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Column

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Notes from the Senate



By Sen. Bill Heath

ATLANTA (March 20, 2009)— I can happily report that economic relief and trauma care continue to make their way through the Senate this session. I support a more efficient economy and trauma care system, because these are important issues throughout Georgia that no one can take for granted. I hear your concerns, and relief will be coming your way with the passage of this legislation.

A bill designed to stimulate Georgia's small business climate with tax incentives and credits has been working its way through the Senate this week. I support the Jobs, Opportunity, and Business Success Act of 2009 (JOBS) which is comprised of House Bill 481 and 482. HB 481 provides a new business filing fee holiday, a \$500 credit towards the unemployment insurance tax for each eligible employee hired, a \$2,400 income tax credit for each eligible employee hired, and the elimination of the sales tax deposit. HB 482 would eliminate the state inventory tax on all Georgia businesses.

This is the most important pro-business legislation the General Assembly has ever considered, and its focus on protecting the small business will be the key to bringing Georgia through the current recession. What we are proposing is harnessing the greatness of Georgia...the intellectual capital, the entrepreneurial spirit, and the true grit of everyday Georgians. True sustainable job creation is the solution to economic recovery. By doing this, Georgia's economy will flourish in a fast, efficient, and stable manner. It is not a quick fix like the Federal stimulus package. The purpose of the government is not to create jobs but to stimulate them. That is what this act can accomplish. We believe that it is you

as the hard-working people of Georgia—not big government—that is the key to our economic prosperity.

I led the Governor’s Super Speeder Bill (House Bill 160) in the Senate this week and its passage through the Senate Public Safety Committee. The bill directs the Department of Driver Services to collect a \$200 fine from any driver, or “super speeder,” who is convicted of driving at a speed of 85 miles per hour or more on any four-lane road or 75 miles per hour or more on any two-lane road. All funds collected from “super speeders” will be used to fund a trauma care system in Georgia.

We are working to make Georgia roadways safer. This bill provides an incentive for Georgians to drive more carefully and will punish those driving dangerously with a fine that will fund Georgia’s trauma care. I am a supporter for finding funds for Georgia trauma care, and I especially support this bill because it will help the state finance the trauma care we desperately need without introducing a new tax. The Super Speeder Bill is a simple, effective piece of legislation with a two part system that can only help make Georgia a safer place.

Questions have been raised in regard to House Bill 229 which requires schools to conduct annual fitness tests on Georgia’s students during a physical education course taught by a physical education teacher. The results of each student will be reported to the parent, and the collective results of the assessments will be sent to the State Board of Education.

I am against nearly every aspect of this issue. Our teachers need to focus on educating our children, not weighing them. My first priority is to see us move up in education from 49th in the nation. Once our state has improved its education systems, then other issues can come into play. Health and the physical state of Georgia’s children is the concern and priority of the parents, and our school systems should stay out of it. With this bill going into effect across the state there is sure to be a negative impact to our already slim fiscal situation, and it will surely cost a lot of money to provide physical assessments for the millions of school children across our state.

As always, I am pleased to serve the people of the 31st Senate District. With only 6 more legislative days left, please contact me with any questions, concerns or feedback. I look forward to hearing from you and continue to work for a better Georgia.

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Sen. Bill Heath serves as Chairman of the Retirement Committee and Governor Sonny Perdue’s Floor Leader in the Senate. He represents the 31st Senate District which consists of Haralson and Polk counties and portions of Bartow and Paulding counties. He may be reached at 404.651.7738 or by email at bill.heath@billheath.net.