

A View from the House

By Representative Doug Holt

Greetings. Last week, the most important bill we passed last week was HB 98, the Land Conservation Act - unanimously. During the week, many law enforcement officials joined us, and I visited with Covington's Chief Stacey Cotton. It's always an honor to meet with folks who put their lives on the line to keep us safe.

Now to a few significant bills. I don't imply that I support or reject them, unless I state so. I simply want you to know what your legislature is up to. You can see bills on the internet at www.legis.state.ga.us.

HB 18 would end the pickup truck seat belt exclusion. According to insurance companies, this should result in a slight reduction in premiums for such vehicles. For a mostly rural district like ours, I'm not sure this is necessary. I'd appreciate your input.

HB 53 and HB 55 would impose more stringent requirements for DNR permits to transfer water both within and between river basins in Georgia. They also call for more extensive public reporting and hearings about permit requests. These bills look like a response to the increasing demands for water in our state, and their intent seems to be keeping water flow and availability within each basin as close to the natural state as possible, and protecting communities with water resources from being unreasonably deprived of them. They are fairly complex bills, and since I'm not an expert in this area, my interpretation of them may not be completely accurate. I'd be glad to hear from any water experts.

HB 78 is basically a ban on pit bull dogs. I'm not aware that these animals are a danger unless trained to be so, and left free to roam. I think this bill will die a quick death.

HB 83 will allow health insurance companies to offer policies that only offer hospital coverage. The intent is to give individuals and small businesses, most of whom cannot afford full coverage health insurance, the ability to obtain at least critical care coverage. It does not allow any discrimination based on pre-existing or chronic conditions. I think this bill is a clear cut winner.