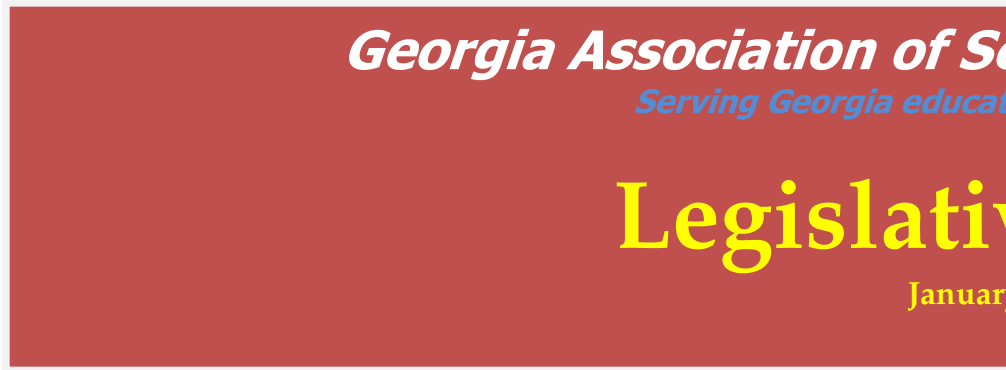


## Jimmy Stokes

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**From:** Jimmy Stokes [stokes30650@bellsouth.net]  
**Sent:** Friday, January 29, 2010 4:49 PM  
**To:** JIMMY STOKES  
**Subject:** GASSP Legislative Update--January 29, 2010



## Deeper Than Miller's Cave

In 1964 Bobby Bare sang the legendary song *Miller's Cave* about a deep, bad hole in Waycross, Georgia. Well, it's time to dust off the records and sing that song again. Education in Georgia is in the deepest cave that it has been in since Eugene Talmadge and Richard Russell squared off over the University System in the 1930's. A recent trusted analysis has looked at the amount of State funds that have been removed from public education, K-12, in the past seven and one-half years. It is shocking to learn that under the leadership of the current governor, **\$4.1 BILLION** has been stripped from public schools. Some have been temporarily replaced by Federal funds, but none the less we are **attempting** to operate with about 75% of the funds that we had in 2003. The next governor will be stymied with a system that must accomplish world class education on a peanut butter budget!

## Flexibility Danger

**Skip Yow** reports that on Thursday afternoon the House Education Committee revisited HB 908, the Great Flexibility Bill. The original bill would waive all restrictions on expenditure controls, class size, salary schedule and the 65% rule. Three substitutes to the bill were offered. One substitute was presented by Rep Casas which only gives flexibility to suspend expenditure controls through June 30. Rep. Benton offered to amend the substitute by Rep Casas. His amendment would alter the class size by allowing grades K-5 to increase by one student and grades 6-12 by

two students. He would also suspend the expenditure controls and the 65% requirement. Rep. Lindsey had the third substitute. His bill would waive expenditure controls, the 65% requirement, class size and the salary schedule. It would require a 30 day notice and a public hearing before a local board used any of the provisions. No vote was taken. **Chairman Coleman stated he will hold HB 908 for two weeks at which time a vote will be taken. He said contact your Representative or Senator with your comments or requested changes. Now is the time to make your voice be heard, so contact your Rep with your concerns. The salary schedule provision and the unlimited class size provision make this one of the most dangerous bills to have emerged in the Legislature in some time!!!**

A substitute was offered to HB 910, the gender equity bill. The substitute, which was **passed** by the House Education Committee, requires the DOE to annually publish a report regarding expenditure and participation rates for high school athletes of both genders.

Some of the best news of Thursday's House Education meeting was the HB 904, the bill to change the way equalization is calculated, was tabled for the remainder of the session by Chairman Brooks Coleman. The bill would have significantly lowered the equalization funds received by 25% of the State's school systems.

## **NEW Legislation**

House Bill 951 Extends for 2010 the sales tax holiday for school supplies, clothing, footwear computers and computer accessories, and energy products

House Bill 952 Extends for 2010 the sales tax holiday for school supplies, clothing, footwear computers and computer accessories but NOT energy products

House Bill 953 Extends for 2010 the sales tax holiday for energy efficient products but NOT for school related supplies.

House Bill 977 Prohibits systems from giving raises to any administrator in a year in which teachers do not receive a raise

House Bill 980 Prohibits school board members from being bail bondsmen.

House Bill 984 Prohibits local income taxes

**House Bill 992** Permits money spent on neighborhood security systems to be tax deductible

**House Bill 995** Prohibits start of school year prior to September 1 or Labor Day whichever comes first.

**House Bill 966** Requires that *permanent* classroom space be available in order for intradistrict transfers to be permitted, does not permit trailers to be used for meeting classroom requirement

**House Bill 1018** Calls for the DOE to develop programs in rape prevention and personal safety education for preventing teen dating violence, the Love Is Not Abuse Curriculum

**House Resolution 1166** Encourages school boards to apply for federal funding to retrofit school buses with pollution control devices.

**House Resolution 1203** Calls for a constitutional amendment that permits a sales and use tax for educational purposes for maintenance and operation of public schools

**Senate Bill 60** Allows local boards to set the dropout age at 16, 17, or 18

**Senate Bill 84** Set qualifications for local school boards, permits the Governor to remove board members if a system loses accreditation, and establishes nepotism policies for persons serving in leadership positions. SB 84 died in the House during the 2009 session. House Education Committee has revived the bill and discussed it at its meeting on Thursday of this week.

**Senate Bill 132** raises the state dropout age to 17 Favorably discussed at Senate Ed Committee on Tuesday, no vote taken

**Senate Bill 298** Would require a basic first aid course as part of the 8th grade and high school health courses. Would require *certification* in first aid for high school graduation. After a lengthy discussion at Senate Ed Committee on Tuesday, major changes are expected.

**Senate Bill 307** Teacher Bill of Rights adapted from MACE's Teacher's Bill of Rights. Discussed at Senate Ed Committee on Tuesday, expect major changes

**Senate Bill 319** Expands definition of textbooks to include computer hardware and technical equipment for nonprint or digital content

Senate Bill 320 Enacts a *Bill of Rights for Teachers* similar to that proposed by MACE.

Senate Bill 299 Seeks to eliminate the *zero tolerance* provisions of the law regarding weapons in schools and weapons within a school zone

Senate Bill 332 Requires an annual report to the DOE from each system with regards to the expulsions for weapons and related offenses

## **The Refrain**

The hopes for a better tomorrow and a new way of doing things in the Legislature lasted only until special interests and greed came out of their hiding places. In the 2009 General Assembly, the Legislature enacted **\$800 million** in tax exemptions that directly impacted State revenues. Out of their hiding places, four bills (HB 998, 1001, 1006, and 1008) call for even more tax exemptions. We are literally giving away the farm! Be advised that there will be more such bills introduced before long, looking after special interests, and detracting from the revenue that is so desperately needed.

There is no dearth of ill advised education bills—**HB 995** is a prime example. The bill prohibits the start of the school year before September 1 or Labor Day, whichever comes first. The authors of the bill are members of the Tourism Committee and one can only hope that was their motivation, but at this point, you just don't know. The bill's authors ignored the problems caused by EOCT's coming in block schools after almost three weeks of vacation. School veterans know that it is easier to teach students in August when they are "fresh to school" than in June, well after the testing season has passed.

**Stay tuned, it has only just begun!**