

## A View from the House

By Representative Doug Holt

There will be a lot of unaccustomed “newness” with the beginning of the 2010 legislative session, exceeded only by the changes that came with the historic 2005 arrival of a Republican majority in the Georgia House of Representatives. The top three leadership jobs (speaker, speaker pro tempore, majority whip) are all changing hands, which will certainly bring changes to policy and style, and probably some downstream alterations to committee chairmanships and offices, etc. Since the personalities involved will have a powerful impact on Georgia, I thought you might like an introduction to the folks involved.

The Republican speaker nominee is David Ralston, from Blue Ridge. (I’m writing at the very beginning of the year, so I can’t simply say speaker, because an election before the full House of Representatives is planned for the first day of the session. With 105 votes in the Republican caucus, David’s election is almost assured, but it is not yet a done deal.) David is a north Georgia native, and an attorney. He and his wife Jane have two children. He also has an interesting political background. David served in the Georgia Senate from 1992 to 1998, and was the Republican nominee for state Attorney General in 1998. He’s been in the House since 2003, and has served as Chairman of the Non-Civil Judiciary Committee. He mounted a challenge for the speaker’s gavel a year ago, but was defeated. He emerged victorious from the competition for that office late last year, after Glenn Richardson’s sudden exit from the scene.

In person, David is down to earth and maintains a very gentlemanly demeanor. At the same time, he is quite self assured, and can be powerfully focused on matters at hand. David has a very sharp mind, and is known for an ability to carry significant, complex legislation to successful passage. I think these traits will serve him (and Georgia) well in the role of speaker. He should be able to command the sometimes rapid fire action of the House chamber, as well as the more mundane (but equally crucial) roles of setting policy and working with other branches of state government. The job of speaker is unique, so there are things you can’t know about how it will affect anyone new to it, but David comes amply prepared. He should do well.

Our nominee for speaker pro tempore is Jan Jones, of Alpharetta. Jan is also a native, and she and her husband, Kalin, have four children. She is a former marketing executive, with an MBA in finance. Elected in 2002, she’s chaired an appropriations committee, and been majority whip. Jan has an absolute passion for education, and is recognized as an authority on Georgia education finance. A short description of her style is: she works very smart, and very hard. One on one, she’s direct, in a friendly way. I’ve worked with her on a number of issues, and she always has a complete command of the facts (the phrase “data driven” may have been made up for her, and she always seems to know the most appropriate statistic that bears on a discussion). She has passed a fair amount of insightful legislation. Two things I like the most about her are that she is always intent about doing things in a transparent, above-the-board manner, and she has terrific political insight. I’m quite enthusiastic about her potential as speaker pro tempore, and look for great things from her.

Then we have our new majority whip, Edward Lindsey. Since this office is strictly one within the caucus, his election is complete. Edward, too, is a native Georgian, living in the Brookhaven area of Atlanta. He is an attorney, and with his wife Elizabeth has three sons. He has a very quick mind, and is often a victorious participant in sharp debates on the House floor. Edward is a strong legislator, and has authored or co-authored many significant bills, most notably those seeking to constrain property taxes in our state. His other policy focus is education, and he has chaired the Education subcommittee of Appropriations. Also, his conservative credentials are impeccable, as a graduate of the Coverdell Leadership Institute. Edward is well prepared to continue the impressive whip operation that Jan Jones developed, and will be a reliable guide to the House Republican caucus.

I hope this gives you a sense of the style and approach the new House leadership will adopt. We should be off to a good start in 2010, ready to deliver commonsense, conservative government.