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### **WEEKLY COLUMN**

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# **Notes from the Georgia State Senate**

## ***Governor Perdue introduces 2007 agenda***

By State Sen. Bill Heath



It was back to work last week in the Georgia Senate, as we began the second half of the 2007 session. This is the hectic portion of the 40-day legislative session, where we roll up our sleeves and really get down to the people's business. At this point, there are numerous issues moving through the legislative process, ranging from dog fighting to education to election laws. This week, I would like to focus on some the issues that Governor Sonny Perdue has introduced and I will carry in the legislature.

### **Redistricting Commission**

In an effort to make the redistricting process a bipartisan one, Gov. Perdue has introduced a constitutional amendment to establish the Citizens Redistricting Commission – an independent redistricting commission that would help ensure fairly drawn districts and improve public faith in the elective process. If the amendment passes, the Commission would function independently with respect to both congressional districts and state legislative districts, and would submit its report to the General Assembly for an up or down vote. If either house declines to give approval, the report would return to the Commission with suggestions that would eliminate the basis for disapproval. If either house declined a second time, the General Assembly would proceed to complete the redistricting process on its own. The Commission would have seven members:

- One person appointed by the Lt. Governor

- One person appointed by the Minority Leader in Senate
- One person appointed by the Speaker of the House
- One person appointed by the Minority Leader in House
- Two persons appointed by the Governor (only one of which may be of the same political party as the Governor)
- One person (selected by six persons above) to chair the commission

**All Georgia Serves Amendment**

The *All Georgia Serves* constitutional amendment would expand the number of social organizations in Georgia able to use state funds to care for our most vulnerable citizens. The Amendment was introduced by Gov. Perdue to remove any uncertainty about the ability of faith-based organizations to accept state funds for providing social services, allowing the best human services providers to serve our neediest families and children. The *All Georgia Serves* Amendment will bring the Georgia Constitution in line with the U. S. Constitution. I will also carry this legislation as it makes its way through the legislative process.

In addition to the HOPE Chest Amendment, these measures will help bring our state forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, protecting essential state services and functions to preserve them for future generations of Georgia citizens. These important pieces of legislation are working their way through the legislative process, and should reach the Senate floor for debate very soon.

I appreciate the faith that Governor Perdue has placed in me, and I appreciate your support as I do my best to represent your interests in the state Senate.

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*Sen. Bill Heath represents the 31<sup>st</sup> Senate District, which includes all of Haralson and Polk Counties and parts of Bartow and Paulding Counties. He may be reached at 404.651.7738, or by email at [billheath@billheath.net](mailto:billheath@billheath.net).*