

Representative Hall, Atlanta, Georgia

Tuesday, January 10, 2012

Second Legislative Day

The House met pursuant to adjournment at 10:00 o'clock, A.M., this day and was called to order by the Speaker.

The following communication was received:

OFFICIAL OATH OF GEORGIA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**HOUSE DISTRICT 68
GEORGIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

I do solemnly swear or affirm that I will support the Constitution of this State and of the United States and, on all questions and measures which may come before me, I will so conduct myself as will, in my judgment, be most conducive to the interests and prosperity of this state.

I further swear or affirm that I am not the holder of any unaccounted for public money due this state or any political subdivision or authority thereof, that I am not the holder of any office of trust under the government of the United States, any other state, or any foreign state, that I have been a resident of my district for the time required by the Constitution and the laws of this state, and that I am otherwise qualified to hold said office according to the Constitution and laws of Georgia.

SO HELP ME GOD.

LOYALTY OATH

I am a citizen of the State of Georgia and a member of the General Assembly and the recipient of public funds for services rendered as such officer and I do hereby solemnly swear and affirm that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of Georgia.

SO HELP ME GOD.

/s/ Dustin W. Hightower
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Sworn to and subscribed before me,

This 10th day of January, 2012.

/s/ John Simpson

Judge, Carroll County Superior Court

The roll was called and the following Representatives answered to their names:

Abrams	Davis	Hightower	McCall	Scott, M
Allison	Dawkins-Haigler	Hill	McKillip	Scott, S
Amerson	Dempsey	Holcomb	Meadows	Shaw
Anderson	Dickerson	Holmes	Mitchell	Sheldon
Ashe	Dickey	Holt	Morgan	Sims, B
Atwood	Dickson	Horne	Morris	Smith, E
Baker	Drenner	Houston	Mosby	Smith, K
Battles	Dudgeon	Howard	Murphy	Smith, L
E Beasley-Teague	Dukes	Hugley	Neal, J	Smith, R
Bell	Dunahoo	Jackson	Neal, Y	E Smith, T
Benton	Dutton	Jacobs	Nimmer	Spencer
Beverly	Ehrhart	James	Nix	Stephens, M
Black	England	Jasperse	Oliver	Stephens, R
Braddock	Epps, C	Jerguson	O'Neal	E Stephenson
Brockway	Epps, J	E Johnson	Pak	Talton
Brooks	Evans	Jones, J	E Parent	E Tankersley
Bruce	E Floyd	Jones, S	Parrish	Taylor, D
Bryant	Fludd	Jordan	Parsons	Taylor, T
Buckner	Frazier	Kaiser	Peake	Teasley
Burns	Geisinger	Kendrick	Powell, A	Thomas
Byrd	Gordon	Kidd	Powell, J	Watson
Carson	Greene	Knight	E Pruett	Welch
Carter	Hamilton	Lane	Purcell	Wilkerson
Channell	Hanner	Lindsey	Ramsey	Wilkinson
Cheokas	Harden, B	Long	Randall	E Willard
Clark, J	Harden, M	Maddox, B	Reece	Williams, A
Clark, V	Harrell	Maddox, G	Rice	Williams, C
Coleman	Hatchett	Manning	Riley	Williams, E
Collins	Hatfield	Martin	Roberts	Williams, R
Cooke	E Heard	Maxwell	Rogers, C	Williamson
Coomer	Heckstall	Mayo	Rogers, T	Yates
Cooper	Hembree	McBrayer	Rynders	Ralston, Speaker
E Crawford	E Henson			

The following members were off the floor of the House when the roll was called:

Representatives Abdul-Salaam of the 74th, Casas of the 103rd, Dobbs of the 53rd, Dollar of the 45th, Fullerton of the 151st, Gardner of the 57th, Golick of the 34th, Hudson of the 124th, Marin of the 96th, Setzler of the 35th, Taylor of the 173rd, and Weldon of the 3rd.

They wished to be recorded as present.

Prayer was offered by Dr. George S. Dillard, Senior Minister, Peachtree City Christian Church, Peachtree City, Georgia.

