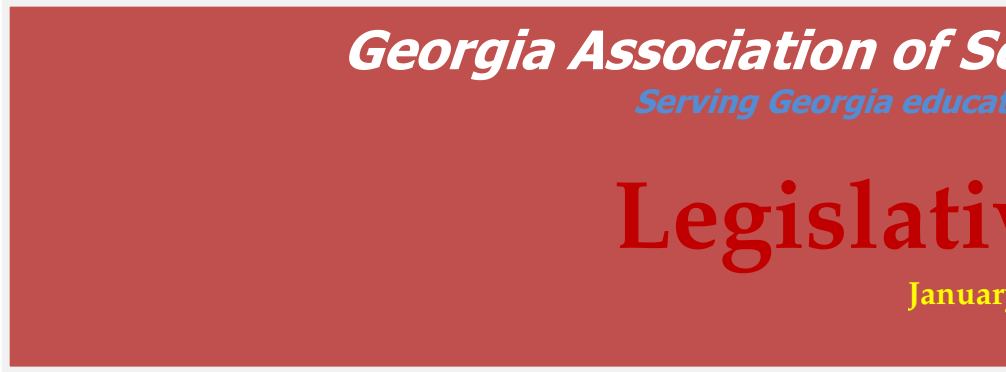


Jimmy Stokes

From: Jimmy Stokes [stokes30650@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2010 8:47 PM
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Subject: Legislative Update--January 15, 2010



New Day

Opening Day 2010 brought the elections as anticipated—**David Ralston for Speaker** and **Jan Jones for Speaker Pro-Tem**. While rhetoric generally is cheap at the Legislature, the sincerity espoused and demonstrated by both Ralston and Jones brought a welcome change to Capitol politics. Jones is the **first female in the history of Georgia** to serve as Speaker Pro-Tem or Speaker.

Budget???

Since before Joshua fought the Battle of Jericho, the Governor has presented his Budget Proposal during his State of the State address—not so anymore. The Governor promised to release his budget by Friday, January 15 and he did—not good news for educators: three more furlough days and significant cuts in other areas. The Legislature will be in recess January 15—January 24 for the purpose of budget hearings. What happens next week is open to conjecture. Next week's *Legislative Update* will have details on the Governor's budget.

Education Legislation Introduced/Passed

HB 651—Eliminates the requirement that the DOE send sex offenders lists to each school system (information is readily available on the internet) . **Passed House Education Committee on Tuesday.**

HB 904—Changes the formula for the Equalization Grant that fundamentally gives more equalization funds to the very poorest school systems. Systems in the 1-25th percentile would receive 90% of full equalization fund, systems in the 26-50th percentile would receive 80% of full equalization funding and systems in the 51-74th percentile would receive about 28% of full equalization funding. Systems in the 75-100th percentile continue to receive no equalization funding.

Held by House Education Committee on Thursday—not a good sign for the bill.

HB 905—Extends the deadlines for capital outlay that were dropped in the last night fiasco of 2009. Passed House Education on Thursday.

HB 906—Extends for three years the May 15 contract notification requirement that was enacted for last year. Passed House Education on Thursday.

HB 907—Changes some basic definitions in the *Middle School Program*, most particularly allowing full middle school funding regardless of where grades 6-7-8 are housed. Currently if all three are not housed together, the system loses funding for that grade level. It also eliminates the mandatory remedial time for students that have experienced unacceptable academic performance. Systems will be able to craft remediation as they deem appropriate. Passed House Education on Thursday.

HB 908—Suspends expenditure controls for three years and basically changes the State funding to a block grant type program. The law would eliminate: expenditure controls, the 65% floor for instruction funding, funding for 20 extra days, maximum class size, and the state teacher salary schedule. Unfortunately it takes all the controls away and offers no limits—classes could be as large as anyone wanted to make them. Held by the House Education Committee on Thursday. Inside sources say that if the bill resurfaces, it will be without the class size and salary schedule elements.

HB 910—Eliminates the requirement that systems file annual gender equity (Title IX) reports with the DOE. Systems must continue to file such reports with GHSA.

HB 923—Changes the deadline for completing an education leadership program and receiving pay for same without holding a leadership provision to July 1, 2013. Program must have been initiated by April 1, 2009. Passed House Education on Thursday.

HB 924, HB 937—Eliminates the nepotism restrictions imposed at the 11th hour during the 2009 legislative session and redefines school board membership qualifications.

HB 925—Eliminates the requirement to notify delinquent attendance students and parents by certified mail and requires only regular mail instead.

HB 927, HB 940—Expands bullying statute.

HB 882—Tightens state bullying statutes

SB 298—requires a first aid course in Georgia schools

SB 299—attempts to remove *zero tolerance* discipline policies in schools

SB 301—raises mandatory school attendance age to 17

SB 84—revived from the dead, sets qualifications and training requirements for school board members and is more imposing than HBs 924 and 937

The Governor's Proposals

In his *Eggs and Issues* speech on January 12, and his *State of the State* speech on Wednesday, the Governor proposed Performance Pay for teachers and principals-- This legislation will preserve the current salary structure but will also enhance it by allowing current teachers to opt-in to a new, performance-based pay structure. The State Board of Education (SBOE) will be required to adopt a common, statewide evaluation tool that takes student achievement into account when assessing teachers and leaders. Using this tool, the state will calculate a Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) and Leader Effectiveness Measure (LEM), 50 percent of which will be based on student growth. SBOE will adopt a new salary schedule that provides performance bonuses for the state's most effective teachers and principals. The TEM and LEM will be used to determine if teachers are eligible for bonuses related to performance and career ladder opportunities in their schools. The bill will enable those who are already enrolled in advanced degree programs to complete their studies and remain in the present salary structure if they so choose. But, new teachers and those who choose to opt-in to the performance-based salary structure will no longer be paid for the degree but instead will be paid for the degree to which students grow. The Governor has had a heavy hand in Georgia's preparation of the *Race to the Top* grant being prepared by the Office of Student Accountability and a private consulting firm. Big federal bucks are at stake and to this point there has been limited DOE and educator input. (Superintendents were given less than two weeks to respond and that was in the middle of Christmas break.) One of the tacit requirements of the *Race to the Top* grant is pay-for-performance and that may be the motivating factor in the Governor's push for the abolition of the salary scale and institution of pay-for-performance. It is regretful that not enough "old timers" are around the table—they would recall the pay-for-performance program the State administered years ago that worked amazingly well, at least until revenues push it out.

Trial Balloon Crashes

On Tuesday the House Education Committee discussed at length the measures found in HB 908 which contains measures to **eliminate the state salary schedule and to remove ALL restrictions on class size**. By Thursday there had been so much negative feedback from Republicans, Democrats, and educators that HB 908 was placed on *hold*, meaning a dim future for the bill. Inside sources say that if the bill does resurface it will be without the salary schedule and class size provisions. Most importantly, it does not bode well for the Governor's proposal and its elimination of the salary schedule in favor of pay for performance. There is widespread concern about the startup costs for the Pay for Performance plan and that very well may be the death ell for the proposal.

Big Changes

As expected, **Speaker David Ralston** made some significant changes in House leadership this week. **Bill Hembree** assumes the chairmanship of the very powerful Committee on

Rules; Terry England was appointed chairman of the Ways and Means subcommittee on Education, Len Walker was moved into Hembree's former position as chair of House Higher Education.

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