

GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Serving secondary school administrators across Georgia
Weekly Legislative Update-Sine Die Edition



THIS WEEK

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Streets of Atlanta Safe Again

The comic relief offered in the forties and fifties was that when the Legislature went home the streets of Atlanta would be safe again. Well they have gone home and perhaps more than anything else, we are safe again. In the days of Herman Talmadge, Marvin Griffin, and Carl Sanders, many of the Legislators “cut a wide path” and were far more concerned with revelry than lawmaking. An honest report is that many Capitol observers would welcome some return of revelry rather than the mean spirited, dividedness that we saw this year. Sine Die Day brought some sights not seen in many years under the Gold Dome.

Ezekiel Prophecies Again—Bones Rise from the Dead

The prophet Ezekiel looked very much like Rep. Fran Millar on Friday night. Everyone had pretty much declared HB 400, the NEW Bridge Bill dead but with wheeler dealing the likes of which have not been seen under the Dome in years,

House and Senate leaders lit up HB 178 like a Christmas Tree. HB 178, originally intended only to extend the capital outlay deadlines to 2011, was rewritten in Conference Committee to include four biggies: 1. Extend capital outlay to 2011; 2. Restoration of funding for dual enrollment; 3. Suspension of spending controls in the key education areas for FY09 and FY10; and 4. the NEW Bridge Bill. Those that think that lobbyists have no influence would have lost their argument on Friday night. The public education lobbyists gathered on the third floor of the Capitol and crafted their "hope and desperation" list which Stuart Bennett and Herb Garrett got to the right people and they rose from the dead and appeared in HB 178, approved by both chambers. Earlier in Day 40, HB 455 extending the contract deadline to May 15 for this year was passed containing two amendments: one to prohibit persons obtaining new leadership certificates after July 1, 2009, from earning pay for that certificate unless they are in a leadership position and the second to eliminate the sunset on the Master Teacher program.

The Voucher Express Derails, Crashes, and Burns

As we described last week, Sen. Eric Johnson's attempted to salvage some of his voucher legislation by attaching it to HB 251, the intra-school district choice bill. In the LATE eleventh hour on Friday, the bill came out of conference committee stripped of all voucher components but saddled with two other amendments. The first requires all school systems to notify parents in writing by July 1 of each year what their rights are with regard to choice and also inform them of vacancies at schools. (Real world educators know that is impossible because AYP determinations and transfers are not completed until close to August 1.) Education leaders and lawmakers huddled after the session and it is agreed that informing parents of *possible vacancies contingent upon meeting AYP transfer requests probably*

meets the spirit of the law. The second amendment was more annoying. Sen. Tommie Williams, Speaker Pro Tem of the Senate and an open foe of public education (even though he is on the Education Committee) insisted on including his nepotism legislation which had not passed any committee or chamber. Basically aimed at superintendents, it prohibits superintendents and spouses from holding administrative positions in the same school system. Many believe it will not stand the test of the court. The bill was almost defeated due to the attempts of author Alisha Morgan to hide the amendments and refuse to answer questions about them. The bill was defeated 78-77 on its first vote, but a vote to reconsider passed and at 11:52 PM, the bill passed. A storm of confusion exists because there were two versions of the bill, one with the nepotism, one without that were on the floor of the House at the time of the vote—no one will know until the official record is posted. Rep. Alisha Morgan angered members of her party (Democrats) over the way she handled the bill. She has a lot of fences to mend if she is to continue as an effective legislator.

