

GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Serving secondary school administrators across Georgia
Weekly Legislative Update-February 6, 2009



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NEW LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

The House and Senate voted today to modify the 2009 Calendar that will call for the Legislature to meet on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays through March 25, 2009 with FY09 and FY10 budgets adopted. The Legislature will then adjourn until the last week in June when it will reconvene. The purpose for the change in calendar is to give the Legislature opportunity to respond to revenue changes including any assistance from the federal stimulus package.

The UGLIER Mess

As if the financial dilemma for local school systems couldn't get any worse, news came in the night—literally after midnight, early Tuesday morning. **Word is that OPB is looking to cut an additional \$ 1 billion from FY09.** Schools systems are in a pickle. The money they were promised is not coming and in most cases the school year is 110/180 days done and any cuts are going to be even more difficult to

impose. It appears that furloughs for all faculty and even students may be in the near future.

SB 90—The Public School Antichrist

The anti—public education Cyclops has risen from the sea outside Savannah. Sen. Eric Johnson of Savannah and announced candidate for Lt. Governor has introduced SB 90, *The Universal School Choice Bill*. Bottom line to the bill is that if enacted, **ANY** student could receive \$5000 per year to attend **ANY** private school they wished. Students could also elect to transfer to any other school in their district, or if accepted, to schools in any other Georgia district. What is so unconscionable is that **public funds** would be going to private schools and the schools receiving the **public funds** would **not** be required to (1) hire certified teachers; (2) test students for achievement and competency and report the results; or (3) report how they have used the **public funds** they have received. Mama always said, "What is good for the goose is good for the gander." Why can't private schools receiving public funds be held to the same standards as public schools? That question will most certainly be posed to Sen. Johnson and his cosigners when the bill goes through the hearing process. **GSBA estimates that it would cost \$403.8 million to fund this 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 222 Provides enhanced homestead exemption for unmarried widows of disabled veterans

House Bill 229 SHAPE bill that requires annual fitness assessment with appropriate reports for all students enrolled in physical education.

House Bill 230 Controls pentachlorophenol emissions near schools

- House Bill 243** **Repeals the extra supplement for individuals attaining certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards**
- House Bill 247** **Grants a new tax exemption for certain disabled veterans and their unremarried survivors**
- House Bill 250** **Creates a Constitutional Convention as allowed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965**
- House Bill 251** **Permits a student to attend any appropriate school in their district—the school choice bill**
- House Bill 252** **Creates the *Closing the Achievement Gap Commission***
- House Bill 278** **Temporarily suspends certain spending controls (direct instruction, media center costs, and professional development costs)**
- House Bill 279** **Revises the method for calculation of equalization grants**
- House Bill 281** **Permits private and home school student participate in extra curricular activities in the public high school associated with their residence**
- House Bill 313** **Make some changes in the calculation of Hope Scholarship Eligibility, particularly AP and IB grades**
- Senate Bill 83** **Increases homestead exemption from \$2000 to \$4000**
- Senate Bill 84** **Revises the per diem and expenses of local school board members, requires a code of ethics for the local BOEs, and establishes a nepotism policy for school systems.**
- SR 152** **Calls for the appointment of a study committee to create legislation for *Governor’s Academies* based on Tough Choices for Tough Times**

Governor’s Legislative Package February 3, 2009

ATLANTA – Governor Sonny Perdue announced that five pieces of legislation were introduced today to improve education in Georgia.

"Even in challenging economic times, we can continue to improve education in Georgia," said Governor Perdue. "The proposals we introduced today will pay dividends for years to come as more students prepare for the opportunities of the future."

The first bill, **SB 84**, introduced by Senator Bill Heath, transforms school board governance to make Georgia a model for the nation. The Governor’s legislation would ensure that every student has the benefit of responsible leadership at the school system

level. It will standardize board ethics policies and board training, clarify law delineating the roles and responsibilities of superintendents and board members, create minimum qualifications for board candidates. It also gives the state the ability to find responsible citizens to serve on school boards when existing members fail to serve the interests of their students.