The members pledged allegiance to the flag.

Representative Davis of the 109th, Chairman of the Committee on Information and Audits, reported that the Journal of the previous legislative day had been read and found to be correct.

By unanimous consent, the reading of the Journal was dispensed with.

The Journal was confirmed.

By unanimous consent, the following was established as the order of business during the first part of the period of unanimous consents:

1. Introduction of Bills and Resolutions.
2. First reading and reference of House Bills and Resolutions.
3. Second reading of Bills and Resolutions.
4. Reports of Standing Committees.

By unanimous consent, the following Bills and Resolutions of the House were introduced, read the first time and referred to the Committees:

HB 668. By Representatives Spencer of the 180th, Willard of the 49th, Braddock of the 19th, Houston of the 170th, Atwood of the 179th and others:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 9 of Chapter 4 of Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to temporary assistance for needy families, so as to define certain terms; to provide that the Department of Human Services shall create an established drug test to be administered to each applicant for temporary assistance for needy families; to provide requirements; to provide that each applicant shall undergo a drug test in order to qualify for benefits; to provide that any person who fails such drug test shall be ineligible to receive benefits; to provide for reapplication; to provide for children's benefits; to provide for confidentiality of records; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

HB 673. By Representative Mitchell of the 88th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to enact "Georgia's Return to Play Act of 2012"; to amend Part 15 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to miscellaneous provisions under the "Quality Basic Education Act," so as to establish a return to play policy for student athletes suffering from concussions; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Education.

HB 675. By Representatives Cooper of the 41st, Harden of the 147th, Wilkinson of the 52nd, Kaiser of the 59th, Watson of the 163rd and others:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 26 of Title 43 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to nurses, so as to revise the definitions of "approved nursing education programs" for registered professional nurses and licensed practical nurses; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Health & Human Services.

HB 679. By Representatives Spencer of the 180th, Byrd of the 20th, Cooke of the 18th and Braddock of the 19th:

A BILL to enact the "Georgia Constitutional Carry Act of 1012"; to amend Titles 12,16,27 and 40 of the O.C.G.A., so as to revise certain laws regarding the carrying of firearms; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Public Safety & Homeland Security.

HB 683. By Representatives Willard of the 49th, Smith of the 131st, Welch of the 110th, McCall of the 30th and Dickey of the 136th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 4 of Title 18 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to garnishment proceedings, so as to provide that the filing of certain answers on behalf of certain garnishees may be done by authorized officers or employees and shall not constitute the practice of law; to provide for definitions; to provide that delivery to the court of money or property that is subject to garnishment may likewise be accomplished by certain officers or employees of an entity; to conform the terminology of the chapter to reflect defined terms; to change provisions relating to service of garnishment actions; to increase the amount of

attorney's fees a garnishee may deduct from the sums paid into court; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

HB 685. By Representatives Maddox of the 172nd, Black of the 174th, Atwood of the 179th, Shaw of the 176th, Taylor of the 173rd and others:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Title 4 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to animals, so as to extensively revise provisions relating to dogs and especially provisions relating to dangerous and vicious dogs; to define and redefine terms; to provide for liability for injuries and damage caused by dogs; to amend Chapter 2 of Title 51 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to imputable negligence, so as to provide for a conforming amendment; to state legislative intent; to provide for other related matters; to provide for an effective date and applicability; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary Non-Civil.

HB 687. By Representatives Taylor of the 79th, Riley of the 50th, Cooke of the 18th and Atwood of the 179th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 1 of Title 35 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to general provisions for law enforcement officers and agencies, so as to require persons and companies licensed to provide alarm monitoring services to utilize alarm verification in order to preserve valuable municipal and county law enforcement resources; to provide for exceptions; to provide for related matters; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Public Safety & Homeland Security.

