



GEORGIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
2009 Legislative Report



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The 2009 session of the Georgia General Assembly was one that made positive progress in several areas important to our state's business community. While several key issues, specifically transportation and trauma care funding and school board governance reform, remain to be resolved in 2010, a number of important steps forward were taken in the Georgia Chamber's areas of policy focus.

The Georgia Chamber of Commerce utilizes its staff, Board members and 450-member Government Affairs Council, made up of top government affairs professionals

from member companies across the state, to advocate on behalf of the business community not only during the 40-day legislative session but also throughout the year with the underlying goal of making Georgia a premier destination for economic growth and development.

An Honor Roll is included on the reverse side of this report designating those legislators who clearly supported the agenda of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce throughout the 2009 session.



BILL SUPPORTED BY CHAMBER



BILL OPPOSED BY CHAMBER

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT






HB 149		"The Move on When Ready Act" allows high school juniors and seniors to receive high school credit for work completed in post-secondary institutions, encouraging excellence in state high schools. Passed, signed by Governor.
HB 251		Allows school choice under certain conditions and within a student's assigned school district. Passed, signed by Governor.
HB 280		Addresses the growing shortage of math and science teachers by paying new teachers in those fields a starting salary equivalent to a fifth-year teacher. Passed, signed by Governor.
SB 84		Clarifies roles, responsibilities and training requirements and establishes ethics standards for local school boards so they can more effectively govern Georgia schools. Based on the recommendations of the Commission for School Board Excellence. Passed Senate, not considered by House.

ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY






SB 155		Amends state law regarding "best management practices" for control of soil erosion and sedimentation, providing consistency and changing certain provisions relating to 25-foot buffers along state waters. Passed, signed by Governor.
HR 338		Expresses support for development of Georgia's offshore and land-based energy resources in a balanced manner that promotes energy independence while respecting the environment. Adopted by both Chambers.

EXISTING BUSINESS & INDUSTRY



HR 22		Constitutional amendment to protect the sanctity of secret ballot elections, including in union-organization efforts, which would be virtually eliminated by the proposed federal Employee Free Choice Act. Defeated in House.
SR 49		Condemns the proposed federal Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), which would significantly tilt union-organizing efforts in favor of big labor and would eliminate the right of employees to vote by secret ballot, threatening Georgia's economic competitiveness. Passed by the Senate.



SB 82		Creates new penalties for knowingly selling or accepting stolen scrap metal, a necessary effort to curb the huge increase in metal theft experienced by Georgia businesses and property owners and costing them millions of dollars each year. Passed, signed by Governor.
SB 16		Would have allowed local communities to determine whether or not to permit Sunday retail sales of alcoholic beverages. Did not pass committee.
HB 290		Would have increased the state's minimum wage for private sector employees, significantly increasing the cost of doing business. Did not pass committee.
HB 37		Would have expanded government-mandated employee leave for private and public sector employers with 10 or more employees and imposed penalties for employers who did not comply. Was not heard by committee.
SB 164		Would have established new guidelines for outdoor advertising, including requirements for roadside beautification in conjunction with billboard placement along roads, highways and interstates. Passed Senate, defeated in House.

HEALTH CARE








HB 160		Creates new funding for Georgia's trauma care network through a \$200 fee on drivers charged for "super speeding." Estimated to provide \$23 million annually for critical injury treatment. Passed, signed by Governor.
HB 277		Would have created a new, dedicated funding source for Georgia's trauma care network through a voter-approved Constitutional amendment establishing a \$10 vehicle tag fee, estimated to provide \$80 million annually. Passed Senate, not calendered in House.
HB 161 HB 426		Opposed by the Chamber, as are all mandates on business-sponsored employee health insurance benefits which would increase costs, this bill would have required private health insurance plans to provide coverage for autism spectrum disorders. Did not pass.
SB 62		Would have placed Georgia in violation of federal ERISA laws governing self-insured health care plans and required certain businesses to pay bills within 15 days. Did not pass.
HB 307		The Georgia Chamber opposed two separate budget proposals that would have had a negative impact on health care in our state. One would have reduced Medicaid provider reimbursements from roughly 85 cents on the dollar to 75 cents, driving up the cost of health care and reducing the number of providers. The other would have taxed HMO benefits offered by employers, forcing many to drop this important benefit. Budget passed without either provision.

