

## A View from the House

By Representative Doug Holt

In the final week of the session, the pace picked up considerably, with 47 bills and resolutions, and 26 conference committee reports considered. Conference committees are six person mini-committees who work out differences between House and Senate versions of a bill, and write a compromise version to be voted on. We were in session Monday, Tuesday and Thursday; with Thursday being the customary all day finale of about 14 hours. There was some posturing between the House and Senate over the budget, which you probably heard about in the media. I've learned that this routine between the chambers is par for the course. One 20+ year Democrat incumbent made the comment to me that "It's always the same, just the faces change."

The most important bills passed were the conference committee versions of the budget, the eminent domain bill (HB 1313), the sexual predators act (HB 1059), and the illegal aliens bill (HB 529). I'm pleased to report that all of these came back from conference committee in pretty much the same form as I reported them in earlier columns, with some worthwhile tweaking provided by the Senate.

There were a number of significant and interesting new measures enacted. SB 382 was an update to last year's HB 221, the bill that changed child support calculations to the "income shares" model used by 37 other states. Last year's bill provided for a study committee to review the impact of HB 221 during 2005, and make recommendations for some fine-tuning. A fair amount of bi-partisan work was done to make the model more equitable, even including some important amendments made during the floor debate. I had received a fair number of comments about the bill, both positive and negative, and from both sides of the issue. This is a good indicator that, as the old saying goes, "if everyone comes away with some complaints, then it's probably a good compromise." I voted yes, and the bill passed by 158 to 14. The Senate agreed to the House version, for final passage.

SB 77 defines and provides punishment for feticide, the killing of an unborn child. Just as with existing definitions of crimes of assault against an individual, the bill lays out a range of offenses and punishments, based on whether the assault is involuntary (crime of passion) or intentional, along with other circumstances. One might have expected a good deal of debate over such a bill, but surprisingly there was not. We added a few amendments, and passed the bill unanimously. The Senate agreed to our changes, giving final passage.

SB 442 changes some of the provisions about child abuse reporting. Certain people already required by law to report suspected child abuse (hospital, school or social agency workers, for example) now are required to report within 24 hours, rather than the previous "as soon as possible." The bill also prohibits the person who receives the report from making any changes to it, except to add additional necessary information (a sad recognition of the fact that this problem does occur). The House passed the bill as delivered from the Senate unanimously, which constituted final passage.

We also passed a pair of personal information protection bills from the Senate. SB 455 prohibits telephone records brokers from obtaining and releasing certain data about phone customer call history: such as the phone number dialed by the customer, the number of telephone calls directed to a customer, or other data related to the telephone calls typically contained on a customer telephone bill, including the time the calls started and ended, the duration of the calls, the time of day the calls were made, and any charges applied. We amended the bill slightly, passed it unanimously, and the Senate agreed with our changes for final passage.

The other personal information protection bill was SB 588. This bill forbids a person or company from publicly displaying someone else's social security number, or transmitting unsecured (via

encryption or other protective means) social security numbers over the Internet. As with SB 455, we amended the bill, passed it unanimously, and the Senate agreed for final passage.

On Tuesday, J. T. Blaker, who attends Cousins Middle School, worked for over seven hours paging for the House. Thanks for your dedication, J.T.!

Now, for a brief wrap-up. I've found that many folks are interested in the raw numbers of what I deal with during the session. Since January 9th, I voted on roughly 400 bills, resolutions, etc. I received over 4600 contacts (phone calls, visits, mail and email), of which almost exactly 1/4<sup>th</sup> were from within the district (I continued my policy of responding to all in district contacts). Email is rapidly becoming the method of choice for legislative contacts, making up about 50% of my in district contacts, and over 74% of all contacts. I also had plenty of opportunities to improve my command of "legalese", by reading over 480 bills.

For reference: bills and live session and committee video are online at [www.legis.state.ga.us](http://www.legis.state.ga.us).  
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