
GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Serving secondary school administrators across Georgia
Weekly Legislative Update-March 13, 2009



THIS WEEK

1. A New Legislative Calendar
2. Crossover Day Comes and Goes
3. Budget News
4. Even the Legislature Makes Mistakes
5. New Legislation
6. Action on Education Bills
7. Hot Buttons

A New Legislative Calendar

Late last week the House and Senate adopted a new adjournment calendar, setting April 3 as the proposed adjournment date. The good news from that is that each system should know by early April what their financial position will be for next year. Nearly all Capitol sources expect

HB 455 which changes the mandatory notification date for contracts to May 15 for this year, to pass and be signed by the Governor. The added flexibility will be welcomed with the bad news that is expected with the budget.

Crossover Day Comes and Goes

Day 30, also known as Crossover Day, was Thursday of this week. Bills that did not exit their chamber of origin are considered dead for the session. *Beware:* a too often used legislative trick is to attach a bill that had not passed its

chamber to one from the other chamber that did pass. A less often technique is to strip the language from a bill that has passed and replace it with entirely different language.

Hopefully we won't see much of that in the final 10 days.

Casualties of Crossover Day included: HB 215 reinstating a three diploma program; HB 281 granting virtual schoolers opportunity to participate in public school extracurricular activities; The Governor's bill creating the Master Teacher Program; SB 210 permitting home schoolers to apply for Governor's Honors; and most importantly SB 90 the Voucher Bill—but its not over till its over! A surprise was that HB 208 granting bilingual designation on high school transcripts, did not make it out of the Rules Committee.

Budget News

HB 118, the Supplemental FY09 Budget, is to the Governor. There were very few differences between House and Senate versions. The Conference Committee report was approved by both chambers on Tuesday and immediately transmitted to the Governor. The primary difference between Legislature and Governor versions is the use of approximately \$150 million in Federal Stimulus funds, enough to offset furloughs for teachers and students. The Governor may or may not veto such—much will depend on the political offerings! Serious work has begun on the FY10 Budget and various legislators continue to make a variety of promises, many of which cannot come true. Perhaps the most political clout has been demonstrated by the Georgia School Nurse Association—they have gone to the Hill with dedication and resolve.

Even the Legislature Makes Mistakes

Late Tuesday afternoon, after a long day in the House, the House Education Committee showed that they too are human by committing a costly mistake. HB 281 made its

second appearance before the committee having been withdrawn after a major amendment passed the committee. The bill enables full time students in the Georgia Virtual Academy (K-8) to participate in local public school extracurricular activities. The costly mistake was not permitting testimony on the bill in either of the hearings. School personnel including GASSP were set to testify that the bill requires no academic progress for the virtual school students, all that is required is enrollment, and thus clearly discriminates against regular public school counterparts. The issue was made clear to committee members after the meeting and the bill died in the Rules Committee.

Action on Education Bills

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

HB 208 Calls for the DOE to establish procedures for certifying bilingual students and identifying such on transcripts

HB 281 Permits full time students in the Georgia Virtual Academy to participate in local public school extracurricular activities

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

HB 193 Give school systems flexibility in scheduling by change the 180 day school year requirement to a total hours requirement

HB 243 Grandfathers Nationally Certified teachers for the 10% supplement but eliminates from the supplement those not in the process as of March 1, 2009.

HB 313 Redefines methods for GPA calculation for HOPE Scholarship relative to new one diploma program, no substantive change from previous methodology.

HB 400 NEW Bridge Bill greatly enhancing CTAE, contingent upon funding by the Legislature. Does require career training for counselors and graduation coaches along with annual graduation plan for
each student even if CTAE portion is not funded.

HB 455 Extends the mandatory contract date to May 15 for 2009 only

HB 555 Requires local systems to make surplus property available to local charter schools

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

SB 36 Provides that local BOEs must have a code of ethics which is annually updated

SR 406 Urges entities involved in accreditation to submit documentation in a timely fashion thereby avoiding loss of accreditation due to failure to provide information

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

SB 27 *Encourages* but does not require the celebration of Confederate Heritage month

SB 114 The Military Compact bill, establishes provisions for hold harmless transfers for dependents of military personnel

SB 160 Makes Veteran's Day a school holiday (similar bill died in the House)

SB 231 Creates the HOPE Promise III scholarship for potential teachers

SB 250 Expands opportunities for school system to bring charges against those that disrupt school OR school bus operation

SR 146 Constitutional amendment that creates Education Improvement Districts for purpose of common facility development

SB 122 Establishes the Georgia School Personnel Post-employment Health Benefit Fund

SR 152 Appoints a working group to establish *Governor's Academies* for charter commission schools

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 680 Requires the DOE to develop a model fine arts curriculum

House Bill 684 Amends the Open Meetings Act and includes making portions of student disciplinary hearings open to the public

House Bill 698 Prevents the use of genetically modified foods or processed foods in school breakfast and lunch programs and encourages the use of locally grown foods

House Bill 704 Requires school uniforms for all K-12

House Bill 719 Requires OPB to provide tax expenditure reviews, exemptions, and exclusions as a part of budget proposals

House Resolution 579 Creates the Joint Study Committee on Sales and Use Tax Simplification

Senate Bill 257 Permits persons who have elected participation in the Regents Retirement Plan in lieu of TRS can change to TRS

Senate Bill 259 Enables the University System to employ a nursing instructor as full time that has retired previously from TRS

Senate Bill 260 Permits all public school employees (including bus drivers, custodians, etc.) may elect to participate in TRS

Senate Resolution 520 Constitutional amendment that would open ALL public meetings and records except those specifically exempted by a two-thirds vote of the Legislature and approved by the Governor

House Resolution 567 Constitutional amendment to prohibit discrimination against faith based initiatives in obtaining state grants

Senate Resolution 453 Creates the Georgia Tax Reform Commission of 2009

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 and is therefore **dead** for the Session.

2. **HB 103/SB 27** which establishes a Confederate Heritage and History Month passed out of Senate committee this week. It was amended considerably and now only **encourages** the celebration of Confederate Heritage and History month. Participation is voluntary and obviously would be elected by few if any school systems.
3. **SB 90, the Voucher Bill, waits in the full Senate for political high jinx.**
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 and appears **DEAD** for the session.
5. **HB 281** Permits home school students to participate in public high school extracurricular activities was amended to include on those students enrolled full time in the Georgia Virtual Academy charter school, a K-8 school. The bill passed out of House Education by a 10-9 and testimony was not permitted. **Chairman Brooks Coleman cast the tie breaking vote but the bill died in the Rules Committee.**
6. **SB 160** The Veteran's Day bill making it a school holiday now passes to the House where it should find difficult going. The fate of the bill will be quickly determined by the committee to which it is assigned.

Responses should be directed to Jimmy C. Stokes at stokes30650@bellsouth.net