

A View from the House

By Representative Doug Holt

Last week concluded the session. We kept up a fast pace, considering over 50 items. We also hashed through agreements/disagreements and conference committee reports with the Senate on over two dozen bills and resolutions. I'm going to cover several items of significance, and then give a quick summation of my work as a freshman legislator.

First, I'm pleased to report that several items I've already described from committee passed. They include HR 230, which will establish a House study committee to examine the addition of education as a need that impact fees could be assessed for. Next was SB 174, the "Small Business Employee Choice of Benefits Health Insurance Act", which will give small businesses (only) a less expensive health insurance option, so that they might be able to afford to offer insurance where they can't currently. Also passed was SB 267, which deals with abuse of handicapped parking permits.

New items from the Senate that passed included SB 46, which is a protection for cell phone users. The bill requires that companies planning to offer directories of cell phone numbers must obtain your permission before they can include your number.

SB 230 establishes reporting requirements for firms that have had privileged personal information stolen. Rapid reporting to both governments and individuals is essential, because fast action is the best recourse to identity theft.

Also, I'm sure many are interested to know the SB 90, the "Smokefree Georgia Act" and HB 48, the Governor's ethics package, passed both houses of the General Assembly.

On Tuesday, Morgan Middle essay winner Mackenzie Lavelle served as a page, doing a great job and staying for almost all of another marathon day. Thursday, the last day of the session, Newton's Tori Gainer also did a great job, handling the frenzied pace of most of what ended up as a 14 hour legislative day. I'm grateful to both for serving the House so diligently. Also on Thursday, south Newton's John Sutherland (home from college for spring break) came by the Capitol to watch the action, and I enjoyed a chance to visit with him. Thursday also had a real treat, when the House passed a resolution commending Newton High's Coach Ronald Bradley for his 45 years of splendid athletic leadership for high school students in many parts of Georgia. Coach Bradley was accompanied by his wife Jan and old friend Johnny Gresham of the DOT Board. The Coach addressed the House briefly, and received a standing ovation.

Now for a brief "Report Card". I was present for every one of the 39 legislative days during the session, and at the Capitol for a handful of committee days as well. Of roughly 355 pieces of legislation we considered on the House floor, I was present to vote on all but 3 items. I considered it my duty to read each one (my comprehension of "legalese" grew rapidly!), and also ready several dozen other items that never made it out of committee. My other main duties were constituent issues, of which I worked on about 15, with some still in process. I also was quite surprised by the amount of correspondence (primarily email) that I received. Over 1600 questions, concerns and opinions poured in during the session. I responded to the 430+ that were from the district. In addition, probably a thousand pieces of mail from various interest groups were delivered, and I felt they should each be reviewed, both for relevance to our district, as well as how one-sided they were in their interests.

Thanks for the honor of being your representative.