

## A View from the House

By Representative Doug Holt

On the surface, the first day of the 2007 session was seemingly tedious. At a glance, it was a day of ceremony, pomp and circumstance. We went through the constitutional rituals of electing the Speaker and other officials of the House for 2007/2008, handled some other “housekeeping” type work in our chamber, and then went to hold a joint session with the Senate to swear in Governor Perdue and other statewide officials. This may sound like a boring and wasteful use of legislative time, but we need to remind ourselves it is not. What we really did was execute an act that is the envy of many peoples across the globe – a peaceful transfer of power.

The election for Speaker of the House was interesting. While the Republican Caucus has 106 of the 180 members in the House, Glenn Richardson won by 113 to 66. Those eight defections from the Democrat Caucus were signals of willingness to work with the majority – which makes the majority’s position even more significant than shown by the actual number of declared Republicans.

We also saw a pile of bills and resolutions launched. I’ll give you a “bird’s eye” view of them in this and the next few columns. HB 1 would make abortion a crime in Georgia. It does make exception for cases where a physician has tried to save both mother and child, but cannot save both. No other exceptions are included. I think we all know that the federal judiciary would strike down the bill, even if passed. Its author is certainly stepping into a media firestorm.

I have introduced HB 2, which is a more thorough version of my Fair Annexation Act from last year. The bill simply seeks to set some state policy on proper use of annexation powers, and to create a dispute resolution process that includes truly viable recourse options for both city and county. Last year, I went in with a very biased version, hoping to negotiate to a more reasonable bill. This year, I have gone to great pains to make the bill as even-handed as possible. I have had a lot of folks ask me for a description of what’s going on with annexation, and why I have introduced the bill. In order to provide a convenient answer for these questions, I have written a short flyer called “Everyone’s Property Rights Matter”. It, as well as a copy of HB 2, is available on my website ([www.DougHolt.org](http://www.DougHolt.org)). Both are free, and may be distributed in electronic or printed form for free, as well.

Two bills, HB 4 for teens on learner’s permits, and HB 5 for adult drivers, would make the use of cell phones and other wireless communication devices (CB radio, for example) on the road a traffic violation. They would allow for a fine of up to \$500, and place one point on the violator’s record.

HB 21 would forbid state and local governments to publish any official document or form in any other language than English (current law gives them that option).

HR 1 would allow residents in a school district to change to an elected superintendent. That official would then be executive officer of the board of education. The change would be made by referendum in the district. Such a change could be reversed by a subsequent referendum.

HR 2 would offer a referendum to change the terms of state legislators to four years. The first election for these extended terms would be in 2010. Certainly, two year terms mean that we are almost constantly “running for office”, and having to raise campaign funds, both of which distract us to some extent from our legislative duties, and make finding time for family and one’s real career more difficult. On the other hand, four-year terms could make legislators feel less accountable. I welcome your opinion on this (by email, please, if possible). I don’t think my preference should determine my vote. Please include your address, because I will only count residents of this district.

I always enjoy the chance to see folks from home, and was glad to visit briefly with Steve Burch, who was at the Capitol for Sportsman's Day.

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