HB 688. By Representative Holt of the 112th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Title 46 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to public utilities and public transportation, so as to provide for jurisdiction of the Georgia Public Service Commission; to provide that a subsidiary corporation of an electric membership corporation exercising the power of eminent domain shall submit a plan to the local governing authority; to provide for the approval or rejection of such

submission; to provide for binding arbitration; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Energy, Utilities & Telecommunications.

HB 689. By Representatives Horne of the 71st and Smith of the 70th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 3 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to local boards of education, and Article 1 of Chapter 18 of Title 45 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the state employees' health insurance plan, so as to authorize local boards of education to provide health insurance benefits to members leaving office on or after a specified date if such members have served on the board for at least 12 years; to provide that such former members shall pay the entire cost of the health insurance coverage; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Education.

HB 690. By Representatives Smith of the 70th and Horne of the 71st:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend an Act creating a board of commissioners for Coweta County, approved August 26, 1872 (Ga. L. 1872, p. 405), as amended, particularly by an Act approved April 8, 2002 (Ga. L. 2002, p. 3809), so as to revise the districts for the election of members of the board of commissioners; to provide for definitions and inclusions; to provide for submission of this Act for preclearance pursuant to Section 5 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended; to provide for related matters; to provide effective dates; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Intragovernmental Coordination - Local.

HB 691. By Representative Mitchell of the 88th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 16-2-21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to prosecution of parties who did not directly commit the crime, so as to provide for a new criminal offense of failure to report a crime; to provide for penalties; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date and applicability; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary Non-Civil.

HB 692. By Representative Mitchell of the 88th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to elementary and secondary education, so as to provide for the automatic decrease in the salary of a teacher or other certificated professional personnel for any salary increase or bonus provided based, in whole or in part, on the results of standardized test scores which were falsified or known or caused to be falsified by such teacher or professional; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Education.

HB 693. By Representative Burns of the 157th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend an Act for the election and creation of a board of commissioners for Screven County, approved December 9, 1871 (Ga. L. 1871-72, p. 231), as amended, particularly by an Act approved August 19, 1912 (Ga. L. 1912, p. 456), by an Act approved August 16, 1915 (Ga. L. 1915, p. 345), by an Act approved April 3, 1972 (Ga. L. 1972, p. 3495), and by an Act approved April 1, 2002 (Ga. L. 2002, p. 3650), so as to provide for the election of members of the board of commissioners of Screven County; to provide for related matters; to provide for submission of this Act for preclearance pursuant to Section 5 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended; to provide for related matters; to provide effective dates; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Intragovernmental Coordination - Local.

HB 694. By Representatives Smith of the 70th and Horne of the 71st:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend an Act providing for the composition of the Board of Education of Coweta County, approved March 5, 1984 (Ga. L. 1984, p. 3701), as amended, particularly by an Act approved April 8, 2002 (Ga. L. 2002, p. 3801), so as to change the description of the education districts; to provide for definitions and inclusions; to provide for the continuation in office of current members; to provide for the submission of this Act for approval under the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended; to provide effective dates; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Intragovernmental Coordination - Local.

HB 695. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 40-2-69 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to free license plates and revalidation decals for disabled veterans, so as to allow for veterans deemed 60 percent disabled to qualify for a free license plate and annual revalidation decal; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Motor Vehicles.

HB 696. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 40-2-69 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to free license plates and revalidation decals for certain disabled veterans, so as to provide that a veteran with a total or partial disability shall be entitled to such free license plates and revalidation decals; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Motor Vehicles.

HB 697. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 7 of Chapter 8 of Title 34 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to unemployment compensation benefits, so as to require random drug testing as a condition of continuing unemployment compensation benefits; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date and applicability; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

HB 698. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 1 of Chapter 4 of Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to general provisions relative to public assistance, so as to require random drug testing for recipients of certain public assistance; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

HB 699. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 1 of Chapter 4 of Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to general provisions relative to public assistance, so as to require drug testing for applicants of certain public assistance; to require the Department of Human Services to implement and maintain such program; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

HB 700. By Representatives Purcell of the 159th and Burns of the 157th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend an Act reconstituting the Board of Education of Effingham County, approved March 26, 1987 (Ga. L. 1987, p. 4596), as amended, particularly by an Act approved September 21, 2011 (Ga. L. 2011 Ex. Sess., p. 315), so to correct the dates of certain elections; to provide for submission of this Act for approval under the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Intragovernmental Coordination - Local.