He Who Has the Power Rules

The arcaneness of the 2009 Session most certainly showed itself on Friday night in the Senate. HB 481, labeled as a stimulus jobs bill package came from conference committee to the floor of the Senate about 7:30 PM. A document labeled "draft" was placed on each Senator's desk along with an unsigned fiscal note (a fiscal note signed by OPB is required of all financial legislation). Senate and House rules require that all bills and conference committee reports lay on the Senator's desk for one hour before the bill can be considered. The chamber can vote to waive the rule by two-thirds vote. The HB 481 conference report did not meet either of those specifications yet was considered and voted upon and passed much along party lines but by a less than ten vote margin. Senators attempted to get Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle to rule on the correctness of the action and he openly

refused and when was shown a copy of the Senate rules, he became enraged and told one Senator to "bring it on". The handlers of the bill knew exactly what they were doing! The real losers in the bill were the citizens of Georgia. The meat of the bill created a huge corporate capital gains tax relief which will cost the State \$900 million over the next five years. The bill optimistically creates 2200 jobs and brings in \$53 million in revenue—but the State will lose \$847 million in taxes. The capital gains tax impacts less than 8% of all taxpayers. *The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. (There is some speculation that the Governor may veto the bill.)* Veteran observers commented that rarely have they seen such an open, heavy handed power move as executed by Cagle on Friday night.

Budget News

The adopted budget saw few changes from House and Senate versions, but there were some surprises. Perhaps the biggest surprise of the night was the nuclear hit that the Department of Education took. The \$2.585 million cut is substantial! There are some important points to report.

1. No furloughs required. 2. Health care costs remain at the current 75/25 split but premiums will be increased under existing procedures.

3. Graduation coaches are placed in QBE and thus become a local decision as to if they will be kept. 4. The National Board Certification dismantling bill died when the House refused to agree to a Senate substitute. There is not enough money in the budget to fund the 10% supplements statewide. Who knows how that will be handled? 5. School transportation was cut \$2+ million. Systems already pay about 75% of transportation costs and this adds salt to the wound. 6. There is no money for equalization. Poorer systems will have an additional austerity cut and that is bad news. It may be restored at mid-year if revenues return. 7. Nurses are alive and well, no change in budget. 8. The

austerity cut for FY10 is \$297 million—largest in history and puts public education funding reduction under the Perdue administration at well over \$2 billion!

FINAL

CHANGES FROM FY09

Academic Coach Program

Transfer Class Keys to Schools Improvement	Governor (\$2,878,858)
House (\$257,500) Senate (\$2,878,858)	(\$257,500)

Central Office

Reduce funds from operations	Governor - (\$1,623,764)
House – (\$2,523,764) Senate – (\$1,623,764)	(\$2,585,249)

Charter Schools

Reduce funds from planning grants	Governor – (\$25,000)
House (\$45,000) Senate – (\$0.00)	0
Eliminate funds for implementation grants	Governor – (\$625,000)
House – (\$500,000) Senate – (\$625,000)	(\$500, 000)

Communities in Schools

Reduce funds by 10%	Governor – (\$132,062)
House – (\$39,619) Senate – (\$132,062)	(\$105,650)

Curriculum Development

Reduce funds from contracts and operations	Governor - \$0.00	House
– (\$378,447) Senate - \$0.00	(\$100,000)	

Dropout Prevention

Transfer all funds for Graduation Coaches to QBE	Governor – (\$49,225,901)
House - \$0.00 Senate – (\$49,225,901)	(\$49,225,901)

Georgia Youth Science and Technology

Eliminate funds	Governor – (\$250,000)
House and Senate - \$0.00	0

Governor’s Honor Program

Reduce funds from contracts	Governor -(\$75,000)
House - \$0.00 Senate – (\$75,000)	(\$75,000)

Reduce funds to reflect the charge of a \$250.00 fee	Governor - \$0.00
House - \$0.00 Senate – (\$172,000)	0

Information Technology Services

Transfer funds for ETCs (\$2,752,130) and GA Virtual school program (\$930,180) to QBE (S: Eliminate funds and initiate new technology support programs through RESAs and/or technical schools

Governor – (\$3,682,310)
House - \$0.00
Senate – (\$3,682,310)
0

National Board Certification

Eliminate funds	Governor – (\$12,294,628)
House - \$1,450,000	Senate – (\$5,085,142)
	(\$5,085,142)

