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WEEKLY COLUMN

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Notes from the Georgia State Senate

By: State Senator Bill Heath



Fiscal responsibility resonates throughout this Legislative session, and efforts to alleviate mismanaged funds in Georgia have flown out of the Senate. Thursday the Senate took a major step in real transportation relief for Georgians. With the passage of the Transforming Transportation Investment Act (SB 200), the Senate voted for an understandable and equitable funding process that will enable transportation dollars to be spent more efficiently, effectively and strategically.

This bill was put forward by Senate and House leadership in concert with the Governor and we look forward to the House now carrying the momentum forward and getting this important legislation through the General Assembly. SB 200 allows for a new, transparent model for funding decisions that gives the General Assembly and the Governor direct appropriation powers, much like the way other agencies in Georgia are funded and governed. As legislators, we will be able to represent our constituents' needs much better by having greater say in the appropriations process and directing what projects are funded. Local governments will also see increased funding, as a minimum of 25 percent of the State Motor Fuel Funds collected annually will be deposited into a Local Grant fund and will be dedicated to local transportation projects.

Accusations of tax fraud by some Georgia state legislators also topped the news this week, and I must say that I have no tolerance for this. Anybody who hasn't paid their taxes should not serve in a public office, no matter their political affiliation. Whether it's paying power bills, tax bills, or making house payments, everybody should be doing their part. I have filed all my tax returns since the time I drew my first paycheck at the age of 15. I assure you I am current with all my taxes as every Georgia citizen should be no matter their occupation or title.

My efforts to help Georgians with identity security (Senate Bill 124) passed with a majority vote out of the Senate this week. The bill prevents social security numbers of public employees from being publicly disclosed. Everyone needs the surety of their identity protection, and this provision closes a loophole in Georgia law that granted any representative of the news media access to social security, birthdates, and other private information not otherwise available in an open records request.

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Sen. Bill Heath 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 billheath@billheath.net.