

Capitol Partners

Public Affairs & Government Relations

Update for Legislative Week Ending 2-14-08

The General Assembly reconvened Monday, February 11, and worked four legislative days this week. They are in recess tomorrow and Monday and will reconvene on Tuesday, February 19. Justice Leah Ward Sears delivered the State of the Judiciary speech on Wednesday focusing on children and families, and presenting the need for an increase in judicial salaries since they haven't had a raise since 1999. We have now completed 18 legislative days.

The House passed a bill allowing on-line drivers education courses to reduce points for certain offenses. Legislation introduced in the House this week includes an income tax credit for adopting foster children, two income tax credit bills for purchasing water efficient products, Chairman Vance Smith's (House Transportation) statewide 1% sales tax increase to fund transportation projects, Speaker Richardson's "property tax reform" act, environmental covenants legislation, and a constitutional amendment sponsored by conservative House Republicans that would put strict limits on how surplus budget funds could be spent. The House Government Affairs Committee favorably reported HB 1158, setting a \$10 per automobile registration fee to fund a trauma care center network.

The Senate passed legislation recognizing February 12 as "Georgia Day," the Joint Statewide Water Planning Oversight Committee, the Governor's bill giving the GBI investigative authority in identity fraud cases, a bill deleting the automatic repeal of the Georgia Coastal Management Act, and two resolutions freezing property value assessments. The Senate Finance Committee passed the Governor's constitutional amendment that would repeal state ad valorem taxes except in cases of emergency. The Senate Economic Development Committee approved, and the Senate passed, legislation for a "Made in Georgia" program to promote Georgia goods and products. The Senate Transportation Committee passed the Lt. Governor's regional sales tax for funding transportation projects.

Secretary of State Karen Handel, reporting a record turnout of voters last week (45%) for the presidential primary, has confirmed the official election results (numbers rounded): for the Democrats Barack Obama 66% and Hillary Clinton 31%; for the Republicans, Mike Huckabee 34%, John McCain 32%, and Mitt Romney 30%.