LAW & JUDICIARY




SR 108		Conforms Georgia law to federal law with regard to the stay of discovery once a motion to dismiss litigation has been filed, keeping the cost of litigation down. Passed as amendment to HB 29, signed by Governor.
SB 23		Would allow for the admissibility of seat belt use as evidence in court cases related to accidents, allowing the jury to decide if and to what extent failure to comply with current seat belt laws may have contributed to injuries. Passed in Senate, failed in House.

HB 173		Clarifies Georgia's current non-compete employment covenant laws. Passed, signed by Governor.
SB 213		Protects manufacturers from specious nuisance lawsuits based on market-share or industry-wide liability trends. Passed, signed by Governor.

TAXATION

HB 481 HB 482		Introduced as "The JOBS Act of 2009," these bills were designed to promote job creation and business investment through tax credits and a voter-approved Constitutional amendment to eliminate the state's inventory tax for retail businesses. HB 481 was passed but vetoed by the Governor. HB 482 was passed and signed by the Governor, allowing for the ballot question in the fall of 2010.
HB 120		Continues Georgia's sales tax holidays for back-to-school and energy and water efficient products, stimulating the economy by temporarily eliminating sales taxes on qualified items. Passed, signed by Governor.
HB 438 HB 439		Modifies the existing "Business Expansion and Support (BEST) Act" making changes to various tax credits offered to businesses in Georgia. Also creates a new "mega" tax credit for major economic development projects. Passed, signed by Governor.
HB 233		Caps the increase of all property assessments and valuations including those for business, industrial and commercial property at three percent annually for two years. Passed, signed by Governor.
HB 17		"The Small Business and Jobs Protection Act of 2009" would have eliminated Georgia's corporate income tax, providing an important economic development incentive for existing and relocating businesses. Did not pass.
HB 186		Re-authorizes tax credits for employer-sponsored telework programs, encouraging the use of this important alternative. Passed, signed by Governor.
HB 271		Would have phased out the sales tax for energy used directly or indirectly by qualified manufacturing or processing plants by 2015, lowering the cost of doing business and providing significant economic relief. Was not voted on by committee.

TRANSPORTATION

HB 277 HR 206		Would have created a statewide one-cent sales tax to fund pre-identified transportation needs and dedicated the fourth penny of sales tax currently collected on motor fuel to transportation through a voter-approved Constitutional amendment. Passed House, was not considered by Senate.
SB 39 SR 44		Would have allowed for a regionally-based one-cent sales tax for transportation projects in the metropolitan Atlanta area and among any one or more counties upon voter approval of a Constitutional amendment. Passed Senate, was not considered by House.
SB 200		Changes the way transportation projects are currently planned, prioritized and implemented. Provides for a new director of planning to be appointed by the Governor and gives the legislature a greater voice in choosing which projects will be built. Passed, signed by Governor.