HB 701. By Representatives Nix of the 69th, Smith of the 129th and Epps of the 128th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend an Act creating the Board of Commissioners of Troup County, approved March 25, 1958 (Ga. L. 1958, p. 3068), as amended, particularly by an Act approved February 27, 1992 (Ga. L. 1992, p. 4796), so as to change the description of the commissioner districts; to provide for definitions and inclusions; to provide for continuation in office of current members; to provide for submission of this Act for approval under the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended; to provide effective dates; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Intragovernmental Coordination - Local.

HB 702. By Representatives Nix of the 69th, Smith of the 129th and Epps of the 128th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend an Act providing a board of education of Troup County, approved January 1, 1986 (Ga. L. 1986, p. 3515), as amended, particularly by an Act approved March 18, 2002 (Ga. L. 2002, p.

3600), so as to change the description of the education districts; to provide for definitions and inclusions; to provide for continuation in office of current members; to provide for submission of this Act for approval under the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Intragovernmental Coordination - Local.

HR 1094. By Representatives Riley of the 50th, Taylor of the 79th, Tankersley of the 158th, Harrell of the 106th, Dutton of the 166th and others:

A RESOLUTION opposing state bailouts by the federal government; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

HR 1103. By Representatives Sims of the 119th and Murphy of the 120th:

A RESOLUTION honoring the life of Deputy James D. Paugh and dedicating a road in his memory; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Transportation.

By unanimous consent, the following Bills and Resolutions of the House and Senate were read the second time:

HB 658	HB 659
HB 660	HB 661
HB 662	HB 663
HB 665	HB 666
HB 667	HR 1072
HR 1093	SB 279

The following Resolution of the Senate was read and adopted:

SR 642. By Senators Williams of the 19th, Rogers of the 21st and Chance of the 16th

A RESOLUTION

To notify the Governor that the General Assembly has convened; and for other purposes.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA that a committee of fourteen, seven from the House of Representatives to be named by the Speaker and

seven from the Senate to be named by the President of the Senate, be appointed to notify His Excellency, the Governor, that the General Assembly has convened in regular session and is now ready for the transaction of business.

The following members were recognized during the period of Morning Orders and addressed the House:

Representatives Williams of the 165th, Lane of the 167th, and Kendrick 94th.

By unanimous consent, the following Bill of the House was withdrawn from the Committee on Insurance and recommitted to the Committee on Judiciary:

HB 121. By Representative McKillip of the 115th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 24 of Title 33 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to insurance generally, so as to prohibit the use of discretionary clauses in health and disability insurance contracts; to provide a short title; to provide for definitions; to provide for related matters; to provide for applicability; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

The following Resolutions of the House were read and referred to the Committee on Rules:

HR 1104. By Representatives Ralston of the 7th, Wilkinson of the 52nd, Holmes of the 125th, Martin of the 47th, Watson of the 163rd and others:

A RESOLUTION honoring the life and memory of Larry Munson and inviting his family to be recognized by the House of Representatives; and for other purposes.

HR 1105. By Representative O'Neal of the 146th:

A RESOLUTION commending Matthew Sellers of Perry and inviting him to be recognized by the House of Representatives; and for other purposes.

The following Resolution of the House, referred to the House Rules Subcommittee on Invites, was reported by the Committee on Rules with the following recommendation:

HR 1104 Do Pass

The following Resolution of the House, favorably reported by the Committee on Rules, was read and adopted:

HR 1104. By Representatives Ralston of the 7th, Wilkinson of the 52nd, Holmes of the 125th, Martin of the 47th, Watson of the 163rd and others:

A RESOLUTION honoring the life and memory of Larry Munson and inviting his family to be recognized by the House of Representatives; and for other purposes.

