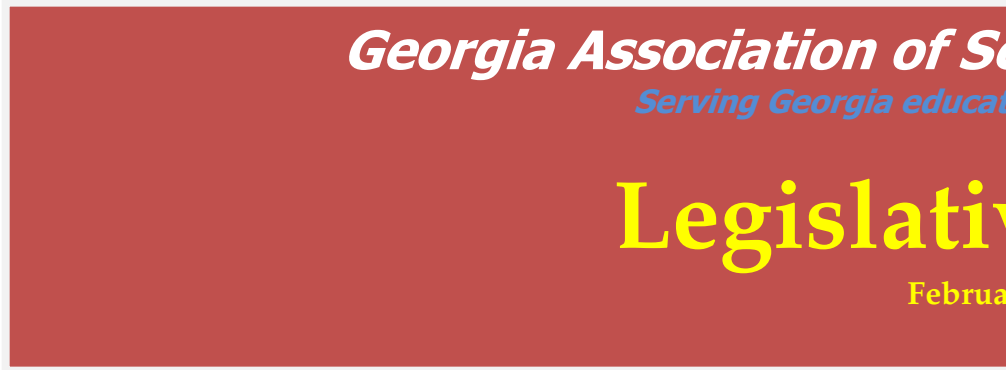


Jimmy Stokes

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From: Jimmy Stokes [stokes30650@bellsouth.net]  
Sent: Friday, February 05, 2010 6:59 AM  
To: JIMMY STOKES  
Subject: GASSP Legislative Update--February 5, 2010



## Fe Fi Fo Fum, I Smell Smoke...

The 2010 Legislature finally hit the start button and tried this week to change the world as we know it. This week saw several pieces of education legislation pass the House of Representatives. **HB 905** passed the House on Tuesday and extends to 2013 the opportunity for systems to apply for **capital outlay** funds. Also passing on Tuesday were **HB 906 and 907**. The **906** bill ends the **contract notification date** to May 15 through 2013. The basic funding definition for middle school changes in **HB 907** to include **middle school funding** for grades 6, 7, and 8, regardless of the format in which they are arranged. Educators currently enrolled in education leadership programs and who were enrolled in such programs on April 1, 2009, can breathe a sigh of relief under **HB 923**. The bill **extends to 2013** the date by which an individual can earn a leadership degree and be paid for that degree even if they do not hold a leadership position. **HB 651** changes the reporting process for sex offenders and does not require the DOE to mail lists to school systems. All these bills now go to the Senate. The Senate passed **SB 319** redefining textbooks to include a variety of digital materials and equipment.

On Wednesday the House passed **HB 916** which if enacted into law will prevent any individual from **retiring from TRS before age 60** and then returning to work in any TRS position until they reach the age of 60. Furthermore, the system from which the TRS member retires must affirm that no agreement for employment exists, including as an independent contractor unless the retiree is 60 years of age or older. This

eliminates the practice of offering TRS members under the age of sixty a 49% position if they will retire.

On Thursday, House Education gave a do pass to an amended version of **HB 908** granting **suspension of expenditure controls** through 2013 as well as not requiring the expenditure of the 20 extra days instruction money through 2013.

**Bullying** continues to be a hot topic with **HB 927** being discussed at Tuesday's Judiciary—Non Civil committee. Educators can expect some change to current bullying statutes and to add cyber bullying to the books. Observers wonder why the bill on school bullying was assigned to a Judiciary committee rather than the Education Committee. One thing to be learned quickly—the Legislature is not predictable!

**Compulsory attendance** age is getting lots of attention. We can expect some change, either to 17 or 18, depending on how the political wind blows.

The House Education Committee continues in turmoil over **SB 84** which was revived from the dead after last year. It seeks to impose **qualifications on local board of education members**, enables the Governor to remove ineffective board members, and establishes a **nepotism policy**. The nepotism policy was added to HB 251 at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour on Day 40 last year and in the opinion of many is mean spirited and represents Sen. Tommie Williams effort to get back at public education. The Governor's Office is now involved and they have attempted to modify the bill to meet House Ed criticism.

