

GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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



THIS WEEK

1. Everything That Rises Must C
2. Some Rules are Rules...
3. The Voucher Revival
3. Budget News
4. Action on Education Bills
5. A New Bill

Everything That Rises Must Converge—the Part II

If the late Flannery O'Connor were still alive, she would loveeeeeee the 2009 Georgia General Assembly. There is soooo much material for a person of Ms. O'Connor's humorous yet mischievous wit. The relationship between Senators and Senators, Representatives and Representatives, and Senators and Representatives has reached the low point of the session. To say they have gotten chippey and sarcastic with one another is only the tip of the story. The Senate Education and Youth meeting on Monday was a point of illustration. HB 493 which passed the House 161-2 and authorizes the Georgia Youth Conservation Corps to train individuals aged 18-24 to do weatherization of houses and thereby enable the state to use \$124 million in Federal Stimulus money, fell prey to arcane and petty discussion lasting over an hour only to be assigned to a subcommittee. It would be a disaster if Georgia loses the

\$124 M and the jobs that go with it. HB 400, the much touted NEW Bridge bill, was held to the end of the hearing and when it was called, all but four of the Senators left the room, rendering the Committee without a quorum. That did not stop the hearing from progressing and it went on without constitutional authority. Chairman Weber stated that the hearing would be “continued” on Wednesday, but HB 400 was not on the agenda!

Some Rules are Rules; Other Rules are Not Rules

HB 455 (postponing the last day for contracts to May 15 this year) was debated by the Senate and Youth Committee on Thursday of last week and was defeated by a vote of 4-3. On Monday Chairman Dan Weber brought the bill up again because “some thought we should vote on it again” and the bill passed 7-2. Unfortunately the earliest it can be considered by the full Senate is Monday, March 30. Even if it is immediately transmitted to the Governor and he signs it when they walk in his office, school systems will have had to make contract decisions before March 30. It is amusing how both the House and the Senate follow some rules yet ignore others—can you imagine what would happen if high school principals operated by the same mantra?

The Voucher Revival DANGER! DANGER! DANGER!

As was predicted previously, Sen. Eric Johnson on Thursday moved to attach his SB 90 The Voucher Bill to HB 251, the within district school choice bill authored by Rep. Alisha Thomas Morgan. (Johnson is alleged to have contributed to Morgan’s campaign fund along with that of her husband who was elected to the Cobb County BOE.) In order to comply with Senate rules, Johnson pared down SB 90 to offer across district line choice. The language offered by Johnson is highly convoluted and confusing, presenting a major problem for lawmakers. The amended HB 251 permits

students to transfer via choice to schools outside their district and take *local funds* with them. Students electing such a choice would not be permitted to transfer to a new school until the school is four years old. The bill will go to the full Senate on Monday. If at all possible, contact your Senator and let them know that HB 251 as amended by the Education and Youth Committee would create chaos in public schools across Georgia!

Budget News

Last week we reported on HB 119, the FY10 budget and its passage by the House. The Senate is deliberating the budget, much behind closed doors, and offers that they want to make some “serious” changes. The Senate Appropriations Committee is set to vote out the bill on Monday, March 30 and it will then go to the full Senate—setting the stage for a mad, furious rush to Day 40 with Senators and Representatives being asked to vote on a Budget that they know very little about. With THREE days left in the Session, there is serious question about the final resolution to the Budget. Some observers have speculated that the Legislature may be driving the Governor to call a special session to deal with the budget—more expense to reduce precious dollars.

Action on Education Bills

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

SB 36 Requires that local BOEs adopt and annually review a code of ethics

SB 84 Governor’s Board of Education Ethics bill

SB 114 Military compact bill that makes transfer of military dependent children more expedient

SB 239 Requires parents to enroll students within 10 school days of moving into a new school district

SR 153 Constitutional amendment establishing Education Improvement Districts

SR 466 Establishes a Performance Based Principal Certificate renewal design team

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

SB 14 Prohibits registered sex offenders from servings on local BOEs

SB 122 Splits State Health Benefit Plan into two categories—state employees and school employees. There will be no change in level of benefits.

SB 210 Permits home school students to apply for admission to Governor's Honors

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

HB 178 Originally designed to waive expenditure controls for the next two years but amended by the Lt. Governor and others to provide middle school funding for any schools contains 6, 7, or 8th grades
AND restores funding for dual enrollment

HB 198 Converts the 180 day school calendar to hours (8 X 180) and authorizes school systems to adopt schedules relative to that requirement

HB 243 Grandfathers 10% supplement to current National Board Certified teachers and those in application by March 1, 2009, *contingent to appropriation by General Assembly. No funding for teachers enter the program after March 1, 2009.*

HB 251 School choice within a district, contingent upon available space, **AMENDED** to include school choice across district lines, transferring *local* funds with the elected choice

HB 280 Places beginning science and math teachers at step 5 of the state teacher salary schedule

HB 455 Extends contract notification deadline to May 15 for 2009 only.

HB 493 Establishes a student based conservation corps

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

HB 100 Reorganizes and gives more advantage to contributors to private school Scholarship Organizations

HB 149 Move on when ready for high school students moving on to college and/or technical college

HB 233 Freezes property assessments for two years thereby putting tremendous pressure on local governments

HB 280 Places beginning science and math teachers at Step 5 of the state teacher pay scale

HB 300 Requires school systems to provide information to parents on meningococcal meningitis and its vaccine when appropriate

HB 555 Requires local school systems to make *unused* available to local charter schools

HB 484 Makes dependents of military eligible for HOPE Scholarship if they qualify academically

For more information on the above bills, go to <http://www.legis.state.ga.us/>

A New Bill

SB 278 Encourages graduation from high school in three years and provides grants for students to enroll in college if they graduate in

three years. The bill is authored by Chip Rogers, Senate Majority Leader, and Tommie Williams, President Pro Tem of the Senate.

Though the bill is dead for this session, it will be active and on the board for 2010.

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