The following Resolutions of the House were read and adopted:

HR 1106. By Representative Maxwell of the 17th:

A RESOLUTION commending the Bobbins Middle School participants of Paulding County Civics Day; and for other purposes.

HR 1107. By Representative Ralston of the 7th:

A RESOLUTION honoring the life and memory of Congressman Edgar Lanier Jenkins; and for other purposes.

HR 1108. By Representative Braddock of the 19th:

A RESOLUTION recognizing and commending Zachary Powell; and for other purposes.

HR 1109. By Representative Braddock of the 19th:

A RESOLUTION recognizing and commending James "Jamie" Autry Ulrich; and for other purposes.

HR 1110. By Representatives Williams of the 89th, Howard of the 121st, Frazier of the 123rd, James of the 135th, Mitchell of the 88th and others:

A RESOLUTION honoring the life and memory of Sophie Sydney Moore; and for other purposes.

HR 1111. By Representatives Purcell of the 159th and Burns of the 157th:

A RESOLUTION recognizing and commending the Effingham YMCA Christian Leadership Academy of the Effingham YMCA; and for other purposes.

HR 1112. By Representatives Purcell of the 159th and Burns of the 157th:

A RESOLUTION recognizing January 23, 2012, as Effingham County Day at the Capitol; saluting the Effingham County Chamber of Commerce; and for other purposes.

HR 1113. By Representatives Harbin of the 118th, Anderson of the 117th and Sims of the 119th:

A RESOLUTION commending Lisa Hutto Guilbeau and recognizing January 11, 2012, as Lisa Hutto Guilbeau Day at the capitol; and for other purposes.

The Speaker announced the House in recess until 6:45 o'clock, this evening.

EVENING SESSION

The Speaker called the House to order.

The hour of convening the Joint Session pursuant to HR 1097 having arrived, the Senate appeared upon the floor of the House, and the Joint Session, convened for the purpose of hearing an address from the Governor, was called to order by the Speaker of the House, David Ralston.

The Resolution calling for the Joint Session was read.

Accompanied by the Committee of Escort and other distinguished guests, His Excellency, Governor Nathan Deal, appeared upon the floor of the House and delivered the following address:

Lt. Governor, Mr. Speaker, President Pro Tem Williams, Speaker Pro Tem Jones, Members of the General Assembly, Constitutional Officers, Members of the Judiciary, my fellow Georgians:

In centuries long past ... in a world far removed from the one we know today ... the Age of Exploration captivated the minds of brave, young men. These individuals traveled through distant waters to identify the unknown, their will to explore outweighing the countless dangers, hardships and tragedies they faced. It is an age we now define by these names: Columbus, da Gama, Vespucci and Magellan.

These brave adventurers, with only primitive tools at their disposal, charted a course by looking to the stars for guidance. The nights were not always clear ... the waters not always friendly. For each man commanding a vessel on the high seas, there was always the temptation to give up and to turn back.

But we know these men today because they held steadfast to their course, leading them to discover new worlds and to expand the opportunities for mankind.

Georgians have charged us to set a course for our state and they have defined the stars that we must follow to expand opportunity: the star of education – we must provide great schools that will cultivate the minds of our young people ... the star of transportation – we must provide safe roads and avenues of commerce ... the star of security – we must give every Georgian the ability to live in a safe community ... and the guiding star in our constellation, jobs – we must create a business climate that provides Georgians with their best shot at a good job! These are the stars on which our eyes must be focused as we chart the course for our great state!

Tonight, I will discuss our course forward, but first, I think we would be well served to look in the rearview mirror for just a moment. The situation we faced one year ago and the progress we've made bears our attention.

One year ago, I said "the state of our state is strong" ... "that we possess a unique set of strengths" ... but we also faced an unusual and historic collection of challenges.

When we met on this occasion this past January, the Revenue Shortfall Reserve Fund, or the Rainy Day Fund as it is better known, had only enough money to fund state operations for less than two days ... meaning essential functions of government were at risk in the event of even the slightest hiccup. One year later, with your help, we have begun restoring the Rainy Day Fund. The balance today is \$328 million, an increase of 183%. I remain committed to building up this strategic reserve by keeping our spending in check.

