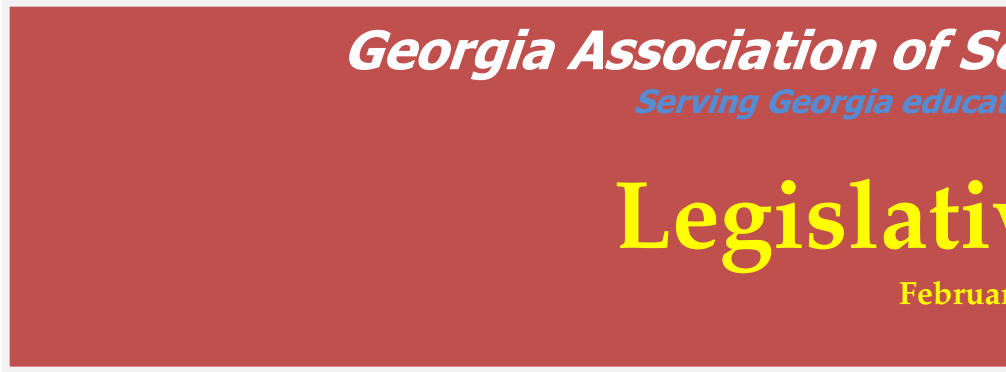


Jimmy Stokes

From: Jimmy Stokes [stokes30650@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Friday, February 12, 2010 8:40 AM
To: JIMMY STOKES
Subject: GASSP Legislative Update--February 12, 2010



Governor Goes For It, 4th Down and Goal to Go

In the afterglow of Super Bowl 44, Governor Sonny Perdue put it all on the line in his attempt to leave a positive education legacy. As has been reported often, the Governor is responsible for removing \$4.1 BILLION from education funding during his time in office. On Monday of this week he called his fourth and goal play in an attempt to put a positive spin on his tenure.

ATLANTA – Governor Sonny Perdue announced today education legislation has been introduced that would increase pay for Georgia’s top teachers and principals, and increase the integrity of Georgia’s testing system.

"Boosting pay for Georgia’s top teachers is an idea whose time has come," said Governor Perdue. "Focusing on student improvement with other measures like peer evaluations aligns state funding with our policy priority: improving the education of our students. The new pay model will help the state attract, reward, encourage and retain top teachers."

Sen. Don Balfour, chairman of the Senate Rules Committee, is introducing SB 386, the Governor’s legislation to increase pay for high performing teachers and principals.

"This legislation rewards our All-Star teachers through higher pay," said Senator Balfour. "These teachers go all the way for our students and should be rewarded appropriately."

Current teachers and principals would have the choice to opt into the enhanced pay model under the proposed legislation. The legislation would require the State Board of Education to adopt a common, statewide evaluation tool that takes student improvement into account in addition to peer observation of planning and instruction when assessing teachers and leaders by July 1, 2011. Using this tool, the state will calculate an Effectiveness Measure which will allow for increased pay for the state’s most effective educators.

Already twenty-three local school districts making up 41 percent of Georgia’s public school students have committed to a similar compensation model through the state’s federal Race to the Top application. The state will implement best practices from those districts in developing and implementing the statewide system.

The Governor also announced today that State Rep. Matt Ramsey, a Floor Leader in the House, is introducing HB 1121 and HB 1111, legislation that will ensure the integrity of the state’s education data.

"We must ensure integrity in our tests. This becomes even more important when we tie teacher evaluations to student improvement," said Governor Perdue. "Valid data is the key to making good public policy decisions and developing a credible system of rewarding our top educators."

HB 1121 will make it unlawful for anyone to knowingly tamper with or facilitate cheating on tests required by the State Department of Education. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) will examine the results of mandated tests. GOSA may submit requests for investigation to the Professional Standards Commission and the Attorney General. Violators will be guilty of a misdemeanor and have their certification suspended or revoked. Under HB 1111, violators will also be subject to the loss of their pensions.

"We need accurate data to base policy decisions on," said Rep. Ramsey. "This legislation will make it clear what the penalties are for tampering with tests. The ultimate victims in these cases are the students, and we must do everything we can to ensure our students receive the services they need to progress."

A few candid comments about the Governor's proposal: 1. The costs of implementing the plan is staggering and the Governor is betting on getting the "Race to the Top" federal grant. (O'Henry would love the irony—a Republican governor often bitterly critical of a Democratic administration staking his great plan on the very hand that fed him stimulus money. Without the federal money, there is NO money to implement this program.) 2. The Governor has indicated that he will introduce legislation to make the State Superintendent, who would implement the plan, a governor appointed position. It is obvious to Capitol observers that Governor Perdue is attempting to strip the current State School Superintendent of what little real authority she retains. The Governor has methodically, and this legislation package reinforces it, shifted authority and power to the Governor's Office of Student Achievement. Getting education right for the children of Georgia is hard enough without having to watch a policy tug-of-war that directly impacts meaningful education progress. 3. IMPORTANT—the plan gives teachers the option of staying on the traditional pay scale or opting for the performance pay scale but the traditional scale is depreciated by cutting step increases in half. The Performance Pay scale is to be funded on the backs of those teachers that opt to stay on the traditional scale.

