

GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Serving secondary school administrators across Georgia
Weekly Legislative Update-February 20, 2009



THIS WEEK

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Immediate Impact of the Federal Stimulus

It appears that first impact of the Federal Stimulus bill is that the conversations about student and teacher furloughs have come to halt. While nothing is guaranteed it does look favorable that teachers will avoid the furloughs this year.

The Governor announced further reductions in the FY09 budget this week based on a revenue estimate revised downward after January's poor showing. The big hit in the new cuts is the State Department of Education with a \$98 million cut. It appears that \$95M will be added to the FY09 austerity cut. Yuck!!!

Strategy of the Voucher Backers

The first hearing on SB 90, the Voucher Bill, took place on Wednesday. Testimony was limited and Chairman Dan Weber promised that additional opportunities will be given for testimony. The strategy used by the voucher backers is to claim if state funds go with voucher students that will

leave more local funds to be spread among the students that remain—a completely NAÏVE understanding of public school funding. Local funds across this state are used to provide transportation for students, maintenance and operation of buildings and facilities, and teacher supplements and benefits—all because the Legislature/Governor has not funded those items at anywhere near the actual cost. Some leaders estimate that the state provides only about 25% of the cost of transportation in every school district. Obviously, there is no “bonus” of local money left when students take state vouchers to private schools, buses still have to run, buildings have to be repaired and cleaned, and the bill for health insurance and teacher supplements have to be paid and a five to ten percent reduction in students will not change the dedication of those funds.

Please tell your legislator that the voucher “bonus” argument is not sound!!!

Impact of the *Federal Stimulus Package on Georgia*

AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009
CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT FOR GEORGIA

State Fiscal Stabilization Fund - \$1.548 Billion – Can be used as deemed necessary

School Improvement Grants - \$96.3 million

Title I, Part A - \$324.4 million

Title I, Part B - \$321.5 million

Educational Technology - \$20.5 million

Non educational - \$693.1 million

Total for Georgia - \$3.0038 Billion

Action on Education Bills

The House Education gave a DO Pass to the following bills this week:

HB 193 Grants local systems the flexibility to base their calendar on hours rather than days, thereby enabling four day weeks as appropriate

HB 280 Creates extra supplements (approximately \$5000) for beginning math and science teachers

The House of Representatives gave a DO pass to the following bills this week

HB 251 Permits students to transfer another school in their district if space permits

The Senate Education and Youth gave a DO pass to the following bills this week:

SB 84 School Board Governance Bill—sets parameters for local boards of education including code of ethics and a conflict of interest policy

SB 90 The Voucher Bill—gives any student the opportunity to attend private school or other public schools and take state funding with them

Education Legislation introduced this week **Reported by Skip Yow**

For more information on the following bills, go to <http://www.legis.state.ga.us/>

House Bill 336 Requires the State BOE to set testing windows so that all school systems have the same number of days prior to the testing window

House Bill 394 Changes the parameters of the private school scholarship organizations to which contributions are a tax credit AND sets eligibility for students that they must be eligible for free and reduced lunch

House Bill 400 The NEW Bridge Bill requires two elements of all schools, regardless of whether they receive an improvement grant to not: 1. a individual graduation plan is required of all students and 2. training is required of all counselors and graduation coaches. Otherwise the bill much the same that died on the last day of the session last year.

House Bill 401 Eliminates the food sales tax exemption

House Bill 423 Permits home school students to participate in joint enrollment programs but provides no funding for same

House Bill 455 Permits local school boards to wait until May 15, 2009, to issue contracts for the 2009-2010 school year (one time revision of common April 15 date)

House Bill 501 Changes gateway exams in grade 1-8 to each grade rather than 3, 5, and 8.

House Bill 503 Requires DOE to create a comprehensive website with all standards, textbooks, and materials related to Georgia standards; requires local systems to provide teacher editions

House Res 341 Permits local systems to use sales tax in lieu of ad valorem tax via local referendum

Senate Bill 178 Establishes sunset of June 30, 2011, for all advance funding, exceptional growth and low wealth outlay grants

Senate Bill 122 Creates the Georgia School Retiree Health Benefit Fund for certain accounting purposes

Senate Bill 132 Dropout Deterrent Act, revises the age of mandatory attendance to seventeen

Senate Bill 137 Military dependent compact, provides flexibility in dealing with military children that transfer as a result of deployment, vetoed by Governor last year.

Hot Buttons

- 1. HB 33, mandating religious freedom via student speakers at all school events in which students speak, saw no movement this week.**
- 2. HB 103/SB 27 which establishes a Confederate Heritage and History Month will without doubt bring considerable response from minority groups saw no movement this week.**
- 3. SB 90, the Voucher Bill, heard testimony on Wednesday in Senate Education Committee. No vote was taken**

and testimony was stopped after two hours with many speakers not being permitted to speak. Hopefully a hearing will be held next week that will permit additional testimony.

- 4. HB 215 moves Georgia back to 1990 with the return to a three diploma program, each of which does not prepare students for admission to the University System or Technical College System.**
- 5. HB 281 Permits home school students to participate in public high school extracurricular activities**

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