
THIS WEEK'S EDITORIAL DEADLINE WAS MOVED UP DUE TO TRAVEL TO NASSP CONVENTION

GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Serving secondary school administrators across Georgia
Weekly Legislative Update-February 27, 2009



THIS WEEK

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The Frustration of Trying to Save National Certification Supplements

On Tuesday afternoon, the House Academic Support Subcommittee of Education made a valid attempt to salvage the supplement for National Teacher Certification. Under the leadership of Tom Dickson and Brooks Coleman, the subcommittee offered a substitute to HB 243, the Governor's bill to forever eliminate the supplement. The substitute calls for maintaining the supplement with the stipulation that it would have to be funded each year by the Legislature—easier said than done. The Governor intends to eliminate the supplement along with many other elements of the education budget. The substitute bill, if it makes through the

House and Senate, sets up a showdown between the Legislature and the Governor. It is refreshing to see legislators trying to do what they promised (and to see what lengths they will go to avoid a potential law suit). After much debate the bill and substitute were tabled to next week but more than likely will pass.

The NEW Drumbeat

Day after day, committee hearing after committee hearing, there is a resounding new drumbeat across the Georgia Legislature and the march that is being called is the elimination of taxes, the provision of major benefits for special interests and backers of key legislators, and continued efforts at micromanaging public education from the state house. It is often discouraging but there are some champions of public education such as Tom Dickson and Kathy Ashe, but their voices are overshadowed by those that would eliminate public education and return the taxes to the rich—who obviously know how best to spend them. A clear indicator of how your Representative or Senator fits into this new scheme is to determine how they feel about SB 90—The Voucher Bill posing as Universal School Choice. The philosophy that the *real* world is populated by the white, rich, and educated has become prevalent among Georgia legislators. Before I am accused of being cynical, all one has to do is to look at the number of bills that have passed through Ways and Means that entitle various groups to sales and ad valorem tax exemptions. Alan Essig has addressed the issue well at his website, www.gbpi.org. It would be worthwhile to visit Alan's *Georgia Budget and Policy Institute* site and signup for his free newsletter. He literally is the voice crying in the wilderness.

The Federal Stimulus Package for Georgia

The ***AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009*** is due to arrive in Atlanta on Monday, March 2, 2009. As reported last week, the three major education hunks of the stimulus money are: State Fiscal Stabilization Fund—\$1.548 Billion, Title I Part A—\$324.4 million, and Title I B--\$321.5 million. Along with the \$20.5 million for educational technology and the \$96.3 million for school improvement grants, the stimulus money goes to the Governor's Office and the Governor has great discretion over the \$1.548 billion. Governor Perdue has offered that he intends to use the money only for FY10 but therein lies the politics. It will be most interesting to see what tradeoffs the legislature and governor create to agree on the final resolution of the stimulus money—stay tuned.

One of the major questions in the halls of the Capitol this week is whether the Legislature will stick to its March 25 recess date, coming back for a week on June 22. Few predicted that the Stimulus Grants would arrive as soon as they have. There is still much work to be done on FY10, especially with promises to "find" money for nurses and National Certification supplements.

Governor Perdue has not indicated that he will **refuse** any of the stimulus money designated for education.

Action on Education Bills

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

HB 278 Removes expenditure controls on instructional funds, media funds, staff and professional development funds, and additional instruction days for next two years as has been done for the past two years. (projected)

HB 400 The NEW Bridge Bill got a do pass from Academic Achievement on Wednesday and House Education on Thursday. (projected)

The House of Representatives gave a PASS to the following bills this week:

HB 100 Modifies the rules and procedures for the Student Scholarship Organizations enacted last year and permits a taxpayer to contribute up to 75% of their state income tax liability to such organizations.

HB 118 Supplemental FY09 Budget which includes funds to prevent teacher and student furloughs (3:30 PM Thursday)

HB 120 Extends sales tax holiday for school supplies, computer equipment, and certain energy products, to dates in 2009.

HB 149 Move on when ready—enables students to enter college after their 10th grade year.

HB 229 The NEW Shape Bill which requires an annual fitness assessment for grades 1-12 taught by a certified physical education teacher beginning in 2011.

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

SB 90 The Voucher Bill passed out of Education and Youth with a 6-4.

The Senate gave a PASS to the following bills this week:

SB 84 The local Board of Education governance bill.

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 37 **Parent Protection Act; provides for leave for employees to attend school conferences**

House Bill 517 **Comprehensive revision of property assessment procedures that requires school systems to conduct a voter referendum to change millage rates**

House Bill 520 **Provide ad valorem tax exemption for motor vehicles owned by certain disabled individuals**

House Bill 501 **Changes promotion and retention criteria to grades 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7**

House Bill 524 **Changes some provisions of compulsory attendance law, removing paperwork required for notification of excessive absences, and calls for reporting of parents knowingly not sending their children to school**

House Bill 531	Sets limits on pentachlorophenol emissions near schools
House Bill 537	Removes required that a charter school be incorporated
House Bill 543 trainer regulations	Makes changes in the definitions associated with athletic
House Bill 547	If state provides PSAT for all students, it must also must make ACT Plan available.
House Bill 555	Requires that local boards that have declared property as surplus to make such property available to charter schools in the district.

Senate Resolution 335 Constitutional amendment that imposes a 1% sales tax to fund PeachCare for Kids

Hot Buttons—bills which if enacted into law will give high school principals major headaches

- 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. Only individuals selected by Chairman Dan Weber were permitted to testify—and as one would guess most were those favoring the bill. The bill passed out of committee by a 6-4 vote. It will face tougher sledding in the full Senate and most certainly in the House.**

- 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, sits in waiting in the House Education Committee.**

- 5. HB 281 Permits home school students to participate in public high school extracurricular activities was tabled by Academic Achievement on Wednesday and may be dead for the session.**

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