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## Public Affairs & Government Relations

### Legislative Update for Week Ending 2-22-08

The General Assembly reconvened Tuesday, February 19, and worked four legislative days this week. They will be in recess Monday working on a compromise for the House and Senate versions of the supplemental FY '08 budget and will reconvene on Tuesday, February 26. The mid-point of the session, Day 20, was this week. We have now completed 22 legislative days.

The House and Senate both passed resolutions calling for an accurate survey of the state's northern boundary, which is the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel and would give Georgia access to the Tennessee River. The House passed the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act. A House Judiciary subcommittee held two days of hearings on right-to-life legislation but did not take any action. Another House Judiciary subcommittee passed bills to toughen penalties for teenagers convicted of multiple seatbelt violations and to impose life sentences for persons twice convicted of drug trafficking. The House Ways & Means Committee favorably reported the Speaker's tax reform legislation (HR 1246 & HB 979), which would eliminate ad valorem taxes on personal autos/trucks (except for a \$20 fee) and the school portion of property taxes but would impose a broader sales tax on goods and services, including tax on groceries. HB 272, which would cap the sales tax on energy used in manufacturing, passed a House Ways & Means subcommittee and action is expected next week. Introduced in the House this week were several bills in response to the Brian Nichols case stating only judges who have to run for reelection could handle death penalty cases and specifically stating how the state public defenders council and the county in which the case was tried would divide the amounts that would be paid for the defense.

The Senate passed the FY '08 supplemental budget, a credit freeze bill that allows the Banking Commissioner to set the fees, a constitutional amendment allowing counties to call for a vote on a local one-cent sales tax to pay for local highway projects, several bills dealing with financially troubled Grady Hospital, and Senator Shafer's telephone competition bill. Introduced in the Senate this week was a bill to revise and update several items related to probate judges and the probate courts, which is tentatively scheduled for the Senate Special Judiciary Committee meeting next week. Also introduced in the Senate this week was a resolution urging the Georgia congressional delegation to oppose the U.S. EPA making air quality standards more strict. The Senate Public Safety Committee favorably reported legislation that would change the terminology of "seatbelts" to "life belts" and "air bags" to "life bags."