When we met last year, we faced a difficult budget situation in which the low-hanging fruit and easy fixes were gone. And yet, we worked together to pass structurally balanced budgets that fund the essential services upon which Georgians depend. And we did it without new taxes. We have delivered commonsense, conservative budgets free of gimmicks and one-time gains. For that reason, we are now one of only eight states with triple-A ratings from the three major rating agencies. When compared to our AA peers, this credential of creditworthiness saved Georgia taxpayers \$11 million over the life of bonds sold last year alone.

This also provides us with a powerful tool for economic development. When a business considers locating in Georgia, it helps to be able to show them that they will be partnering with a state government that has its house in order!

To that end, beginning this year, we will implement zero-based budgeting in 10% of all programs. Through zero-based budgeting, we will bring a new level of accountability to state government and verify that taxpayer dollars are being spent to meet the priorities of Georgians!

When we met last year, we faced a federal district court ruling that threatened to cut off up to 85% of Metro-Atlanta's water supply. This evening, with the benefit of an 11th Circuit Appeals Court ruling overturning that decision, we are in a far stronger position to reach a lasting agreement with our peers in Alabama and Florida on an issue of critical importance to Georgia's ability to attract investment and new jobs.

One year ago, HOPE – arguably the nation's most generous merit-based, higher education scholarship and grant program – was on an unsustainable course and faced a complete depletion of reserves as early as FY 2013. This evening, we can claim a piece of legislation that preserves HOPE for future generations!

And for every student who earns HOPE, my budget for next year maintains the same award amount received this year.

Also, we will again appropriate \$20 million for the needs-based one percent student loan program which eases the burden of affording a college education. This year, more than half of these newly-appropriated funds went to students who had no assistance from their families.

Together, we've done something else over the past year. And while it is more general in nature, it is perhaps even more important to our ability to govern well and to the long-term prospects of our great state. Together, we have ushered in a new era of cooperation.

Last January, we were faced with a mountain ... Together, we climbed it. Thank you for your partnership and thank you for all that you do to serve Georgians!

But this evening, as we embark on a new year, we have other mountains to climb that will require our best collective efforts this year and beyond.

Recalling the great explorers who looked to the night skies in their search for new lands, the first star in our constellation is education. Our schools are the front line in our effort to create prosperity. It is here we make our most strategic investment in the future!

The Amended and FY 2013 budgets I've prepared take advantage of the stabilization in revenues and appropriate an additional \$146.6 million to fully fund enrollment growth in our K-12 schools.

Likewise, in both the technical college and university systems, I am calling for an additional \$111.3 million to fund anticipated enrollment growth.

Also, in keeping with the recommendations of the Education Finance Study Commission, and because we believe they are vital ingredients of the educational experience we provide young Georgians, my budget calls for \$3.7 million in additional funds for school nurses!

This along with the school nutrition program and transportation funding will be moved into the Quality Basic Education funding formula. These funds will be allocated using the same formula local districts are accustomed to, but they will have complete flexibility in how to spend them. Better than me, or anyone else under this Gold Dome, I believe local school leaders know how to spend funds within their district in order to get the greatest outcomes for students!

My proposed budget calls for an additional \$55.8 million to fund salary increases for our teachers based on training and experience. Unlike the past, there are no reductions to QBE, Equalization Grants, State Schools or other enrollment driven programs.

Within education, I have called for a new focus on our youngest learners. The budget I'm proposing increases the Pre-K school year for 84,000 students by 10 days, bringing it to 170 days. I am proud to say that this will allow us to begin restoring Pre-K teacher salaries!

We must make a concerted effort to increase the percentage of children reading at grade level by the completion of 3rd Grade. The best evidence tells us that children not meeting this standard often fail to catch up and are more likely to drop out of school, go to prison and have higher unemployment rates later in life than their reading-proficient peers.