GEORGIA CHAMBER HONOR ROLL - HOUSE

Representative (District - City)	Representative (District - City)	Representative (District - City)
Stephen Allison (8 - Blairsville)	Tom Graves (12 - Ranger)	Larry O`Neal (146 - Bonaire)
Amos Amerson (9 - Dahlongega)	Gerald Greene (149 - Cuthbert)	Bobby Parham (141 - Milledgeville)
Lee Anderson (117 - Grovetown)	Mark Hamilton (23 - Cumming)	Butch Parrish (156 - Swainsboro)
Rick Austin (10 - Demorest)	Bob Hanner (148 - Parrott)	Don Parsons (42 - Marietta)
Glenn Baker (78 - Jonesboro)	Ben Harbin (118 - Evans)	Allen Peake (137 - Macon)
Terry Barnard (166 - Glennville)	Buddy Harden (147 - Cordele)	Alan Powell (29 - Hartwell)
Paul Battles (15 - Cartersville)	Michael Harden (28 - Toccoa)	Jay Powell (171 - Camilla)
Timothy Bearden (68 - Villa Rica)	Bill Hembree (67 - Winston)	Jimmy Pruett (144 - Eastman)
Tommy Benton (31 - Jefferson)	Calvin Hill (21 - Canton)	David Ralston (7 - Blue Ridge)
Ellis Black (174 - Valdosta)	Cecily Hill (180 - Kingsland)	Matt Ramsey (72 - Peachtree City)
Bob Bryant (160 - Garden City)	Doug Holt (112 - Social Circle)	Bobby Reese (98 - Sugar Hill)
Mark Burkhalter (50 - Johns Creek)	Billy Horne (71 - Newnan)	Tom Rice (51 - Norcross)
Jon Burns (157 - Newington)	Penny Houston (170 - Nashville)	Glenn Richardson (19 - Hiram)
Mark Butler (18 - Carrollton)	Mack Jackson (142 - Sandersville)	Jay Roberts (154 - Ocilla)
Charlice Byrd (20 - Woodstock)	Mike Jacobs (80 - Atlanta)	Carl Rogers (26 - Gainesville)
Amy Carter (175 - Valdosta)	Sean Jerguson (22 - Holly Springs)	Ed Rynders (152 - Albany)
Buddy Carter (159 - Pooler)	Jan Jones (46 - Alpharetta)	Austin Scott (153 - Tifton)
David Casas (103 - Lilburn)	Jerry Keen (179 - St. Simons Island)	Martin Scott (2 - Rossville)
Jill Chambers (81 - Atlanta)	Mike Keown (173 - Coolidge)	Tony Sellier (136 - Fort Valley)
Mickey Channell (116 - Greensboro)	David Knight (126 - Griffin)	Ed Setzler (35 - Acworth)
Mike Cheokas (134 - Americus)	Tom Knox (24 - Cumming)	Jay Shaw (176 - Lakeland)
Mike Coan (101 - Lawrenceville)	Bob Lane (158 - Statesboro)	Donna Sheldon (105 - Dacula)
Jim Cole (125 - Forsyth)	Roger Lane (167 -Darien)	Barbara Sims (119 - Augusta)
Brooks Coleman (97 - Duluth)	Kevin Levitas (82 - Atlanta)	Chuck Sims (169 - Ambrose)
Doug Collins (27 - Gainesville)	Edward Lindsey (54 - Atlanta)	Bob Smith (113 - Watkinsville)
Sharon Cooper (41 - Marietta)	Barry Loudermilk (14 - Cassville)	Lynn Smith (70 - Newnan)
Clay Cox (102 - Lilburn)	John Lunsford (110 - McDonough)	Richard Smith (131 - Columbus)
Hardie Davis (122 - Gracewood)	Billy Maddox (127 - Zebulon)	Tommy Smith (168 - Nicholls)
Steve Davis (109 - McDonough)	Gene Maddox (172 - Cairo)	Vance Smith (129 - Pine Mountain)
Burke Day (163 - Tybee Island)	Judy Manning (32 - Marietta)	Calvin Smyre (132 - Columbus)
Katie Dempsey (13 - Rome)	Chuck Martin (47 - Alpharetta)	Ron Stephens (164 - Savannah)
Tom Dickson (6 - Cohutta)	Howard Maxwell (17 - Dallas)	Willie Talton (145 - Warner Robins)
Matt Dollar (45 - Marietta)	Jeff May (111 - Monroe)	Len Walker (107 - Loganville)
Earl Ehrhart (36 - Powder Springs)	Tom McCall (30 - Elberton)	Tom Weldon (3 - Ringgold)
Terry England (108 - Auburn)	John Meadows (5 - Calhoun)	Joe Wilkinson (52 - Atlanta)
Carl Epps (128 - LaGrange)	Fran Millar (79 - Dunwoody)	Wendell Willard (49 - Sandy Springs)
Melvin Everson (106 - Snellville)	James Mills (25 - Gainesville)	Mark Williams (178 - Jesup)
Harry Geisinger (48 - Roswell)	Alisha Morgan (39 - Austell)	Roger Williams (4 - Dalton)
Mike Glanton (76 - Ellenwood)	Greg Morris (155 - Vidalia)	John Yates (73 - Griffin)
Rich Golick (34 - Smyrna)	Jay Neal (1 - LaFayette)	
J. Craig Gordon (162 - Savannah)	Randy Nix (69 - LaGrange)	

