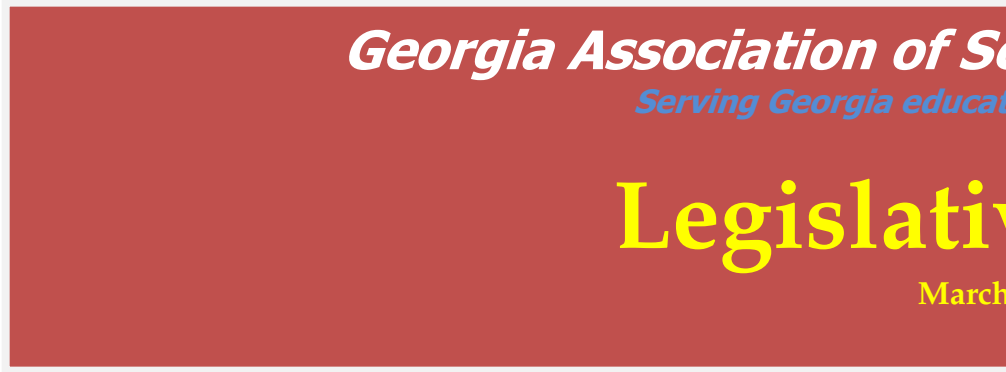


Jimmy Stokes

From: Jimmy Stokes [stokes30650@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Friday, March 12, 2010 10:54 AM
To: stokes30650@bellsouth.net
Subject: GASSP Legislative Update--March 12, 2010



Bull in the Ring

In days gone by, one of the most dreaded football practice drills was Bull in the Ring. A rather large ring of players surrounded an unsuspecting "bull". On some clandestine signal, a member of the ring would charge the player in the middle of the ring and attempt to inflict bodily harm, they would then retreat and another member of the ring was called in. Weak players suffered a hapless fate, continuing until mercy was declared. Strong players spent little time in the ring and in some cases became politically exempt because of their ability to inflict fear on players in the middle of the ring. Bull in the Ring has become a popular sport at the Capitol. Weak or defenseless departments are cast into the ring and told their funding is going to be eliminated or cut so dramatically that they cannot function. Observers have watched as 4H, teachers, the State Department of Education, RESAs, nurses, the University System and others are cast into the ring and bashed by the financial powers of the Legislature. In order to survive the agencies or departments have to muster support quickly and hope that enough political clout will come to their rescue and then watch as some other agency or department is cast into the ring. It may build stronger government, but it is not pleasant to watch and it takes an awesome toll on morale.

Every day brings more tension and consternation over finances. Georgia simply cannot function within its current revenue stream and provide the services that our expanded population is guaranteed by the Georgia Constitution. *No new taxes* may make for meaningful political rhetoric but

it is irresponsible in light of what is happening to our state. Individual citizens cannot operate as does the State—imagine telling your creditors that what you owe them will be drastically cut by your decision to impose an austerity cut! Fortunately many legislators are awakening to that reality. On Tuesday, the Legislature adopted a calendar that will carry the 2010 Session probably until very late April or early May. (Day 30, the mythical day after which legislation cannot move from one chamber to the other is set for March 25.) What happens between now and Day 40 and more importantly how it happens will define state government for years to come.

From the AJC: On Thursday the Governor announced a revised budget proposal. The governor announced that the state budget is under water for the current fiscal year by \$342 million. He also said that his original \$18.2 billion budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1 must be cut by \$443 million -- much less than the rumors of a needed \$1 billion in additional cuts -- for a 2011 budget that would spend \$17.7 billion. The hole in the current 2010 budget will be filled with federal stimulus funds that the governor had planned to spend in 2011. Perdue finds \$244 million in new revenue through fee increases and by taking away the sales tax exemption that nonprofit hospitals enjoy for purchases. The governor, signaling his ire at Georgia's hospitals, also said he would reduce the rate by which hospitals and doctors are reimbursed for treating Medicaid patients by 10.25 percent. **Needless to say his proposal was met with mixed reaction—never has Georgia needed leadership more!**

