

## A View from the House

By Representative Doug Holt

Once again, we were only in session three days last week, with an eye towards a PeachCare settlement. Finally, the General Assembly decided to go into recess for two weeks, in order for the federal government to act on some promises about a solution. We will be back in session on the 19<sup>th</sup>, though we will probably do some committee work during these next two weeks.

Meanwhile, we were certainly not idle. We voted on 40 bills and resolutions during those three days. Some of the interesting ones were items I described a few weeks ago, when they were first introduced. You can't always tell if interesting items will make it through the committee process and up to a House floor vote, but it is fascinating to watch when the intriguing ones make it.

HB 69 would require the state to make our driving records available to us free online. This important information determines how our auto insurance is priced, and everyone felt that citizens shouldn't have to "jump through hoops" to see their own record. The bill passed unanimously.

HB 78 makes "agritourism" a valid part of the conservation use easement. This allows farmers to make money providing tours of their operation for educational purposes. The new category fits the intent of helping farmers stay on their land, rather than having to sell off to developers. Thus I felt it was a worthwhile extension of the easement. The bill passed unanimously.

HB 202 provides some common sense protection for Georgia in dealing with contractors who are 25% or more behind on government contracts. Such contractors are denied the right to bid on new government contracts until they have caught up on tardy projects. Another unanimous vote!

HB 208 changes the makeup of school councils. It would require that a majority of members be parents – two of whom must be business-people. It also stipulates that the chair of each council be a parent. The bill's intent is to encourage stronger parent involvement and support of schools. Every study I've seen shows that such involvement promotes discipline and higher performance. There was some dissent about the formula for council membership, but the bill still passed by a strong 147 to 14, with my "yes".

HB 225 would help parents saving for their children's college education. It eliminates an income test and other limitations the state income tax deduction for contributions to Georgia's Higher Education Savings Plan. We are the only state in the union that limits access to such deductions, and the House unanimously agreed that this was unfair.

HB 243 addresses a fear held by some high school students about taking "dual enrollment" courses at colleges or technical schools (these courses let high them earn advance college credits). The fear they have is that the courses might count towards their HOPE Scholarship cap. Currently, there is no consistent rule on this question, which creates a disincentive for students to take more challenging courses. HB 243 would ensure that dual enrollment courses don't count against the HOPE cap. Like most of the legislation we considered this week, this one passed unanimously too.

On Wednesday, the Morgan FFA leadership team came to the Capitol, lead by their advisor, Tim Savelle. One FFA member, James Dean, served as a page, and did a great job. FFA teaches a lot of valuable skills, including leadership. Morgan's program is consistently one of the best in Georgia. I really appreciate the time the group took to come and visit.

Now a quick 10<sup>th</sup> Congressional District update. There are now over ten announced candidates (from both parties) for the post. The buzz around the Capitol still favors Senator Whitehead.

Due to the recess, I will not be sending another column until after the next week of session.

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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