GEORGIA CHAMBER HONOR ROLL - SENATE

Senator (District - City)	Senator (District - City)	Senator (District - City)
David Adelman (42 - Decatur)	Seth Harp (29 - Midland)	Chip Rogers (21 - Woodstock)
Don Balfour (9 - Snellville)	Lee Hawkins (49 - Gainesville)	Mitch Seabaugh (28 - Sharpsburg)
John Bulloch (11 - Ochlocknee)	Bill Heath (31 - Bremen)	David Shafer (48 - Duluth)
Jim Butterworth (50 - Cornelia)	Jack Hill (4 - Reidsville)	Freddie Powell Sims (12 - Dawson)
Ronnie Chance (16 - Tyrone)	Judson Hill (32 - Marietta)	Preston Smith (52 - Rome)
Jeff Chapman (3 - Brunswick)	George Hooks (14 - Americus)	Cecil Staton (18 - Macon)
Bill Cowsert (46 - Athens)	Bill Jackson (24 - Appling)	Doug Stoner (6 - Smyrna)
John Crosby (13 - Tifton)	Eric Johnson (1 - Savannah)	Don Thomas (54 - Dalton)
John Douglas (17 - Social Circle)	Dan Moody (56 - Alpharetta)	Ross Tolleson (20 - Perry)
Greg Goggans (7 - Douglas)	Jeff Mullis (53 - Chickamauga)	Renee Unterman (45 - Buford)
Tim Golden (8 - Valdosta)	Jack Murphy (27 - Cumming)	Dan Weber (40 - Dunwoody)
Johnny Grant (25 - Milledgeville)	Chip Pearson (51 - Dawsonville)	John Wiles (37 - Kennesaw)
Bill Hamrick (30 - Carrollton)	Kasim Reed (35 - Atlanta)	Tommie Williams (19 - Lyons)

Georgia Chamber of Commerce 2009 LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR



(R-16)

Senator Ronnie Chance

First elected to the State Senate in 2004, Senator Chance serves as Chairman of the Finance Committee and Vice Chairman of the Government Oversight and Retirement Committees. He is also a member of the Higher Education, Reapportionment, Redistricting and Economic Development Committees. Chance is a graduate of Georgia State University and resides in Tyrone with his wife and two children.



(R-118)

Representative Ben Harbin

Representative Harbin is serving his second term as Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, having been first elected to the House in 1994. Harbin served on the Appropriations Committee for ten years before becoming Chairman and also serves on the Energy, Utilities and Telecommunication, Insurance, and Intragovernmental Coordination Committees. He is a graduate of Georgia Military College and lives in Evans with his wife and two children.



(R-4)

Senator Jack Hill

Senator Hill of Reidsville was first elected to the State Senate in 1990 and is the current Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, which as a result of his leadership has implemented a results-based process based on clearly defined purposes and measurements. He also serves on the Ethics, Natural Resources, Regulated Industries and Rules Committees.



(R-19)

Representative Glenn Richardson

Representative Glenn Richardson joined the Georgia House in 1996 and in 2005 was elected by his peers to serve as Georgia's first Republican Speaker in 130 years. He has used his leadership position to advocate for issues including transportation, education, water management and tax reform. Speaker Richardson received his bachelors and law degrees from Georgia State University and lives in Hiram.



(D-132)

Representative Calvin Smyre

Representative Smyre was first elected to the House in 1974 and currently serves as the Minority Caucus Chairman. Considered one of the "deans" of the Georgia House, he is currently a member of the Appropriations and Rules Committees and in the past has chaired the Rules, University System of Georgia, and Industrial Relations Committees. He is a graduate of Fort Valley State University and lives in Columbus.