News

On **Monday** the House passed SB 84 which establishes qualifications, ethics requirements, and certain other requirements for local BOEs. Bill now goes to Senate for reconciliation with Senate version. The Senate passed **SB 298** which requires first aid instruction in high school health classes and **SB 340** which requires HOPE eligibility reporting by high schools to include freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Senate Education met on **Tuesday** and gave a do pass to an amended version of **HB 908**. The amended bill allows for systems to average maximum class size in k-8 for the next three years. It gives the SBOE the authority to provide a blanket waiver for class size requirements when financial exigency occurs. The amendment also permits local BOEs during the next three years to notify the SBOE that they are electing not to

complete up to 10 days of the school year due to financial exigency. The 10 days can be a combination of planning and up to 5 instructional days. **HB 908** as amended should go to the full Senate next week.

On **Wednesday** the House passed **HB 925** which permits school systems to notify parents of excessive absence students with regular mail rather than certified mail. The Senate passed **HB 906** which extends the deadlines for contract notification to May 15 through 2013.

At the House Education Committee on **Thursday** a number of bills were discussed and passed. **HB 936** passed permitting using transportation funds for **refurbishing buses** within certain limitations. **HB 1130** passed after considerable debate and lifts expenditure controls for two years including the use of 20 extra day money. The bill also **raises class size limitations** by adding 1 student in K-5, 2 students in 6-12, and permits school systems petition the SBOE for additional relief. A great deal of revision took place in **HB 1100** and the revised bill which passed the committee **eliminates the CRCT for grades 1 and 2** and gives the SBOE the authority to waive any tests for which the Legislature does not provide funding. The passage of **HB 1307** gives some relief to teachers by **waiving the professional learning requirement** for recertification for the next five years. The committee gave a do pass to **HR 1485** which creates the **Certification and Professional Learning Task Force** for the purposes of reviewing certificate renewal requirements and procedures and making recommendations for improvement with the goal of improving schools and teaching, leading to improved student learning. **HB 1097** which would prohibit the start of the school year prior to the third Sunday in August **FAILED** by a vote of 18-3. Later in the day, the House passed **HB 927** which expands the definition of bullying to include cyber bullying and **HB 1079** which permits the use of credit cards to make payments to Professional Standards Commission for certification applications.

NEW Legislation

House Bill 1239 Provides tax exemption for companies creating new tourism attractions

House Bill 1248 Sets a onetime ad valorem fee for certain trucks, buses, and related vehicles

House Bill 1249 Provides exemption from local ad valorem taxes for businesses providing new jobs

House Bill 1266 Creates a program of tax refunds for companies creating new tourism attractions

House Bill 1276 Authorizes a temporary waiver of specific assessments or grades if insufficient funds are appropriated for the student assessment program

House Bill 1278 Comprehensive tax revision that includes an increase in cigarette tax and an increase in income taxes for higher income brackets. The bill also permits temporary revocation of certain tax exemptions.

House Bill 1305 Requires local BOEs to permit citizens to speak at board meetings

House Bill 1307 Temporarily suspends professional learning requirements for certification renewal for teachers and paraprofessionals.

House Bill 1316 Requires annual evaluation of principals by teachers

House Bill 1335 Permits students that are 16 years of age or older to preregister to vote

House Bill 1339 Requires a fiscal note to accompany bills that impact anticipated revenues or expenditures of a local system

House Bill 1348 Creates the Georgia School Bus Safety Task Force

House Resolution 1476 Constitutional amendment that would authorize the Speaker of the House and the Lt. Governor to call a special session of the Legislature for the purpose of overturning a veto by the Governor following *sine die*.

House Resolution 1480 Constitutional amendment that would permit the use of lottery funds to assist children with diagnosed learning disabilities

Senate Bill 444 Creates a tax exemption for certain dealers who construct, lease, or purchase clean energy properties

Senate Bill 480 Creates the State Council of Economic Advisors

Senate Resolution 1172 Constitutional amendment that would permit pari-mutuel betting

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