

## A View from the House

By Representative Doug Holt

Last week saw a slower pace on the House floor. Most of the measures we considered were either of the “housekeeping” variety, where they update state regulations to meet changed federal standards; or they were on fairly minor matters. A couple of them were of minor interest.

HB 387 officially declares February 12 of every year as “Georgia Day”. For those not familiar with the history, James Oglethorpe set up the first settlement of what would eventually become Georgia on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1733. Since we have “official days” for all sorts of other purposes, it’s almost surprising that the state hasn’t recognized its own birthday for 275 years. This passed by an obvious unanimous vote.

HB 921, which I described last week, would enable Georgia’s Banking and Finance Department to participate in an online, national licensing and tracking system of mortgage lenders and brokers. It would give Georgia a greater ability to investigate the practices of out of state lenders and brokers seeking a license here. This reform addresses the sub-prime mortgage crisis, which is severely affecting many areas of Georgia. I voted yes, and the bill passed by 157 to 1.

Last week’s slow pace gives me more space to describe interesting new legislation. HB 897 would grant an income tax credit for the purchase of premium energy efficient appliances. The credit would be up to 25% of the purchase price of a qualified appliance. The goal, obviously, is to create a market incentive for Georgians to acquire more energy efficient devices – hopefully moving us more quickly into next generation equipment, and moderating our future power needs.

HB 904 proposes more thorough national fingerprint checks for employees of child and adult day care centers. It would also implement such checks for potential residents of adult care facilities. It is a response to criminal acts against the wards or residents of these institutions.

HB 940 would guard people against required implantation of new microchip devices that can transmit information about their movements, activities and body function. New technologies in this field are emerging that are quite threatening. The author is clearly out to defend individual rights against misuse of such powerful tools.

HR 1056 proposes a referendum to change rules for educational local option sales taxes. Specifically, it addresses situations where there is an independent school system, separate from a county system. If passed, the referendum would require that proceeds from such a tax be divided strictly based on the number of students in each system. This would undo the famous “veto” that former Speaker Tom Murphy created to benefit an independent system in his district.

HR 1216, called the “Taxpayer Dividend Amendment”, would specify how surplus revenues are to be used, and could significantly advance fiscal conservatism. If brought before the voters and passed, this amendment would allocate surplus revenue in the following order of priority:

- 1) Meeting legally mandated educational spending and enrollment adjustments;
- 2) Maintaining the Budget Reserve Fund at 8% of the previous year’s spending; and,
- 3) Returning a taxpayer dividend by increasing the income exemption used for calculating Georgia personal income taxes.

This could be an important reform, and I co-signed it.

Tuesday, David Ulfik of Oxford came by to visit and discuss some of this session’s issues. And on Thursday, Mary Key of Middle Ridge Elementary, and Jolynn Gill of Alcovy High stopped by to talk about school nutrition issues. Thanks to all of you for making the time to come to Atlanta and give me your thoughts. Also, Gloria Peters of Buckhead came to the Capitol on Wednesday. She testified in support of my HB 956, which is focused on making application of a Georgia Supreme Court precedent more consistent. This precedent could have rendered a favorable decision for Morgan County in the well-known Buckhead zoning lawsuit last summer. Gloria gave strong, heartfelt remarks, which always weigh heavily on members of a committee. I really appreciate her help with the effort.

For reference: bills and live session and committee video are online at [www.legis.ga.gov](http://www.legis.ga.gov).  
Contact Info: My office phone is 404-656-0152, and email address is [Doug@DougHolt.org](mailto:Doug@DougHolt.org).