(10% at level of beginning teacher)**National Science Center and Foundation**

Eliminate funds	Governor – (\$750,000)
House – (\$250,000)	Senate – (\$750,000)
	(\$250,000)

Non QBE Formula Grants

Reduce funds to Residential Treatment Centers	Governor – (\$120,337)
House – (\$120,337)	Senate - \$0.00
	0

Increase funds for Special Needs Scholarships	Governor - \$0.00
House and Senate - \$5,978,162	0

Nutrition

Reduce funds by 3%	Governor - \$0.00
House and Senate – (\$1,194,697)	0

Preschool Handicapped

Reduce funds base on a projected change in FTE	Governor – (\$470,178)
House and Senate – (\$729,432)	0

Pupil Transportation

Reduce funds by 3%	Governor - \$0.00
House \$0.00	Senate – (\$5,128,292)
	(\$2,564,146)

QBE Program

Increase funds for dual enrollment courses	Governor - \$1,390,960
House - \$761,613	Senate - \$1,390,960
	\$1,390,960

ARRA of 2009 for FY10 (Stimulus funds used)	Governor - \$319,175,639
House - \$400,000,000	Senate - \$334,581,87
	\$413,145,927

Increase funds for charter systems grants	Governor - \$0.00
House and Senate - \$1,757,611	0

Transfer Graduation Coaches., Classroom Supply Cards	Governor - \$60,699,627
House - \$0.00	Senate - \$49,225,901
	\$49,225,901

Transfer ETCs and RESAs program to QBE	Governor - \$15,219,551
House and Senate - \$0.00	0

RESAs

Reduce funds by 3%	Governor - \$0.00
House and Senate – (\$374,022)	0

Increase educational technology training funds	Governor -\$0.00
House - \$0.00	Senate - \$1,773,022
	0

Transfer RESA funds to the QBE Program	Governor - (\$12,467,421)
House and Senate - \$0.00	0

School Nurses

Eliminate funds (H and S: Reduce funds by 3%)	Governor – (\$30,000,000)
House and Senate – (\$900,000)	0

State Interagency Transfers	Governor - \$0.00
House - \$450,000 Senate - \$450,000	0
Technology\Career Education	
Reduce funds to reflect the revised revenue estimate	Governor – (\$503,909)
House (\$503,909) Senate: Operations (\$503,909) and	(\$503,909)
Testing	
Reduce funds from A P tests for private schools	Governor – \$0.00
House and Senate – (\$354,075)	0
CAPITAL OUTLAY (Senate used lower bond rates)	
Capital Outlay-Regular for local 20 year bonds	Governor - \$9,552,614
House - \$9,552,614 Senate - \$9,005,548	Senate
changes accepted	
Capital Outlay- Exceptional Growth- 20 year bonds	Governor - \$10,106,948)
House - \$10,106,948 Senate - \$9,528,136	
Capital Outlay-Regular Advance for local- 20 years bonds	Governor - \$7,145,052
House - \$7,145,052 Senate - \$6,735,864	
Capital Outlay Program-Low Wealth for local 20 year bonds	Governor - \$1,089,600
House - \$183,416 Senate - \$172,912	
Purchase vocational equipment – 5 year bonds	Governor - \$1,628,200
House - \$1,628,200 Senate - \$1,617,000	
Facility repairs, improvements at state schools. 5 year bonds	Governor - \$928,074
House - \$928,074 Senate - \$921,690	
Provide additional funds to schools the meet low-wealth eligibility requirements to assist with major capital outlay projects	
	Governor - \$0.00
	House - \$0.00
	Senate - \$854,288

Action on Education Bills

THERE WILL BE A 2009 SESSION REPORT OF ALL BILLS PASSED THAT WILL BE AVAILABLE LATER THIS MONTH.

Truthfully, the news is not what passed; it is all the insanity and trash that did not pass!

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