NEWS

A special, special thanks goes to our friend Skip Yow. I have been on the bench this week with some health issues but Skip has provided all of the information regarding the goings on in the Legislature. Thank you Skip, we owe you big!

Despite what was reported last week, HB 916 relates to ERS, not TRS. Thanks to Bill Sloan for catching that.

On Tuesday, the House passed **HB 908** which provides relief of spending controls for instructional funds and 20 days additional instructional funds. The bill now goes to the Senate.

On Tuesday, the House Academic Support Subcommittee gave a do pass to **HB 925** which permits systems to notify parents of students with **excessive unexcused absences** with regular mail rather than certified mail. It also gave do pass to **HB 936** which permits bus replacement funds for **refurbishing of buses** and **HB 937** which is a limited grandfathering clause for the **nepotism** legislation passed in the 11th hour of Day 40 last year. The subcommittee gave a do pass to **HB 977**, also known as the **Crawford Lewis Bill**, prohibits a superintendent from receiving a salary increase, other than step increases, in a year in which teachers in that system are furloughed.

The Senate Education and Youth Committee discussed **SB 352**, the *Make Georgia Look Academically Like Florida* bill, on Tuesday but took no vote.

Wednesday saw an active day. The House passed **HB 542** which impacts positively the retirement benefits of the Public Employee Retirement System (custodians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, etc.). Judiciary-Non Civil gave a do pass to the first of the bullying bills, **HB 927**, and broadens **bullying** to include cyber bullying. In a grand political maneuver, the House Science and Technology Committee in an 8:00 AM meeting gave a do pass to **HB 281**. Rep. Len Walker's bill to permit Virtual School Students (home schoolers) to participate in **extracurricular activities** at the school in their residence zone. The bill died in the Education Committee in 2009, but reappeared in Science and Technology this year--and what do they have to do with extracurricular activities? Ain't politics grand?

Thursday saw the House Appropriations Committee present their FY10 Supplemental Budget. While some areas have seen some restoration, the budget still reeks of cuts and slashes. The finalized supplemental budget will be shared with you as soon as it is approved by the Senate. The House Education committee passed out **SB 84**, the Board of Education qualification and removal bill, along with **HB 925**, and **HB 936** (described above).

The Senate Education and Youth Committee on Thursday afternoon gave a do pass to SB 132. **SB 132** raises the compulsory attendance age to **17**. They discussed **SB 298** which requires **first aid certification** as a part of graduation from high school but took no vote. (This was the second lengthy

discussion of this bill with no vote being taken.) **SB 386**, the Governor's pay-for-performance bill was also discussed but no vote taken.

NEW Legislation

House Bill 1097 Requires the start of the school year no earlier than the third week of August each year.

House Bill 1100 House version of the comprehensive education reorganization called for in SB 352.

House Bill 1102 Provides sales and use tax exemption for certain nonprofit health centers.

House Bill 1103 Requires the PSC to do criminal background checks rather local school systems

House Bill 1105 Exempts watercraft held in inventory for resale to be exempt from ad valorem taxes for a limited period of time.

House Bill 1108 Changes zero tolerance policies and charging students with felonies. One of the changes is the a student cannot be charged with a felony until they have brought a knife to school for the second time.

House Bill 1110 Prohibits local BOE members from being employed by the local BOE for a period of one year following their leaving the BOE.

House Bill 1111 Adds unlawful acts relating to state mandatory uniform assessments (state testing program) to the list of public employment related crime. Persons convicted of public employment related crime lose ALL retirement benefits.

House Bill 1112 Excludes military retirement income from Georgia income tax.

House Bill 1113 Requires local BOEs to report the results of disciplinary tribunals that expel students for bringing weapons to school.

House Bill 1114 Provides for the Student Teen Election Participant program

House Bill 1116 Prohibits an member of the General Assembly from receiving ANY compensation from any political subdivision within their district.

House Bill 1120 Exempts certain nonprofit health centers from sales and use tax. Extends exemptions for certain qualified nonprofit job training organizations.

House Bill 1121 Makes it unlawful to tamper with state tests and sets out various penalties for those found guilty of same.

House Bill 1130 Suspends class size regulations, permitting classes K-5 to be raised by one student and classes 6-12 by two students. It also authorizes the SBOE to raise the limits by one more student. It requires a public hearing to implement class increases.

House Bill 1132 Eliminates CRCTs in grades one and two.

House Bill 1136 Restores salary increases for persons receiving National Board Certification. Hope lives!

House Bill 1149 Provides a tax exemption for using certain reusable grocery bags.

Senate Bill 386 Establishes an alternative performance-based salary schedule, teacher and administrator effectiveness instruments, and a phase in of the use of the instruments to place teachers and administrators on the performance salary schedule. (Governor's bill)

Senate Bill 388 Requires that when a law authorizes an officer or agency to publish any matter, the publication may be in printed or electronic format.

Senate Bill 387 Provides career counseling and advisement for students in grades 6-12.

Senate Bill 392 Requires that schools verify that charter bus companies they use are certified.

Senate Bill 393 Governor's bill that calls for the appointment rather than election of the State School Superintendent, Commissioner of Agriculture, Commissioner of Labor, and the Commissioner of Insurance.