The House and Senate saw some interesting legislation introduced this week. The House saw the introduction of **HB 1065, 1066, 1067, and 1068** all of which significantly reduce the sales tax and ad valorem tax exemptions which were voted in last year. Unfortunately all of the cosigners of the bills were Democrats and the probability of the bills going anywhere is very limited. The Senate saw **SB 352** come alive. The bill authored by Republicans Tommie Williams and Chip Rogers and signed on by others and calls for a **sweeping** reform of education practices in Georgia. It is worth the read to look at this bill. Included are grades for each school, A,B,C,D, or F. About the only thing the bill does not do is to erase the border between Georgia and Florida.

**Budget** work continues to be slow. Numerous legislators have promised to get the supplemental budget for FY10 finished by the end of this month, but don't bet anything on it. There is no money to fund pet projects unless it is taken from somewhere else, and that makes for a very difficult row to hoe for politicians.

On Wednesday, **Sen. Chip Rogers** told reporters that he intends to introduce legislation that would expand the current **voucher for private schools** program available for special needs student. Standing behind him at the news conference was Eric Johnson, candidate for Governor and a lifelong advocate for vouchers. His intentions were not well received by Republicans or Democrats and any voucher legislation will face difficult going in this hard financial times.

**NEW Legislation** *See full descriptions of bills*  
*at* **[www.legis.state.ga.us](http://www.legis.state.ga.us)**

House Bill 1049 Permits local taxing districts to enact by referendum sales tax for improvement of community, cultural, and other qualified projects. Rate must be less than 1 percent.

House Bill 1051 Authorizes a special homestead sales and use tax for educational purposes

House Resolution 1219 Urges the DOE and school systems to safeguard the rights of children 17 years of age and under from military recruitment

House Bill 1064 Raises the compulsory attendance age to 17.

**House Bill 1065 Reduce all sales tax exemptions by 15% through 2013.**

**House Bill 1066 Provides for an income tax surcharge through 2013.**

**House Bill 1067 Provides a temporary reduction in the aggregate amount of existing income tax credits.**

**House Bill 1068 Reduces temporarily the amount of certain income tax credits.**

House Bill 1069 Provides income tax credit for certain qualified equipment that reduces business or domestic energy or water usage.

**House Resolution 1238** Constitutional amendment that would authorize boards of education to levy a homestead option sales and use tax for educational purposes.

**House Bill 1079** Permits the use of credit cards and debit cards to pay certification fees

**House Bill 1086** Exempts teacher personal information from freedom of disclosure act as well as information relating to tests administered by PSC.

**House Bill 1087** Limits pentachlorophenol emissions near schools

**Senate Bill 299** Eliminates the zero tolerance provisions for students bringing weapons to school, eliminating the requirement that all such possessions be treated as felonies.

**Senate Bill 322** Requires more elaborate reporting of student expulsions, requiring demographics (race, gender, disabilities, etc.) be included for each expulsion reported to DOE.

**Senate Bill 340** Requires a report from each school system for all students at the end of their freshman, sophomore, and junior year regarding HOPE eligibility. (Editor's Note: Why? No one has established how such information would be useful for high school underclassmen.)

**Senate Bill 341** Requires a student to be a Georgia resident in order receive a HOPE GED voucher. (Students currently receive a HOPE Voucher for \$500 if they earn a GED.)

**Senate Bill 346** A 46 page bill that dramatically changes the system for determining and collecting ad valorem taxes. Perhaps the element of greatest interest to school systems is that it installs an elaborate appeals system that could basically delay the paying of taxes for several years through various appeals methods, thereby putting school systems in a financial bind. It also puts in place qualifications for tax appraisers and assessors. This bill will have significant impact on the way school systems collect ad valorem taxes, and it doesn't make it easier or better.

**Senate Bill 352** Requires DOE to include a *growth model* as a primary factor in AYP calculations, assign individual school ratings based on academic performance, provide bonuses for schools based on appropriations, eliminate criterion-referenced competency tests in grades one and two, eliminate the GHSGTs in favor of EOCTs, and provide a number of standards and procedures. This bill requires DOE to give each school A,B,C,D or F. **Some observers have described this as the *Make Georgia Look Like Florida Bill*.**

**Senate Bill 361** Expands eligibility for special education voucher and renames the voucher *Georgia Early Hope Scholarship*.

**Senate Resolution 939** Constitutional amendment that will require that lottery tickets be subject to state and local use sales tax.

**Senate Resolution 955** Urges DOE and school systems to safeguard the rights of children under the age of 17 from military recruitment and implements safeguards for the recruitment of 17 year olds.