Students must "learn to read" in order to be able to "read to learn" and when we fail to invest in our youngest students, we are forced to spend money on remediation for the remainder of their academic careers. To this end, my budget includes \$1.6 million for a reading mentors program. This program will assist schools and teachers as they work to help more young Georgians achieve this strategic benchmark – reading at grade level by the completion of 3rd grade.

You've heard me talk about moving beyond the status quo in education and that requires a more intense focus on innovation in the classroom. In particular, we need to put in place strategies that provide students with opportunities to practice and apply what they are learning in a high-quality, real-world environment. This is one reason we allotted nearly \$20 million of our Race to the Top money for the creation of an Innovation Fund. This initiative asks schools to partner with businesses, non-profits and postsecondary institutions and places a primary focus on developing applied learning opportunities. We are already seeing positive results. Tomorrow, I will announce the winners of round two.

To spur innovation, I am also recommending \$8.7 million in supplemental grants in both the Amended budget and next year's budget for state chartered special schools affected by the Georgia Supreme Court ruling on charter schools. These schools are key to Georgia's educational success and without these additional dollars, they would be forced to operate on approximately half of the funds of other public schools.

However, this is not the long-term solution, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that charter schools can thrive in Georgia. We can do this and with your help we will!

Further, we must clarify the mission of our schools. Let me state this very clearly: I believe students graduating from our high schools ... those young men and women who

have done everything asked of them by our K-12 system ... should be fully ready for postsecondary study or a job!

Going forward, we will reclaim that mission by ensuring that there is a more seamless transition from High School to further study ... and from postsecondary study to the workforce.

With our young people facing a difficult job market and stiff global competition for good jobs, we must do everything in our power to ensure that our education system provides graduates with real opportunity. Our postsecondary institutions must maintain an intense focus on employability and creating job opportunities. And in today's competitive global environment where technology is constantly reshaping the economy, that means abandoning the "ivory tower" model and adapting to meet the needs of business.

That focus on practical education is why I'm announcing Go Build Georgia this evening. Go Build is a public-private initiative that will round out our workforce development program by educating young people and the public at large about the skilled trades.

Already, the business community is unable to fill many positions calling for highly-skilled industrial and commercial construction professionals, jobs that on average pay 27% more than the average Georgian currently brings home. And with an aging workforce in this area, we are on track to replace only one of every four retirees.

Today, in America, with more than 13 million people unemployed and seeking work, there are 1.3 million open positions in skilled trade industries for which companies are unable to find qualified applicants! Right here in Metro-Atlanta, Siemens has been unable to fill approximately 200 skilled-trade positions in the fields of manufacturing automation, healthcare technology, transportation systems and technical services. It is time we begin work to boost our pipeline!

We must work together to ensure that our state has the craft professionals to meet present and forecast demand. This is something we can do and with your help we will!

Here in Georgia, we are blessed with world-class university and technical college systems that provide opportunity to every young Georgian and provide business with a pipeline of talented workers. As we seek to continue improving higher education in this state, I want to commend Chancellor Hank Huckaby and the Board of Regents, along with Commissioner Ron Jackson and the Technical College Board, for performing a strategic consolidation of institutions. In this age of "doing more with less," you are delivering a better return on investment without compromising service to students.

Before leaving the topic of higher education, I want to announce two ambitious goals. Georgians deserve a world-class, public medical university, and it will be a priority of

this administration to have a medical college among the top 50 nationally. This is something we can do and with your help we will!

Also within this push, the Georgia Health Sciences University will seek to become the state's second National Cancer Institute designated Cancer Center, alongside the Winship Cancer Center at Emory.

As of today, Georgia's annual death rate from cancer exceeds the national average, but I believe we have all of the ingredients necessary to be a destination for cancer research and a resource for every family battling this disease.

This designation would mean greater access to research dollars and enhance our ability to recruit top cancer specialists. Even more, it will place Georgians battling this horrific disease first in line for the newest, most promising therapies and clinical trials.

To support this goal of a second Georgia-based Cancer Center, my budget proposal includes an investment of \$5 million. This is something we can do and with your help we will!

