

Jimmy Stokes

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From: Jimmy Stokes [stokes30650@bellsouth.net]  
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To: stokes30650@bellsouth.net  
Subject: GASSP Legislative Update--February 19, 2010



*Georgia Association of Schools*  
*Serving Georgia educators*

**Legislative**  
February

## The Camel's Nose Tries to Get Farther Under the Tent

The proverbial *Camel's Nose Under the Tent* continues to perplex educators in the form of **voucher legislation**. Every year there is yet another attempt to expand vouchers (paying private school tuition with state tax dollars) and this year is no exception. **Senate Bill 361** authored by two of the most anti public school senators (**Tommie Williams of Lyons and Chip Rogers of Woodstock**) attempts to rename the SB 10 Special Needs Scholarship enacted four years ago to *Georgia Early Hope Scholarship*. It is nothing more than an attempt to expand vouchers, this time offering private school tuition assistance to foster children, Section 504 students, and military family students. One can only assume that the additional groups are included because no legislator would dare vote against such students. The bill passed out of Senate Education on Thursday and is on its way to the full Senate. Understanding the voucher cause is problematic at best but it most certainly appears that the end goal of vouchers is not to destroy public education but rather to skim the cream of the crop off for private schools--after all the poor, ill prepared, and unwashed have to have somewhere to go to school and the private schools don't want them. See SB 361 for exactly what it is—an emotional attempt to further the cause of vouchers. The legendary Bear Bryant said often that quitting is only difficult the first time and that is what voucher proponents are attempting to do, get legislations to vote for vouchers once, then it becomes a matter of routine. If you have any opportunity to talk with your legislator, let them know that public educators totally oppose the use of most precious state funds for private

education. Vouchers will not go away and like fire ants we must treat them before they spread.

## News

On **Tuesday**, the Senate Education Committee gave do pass to **HB 905, 906, and 906** which passed the House last week.

They also gave a do pass to **SB 387** which requires career counseling for middle school. (No suggestions as to how it will be paid for in FY2011.) Also on Tuesday, the Sales Tax Committee of Ways and Means gave a do pass to **HB 1020/HR 1203** which, if approved by voters statewide, would enable local systems to call for ELOST elections that would provide sales tax for maintenance and operation of schools. The Senate Appropriations Committee also cleared the **FY2010 supplemental budget** with a \$17 million increase in equalization, heading to full Senate adoption on Thursday. There is considerable difference between House and Senate versions at this point, thus the Conference Committee becomes crucial. In other Tuesday action, the House passed **HB 122** which requires all local government units, such as BOEs, that have a budget of more than \$1 million per year to have **website** on which they post their working budget and certain other financial details. More work and no money to do it with.

**Wednesday** saw a light calendar. The Senate gave a do pass to **SB 341** which requires that a GED student be a Georgia resident to receive the \$500 HOPE scholarship given to all GED graduates.

**Thursday** brought some unanticipated news. The House passed **HB 977**, the Crawford Lewis Bill, that prevents system administrators from receiving a pay raise in any year in which teachers are furloughed. Perhaps the news of the day was that both chambers voted to **recess until March 8, 2010. The purpose of the recess is for intense budget work and for the first time ever, House and Senate budget committees will meet together to bring resolution of the FY2011 budget.** The Senate did pass the supplemental FY2010 as expected but a conference committee will have to be appointed to iron out the differences.

## NEW Legislation

House Bill 1186 Tax exemption for certain public-private transportation projects.

**House Bill 1195** Creates the Georgia Workforce Investment Board

**House Bill 1200** Permits local BOEs to solicit and accept donations for field trips and other educational purposes

**House Bill 1204** Creates income tax credit for job creation

**House Bill 1205** Permits the state to grant personal leave for teachers to compensate for furlough days to be done in years when the State has positive revenues.

**House Resolution 1432** Constitutional amendment that would permit elimination of local ad valorem taxes in favor of 1% local sales tax.

**Senate Bill 420** Creates State perfect attendance awards

**Senate Bill 421** Limits the State's Revenue Shortfall Reserve to 15% (currently 10%) of the previous year's net revenue

**Senate Bill 426** Prohibits local BOE members from receiving per diem, salary, or benefits during any time that the system's accreditation is revoked, suspended, or placed on probation

**Senate Bill 427** Establishes the Georgia Foundation for Public Education

**Senate Resolution 1085** Urges GSBA to recommendation legislation to address local school board governance issues