collected

The bill is now in the Senate and awaits further review.

**House Bill 821**

Military families will find transitioning to Georgia's workforce a bit easier with the passage of [House Bill 821](#). HB 821 would require all state licensure boards to streamline the licensing process, specifically for military spouses and transitioning service members who move to Georgia from another state. The bill would allow those eligible to qualify for temporary occupational licenses, licenses by endorsement, or expedited licenses. Streamlining the licensure process for qualified military spouses and transitioning veterans will give individuals who want to enter our workforce the chance to do so in a more efficient manner. Servicemen and spouses are eligible for expedited licensing if they meet the following criteria:

- Currently holds a license from another state where the training, experience, or testing meets or exceeds that of the Georgia license requirement they are seeking
- Transitioning veterans currently on active duty status or are within 24 months of their retirement who have received specialty, certification, training, or experience in the military which meets or exceeds Georgia license requirements

*Military Measures Continued....*

With 12 military bases across the state, and the fifth largest military population in the nation, it is imperative that we help these families transition with ease and I am honored to join my colleagues in support of this measure. I cannot thank our servicemen and their families enough for the sacrifices they make on our behalf and I am hopeful that this legislation will make their transition into our great state a positive experience!

I will keep you posted on any news regarding the various measures we consider as we make our way towards the end of session. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to me anytime. It is my pleasure to serve you, working for the betterment of our state and district. Thank you for your continued support and much needed prayers. I hope to see you all very soon!



Jimmy Pruett  
Georgia House of Representatives, District 149