



*****Georgia Legislative Update*****

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Legislative Days 1-4 (of 40)

- 2017 Legislative Session Commences
- Governor delivers "State of the State" address
- Committee membership set
- Governor announces Floor Leaders
- Senate rules changes

Monday, January 9, marked the first day of the 2017 legislative session, and the beginning of the two year term. The bulk of the week was marked by the usual pomp and circumstance, including the Governor's State of the State, as well as his Budget Address.

Legislators worked in session Monday through Thursday, legislative days one through four respectively. The coming week they will be in recess for appropriations committee work.

State of the State

The theme of the Governor's address was "accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative." He outlined many of the improvements the state made over the past few years including: reducing the unemployment rate from 10.4% to the current 5.3%, the increase in the state's 'rainy day fund' from \$116M to \$2.03B, and we have maintained the all important AAA bond rating. He outlined his coming budget proposal contains a 19% pay increase for DFCS caseworkers, a 2% increase for state employees.

The Governor spoke about a number of healthcare issues, including the need to continue the Medicaid Hospital Provider Fee, and the opioid addiction epidemic. He also suggested the general assembly use 'caution' and not make any significant reforms in the health policy arena until we have a better sense of what the new presidential administration will do.

The Governor spoke at length about education in the state. While the high school graduation rate has improved (from 67.4% to 79.2%) has improved, there is still more work to be done. He is especially concerned with the "153 chronically underperforming schools" that serve almost 89,000 students. Given the majority of these students are in elementary school, he acknowledged his coming proposal will emphasize elementary schools. He will be working with the House and Senate to craft related legislation.

Governor's Floor Leaders

The Governor announced his team of floor leaders in the House and Senate. In the House, the Governor named: Representative Chuck Efstration (R-Dacula), Representative Trey Rhodes (R-Greensboro), and Representative Terry Rogers (R-Clarkesville). In the Senate, Senator P.K. Martin IV (R-Lawrenceville), Senator Butch Miller (R-Gainesville), and Senator Larry Walker III (R-Kathleen).

Committee Chairmen Announced

HOUSE

Agriculture and Consumer Affairs: Tom McCall

Appropriations: Terry England

Banks and Banking: Greg Morris

Budget and Fiscal Affairs Oversight: Chuck Martin

Code Revision: Buzz Brockway

Defense and Veterans Affairs: Bill Hitchens

Economic Development and Tourism: Ron Stephens

Education: Brooks Coleman

Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications: Don Parsons

Ethics: Randy Nix

Game, Fish, and Parks: David Knight

Governmental Affairs: Ed Rynders

Health and Human Services: Sharon Cooper

Higher Education: Rick Jasperse

Human Resources and Aging: Tommy Benton

Industry and Labor: Brian Strickland

Information and Audits: Darlene Taylor

Insurance: Richard Smith

Interstate Cooperation: Matt Dollar

Intragovernmental Cooperation: Jan Tankersley

Juvenile Justice: Mandi Ballinger

Judiciary: Wendell Willard

Judiciary Non-Civil: Rich Golick

Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment: Johnnie Caldwell

MARTOC: Tom Taylor

Motor Vehicles: Bubber Epps

Natural Resources and Environment: Lynn Smith

Public Safety and Homeland Security: Alan Powell

Regulated Industries: Howard Maxwell

Retirement: Paul Battles

Rules: John Meadows

Science and Technology: Ed Setzler

Small Business Development: Chad Nimmer

Special Rules: Buddy Harden

State Planning and Community Affairs: Jimmy Pruett

State Properties: Gerald Greene

Transportation: Kevin Tanner

Ways and Means: Jay Powell

SENATE

Agriculture and Consumer Affairs: John Wilkinson

Appropriations: Jack Hill

Banking and Financial Institutions: William Ligon

Economic Development and Tourism: Mike Dugan

Education and Youth: Lindsey Tippins

Ethics: Dean Burke

Finance: Chuck Hufstetler

Government Oversight: Bill Heath

Health and Human Services: Renee Unterman

Higher Education: Fran Millar

Insurance and Labor: Burt Jones

Interstate Cooperation: Donzella James

Judiciary: Jesse Stone

Natural Resources and Environment: Frank Ginn

Public Safety: Tyler Harper

Reapportionment and Redistricting: Ben Watson

Regulated Industries and Utilities: Rick Jeffares

Retirement: Ellis Black

Rules: Jeff Mullis

Science and Technology: Bruce Thompson

Special Judiciary: Curt Thompson

State and Local Government Operations: John Albers

State Institutions and Property: Ed Harbison

Transportation: Brandon Beach

Urban Affairs: Lester Jackson

Veterans, Military, and Homeland Security: Hunter Hill

Senate Rule Changes

The Senate made a few modifications to their policies and procedures. Notably, they moved 'cross-over day' (the day House bills must be in the Senate in order to continue) from day 30 to day 28.

Schedule

The legislature is in session Monday, January 23, 2017 for day 5. We are currently expected to be in session Monday through Thursday the week of the 23rd and the 30th.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

Thank you.

Sheila

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