"SB 84 makes sure that school board members understand their role and responsibilities," said Senator Heath, one of the Governor's floor leaders in the Senate. "It ensures that boards serve the students' best interest, not their own." The legislation is based on recommendations of the Commission for School Board Excellence. The Commission included leaders from the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, and Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, AdvancED and other stakeholders. "This legislation includes key recommendations of the Commission for School Board Excellence that was conducted by the Metro Atlanta Chamber, the Georgia Chamber, the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education and AdvancED (parent organization for SACS)," said John Rice, the co-chair of the Commission. "We support Governor Perdue's legislation and appreciate his leadership on this critical issue. If Georgia adopts a significant majority of the commission's recommendations, our state will be a leader in providing a model for good school board governance. We owe it to all the children of Georgia to support this legislation." Three other pieces of legislation match the state's educational spending with its desired outcome. The first proposal, **SB 93**, introduced by Senator Bill Cowsert, an Administration floor leader, recognizes the important role that principals play in student achievement. Under the proposal, high school principals who demonstrate improvement in graduation rate, SAT scores and End of Course Tests compared to their school's most recent 3-year average will be eligible for a \$10,000 performance bonus. Principals could also qualify by leading a school that is in the top 5 percent of high schools in the state in these three areas. "SB 93 rewards principals who make the extra efforts that result in substantive improvement in student achievement," said Sen. Bill Cowsert. The second proposal, **HB 282**, introduced by House Education Chairman Brooks Coleman, recognizes the role that quality teachers play in producing positive educational outcomes. The proposal would reward teachers for improving student achievement. It is based on Georgia's Master Teacher program and would allow exceptional teachers, willing to serve as instructional leaders, to be eligible to receive pay increases of ten to fifteen percent. "It has long been one of the chief fallacies of government to focus on inputs, usually on how much you're spending, instead of outputs – on performance and achievement," said Governor Perdue. The Governor's third proposal, **HB 280**, also introduced by Rep. Coleman, is based on recommendations by the Alliance of Education Agency Head's Math and Science Task Force. It would start new fully-certified math and science teachers at the same salary as a fifth year teacher. Teachers in these fields with less than five years experience would also be brought up to the fifth year pay level. To encourage and reward elementary teachers to increase their competency in math and science, the legislation will also provide a \$1,000 annual bonus to elementary teachers who hold a math or science endorsement. "These pieces of legislation will help Georgia attract the best teachers that will enable our students to thrive in the global economy," said Rep. Coleman. "They focus the state on teachers who excel and get results for their students." All the three incentives would be available beginning in 2010-11 school year, which would be in the

Fiscal Year 2011 state budget. The fifth piece of legislation, **HB 278**, introduced by House Administration Floor Leader Rep. Matt Ramsey, would *temporarily give local school systems more control over state-funded expenditures*. Lifting expenditure controls will give school systems additional tools to address budget shortfalls brought about by a downturn in the national economy. "I am proud to sponsor this important legislation," said Rep. Ramsey. "This measure will provide school systems the needed flexibility to manage their budgets in difficult economic times." Governor Perdue, Lt. Governor Casey Cagle and House Speaker Glenn Richardson agreed on the need for the legislation as the economy started to worsen last fall and alerted school systems that legislation would be introduced giving them a two-year window for maximum flexibility.

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. HB 3 which creates a school holiday on Veteran's Day is opposed by GASSP. A survey indicated that a great many of our schools have Veteran's Day observances and declaring it a school holiday would mean that only a small percentage of our students would participate in a Veteran's Day observance. It appears that the members of the Defense and Veterans Affairs agree with GASSP's position and the bill may not make it out of committee.**
- 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. SB 90, the Universal School Choice Bill, has been assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee.**

6. HB 281 Permits home school students to participate in public high school extracurricular activities

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