In order to address the need for additional health professionals in Georgia, we have been investing in the expansion of undergraduate medical education for several years. We must now take the next step in this process by increasing the number of graduate residency slots.

My budget funds 400 new residency slots in hospitals across the state. Presently, because we lack adequate residency program capacity, Georgia taxpayers help fund a promising young Georgian's pre-K, K-12, postsecondary and graduate-level medical education only to see them perform their residency outside of our state and not return. That doesn't provide value for Georgians paying taxes. It doesn't make sense for Georgians needing care and it isn't fair to young Georgians looking to begin medical careers. We must ensure that no doctor trained in Georgia is forced to leave the state to complete his or her medical education. This is something we can do and with your help we will!

Another primary responsibility of government is providing infrastructure – and because it is a key building block of job creation, it is a star that will guide our course forward. In a global economy in which commerce is increasingly long distance and reliant on cutting-edge logistics, we need a bigger, smarter transportation network to move people and products in the most efficient way possible. That means roads on which traffic and freight move freely, ports that handle bigger ships, and airports that process people and packages more efficiently.

To reduce traffic congestion in Metro-Atlanta along Georgia 400, we will be working with the DOT to implement innovative traffic solutions. We will modify the existing

southbound lanes from McFarland Road to the Chattahoochee River, allowing an additional southbound through lane. From the Chattahoochee River to I-285, we will implement flex shoulders in each direction.

These improvements will allow us to better facilitate traffic during peak rush hours, accommodating the explosive growth the Northern suburbs have experienced.

Recently, we called a halt to the P-3 project for the Northwest Corridor. While there were many reasons for doing so, one of the most important ones is that I was, am, and will be opposed to contracting away Georgia's sovereignty for a period of 60 to 70 years over a transportation corridor that is so vital to our future. I remain committed to improving the Northwest Corridor but there is a better way forward.

Investment in transportation infrastructure is an investment in our future. I applaud this Legislature's creation of a transparent, bottom-up approach to identifying critical transportation projects throughout Georgia. The regional referendums on this year's ballots give voters the opportunity to fund a slate of projects with a sales tax when they deem the proposed investment provides value. Over the last several decades, our capacity has fallen behind due to underinvestment in transportation.

We must seize this opportunity to invest in our future! We can do this and with your help we will!

We are continuing to work towards the completion of the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project – a project that is imperative to our state's competitiveness when the bigger ships start traversing an enlarged Panama Canal in 2014.

My budget for next year includes \$46.7 million in bonds to continue deepening the harbor, building on the more than \$136 million already approved for harbor deepening over the last three years.

Also within infrastructure, we are working to ensure every Georgia community has dependable water supplies. While we await the Army Corps of Engineers decision regarding the impact of water diversions from Lake Lanier, we are moving forward with plans to enhance water supply and security around the state.

Last year, we took definitive action to get the ball rolling. My budget for next year proposes \$45.7 million for water supply projects, the second installment in a four-year plan calling for \$300 million of new investment in water supply. Today, the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority has issued the solicitation and application forms for the Water Supply Program and local governments can now apply for the low-interest loans and state direct investment as detailed in the recently-approved Water Supply Plan.

I want to commend our Water Task Force for creating a thorough, forward-looking plan that makes sense for Georgia communities, big and small.

With our state's population projected to grow by an additional 4.6 million people over the next two decades, it is imperative that we expand water supply across the state. We must stop being so dependent on the federal government for our water. We must seize our own destiny! This is something we can do and with your help we will!

This evening, I have talked about the our duty as elected officials to do the long-term work of ensuring our state charts a course forward that leads to a rich environment of opportunity for every Georgian.

When those traditional building blocks fail, more and more citizens drift into the criminal justice arena. And here in Georgia, entrance into our criminal justice system has been a dead end for far too many.

Last year, faced with one of the most incarcerated populations in the nation, low rehabilitation rates and high recidivism; you joined me in passing legislation to create the Criminal Justice Reform Council. Since that time, the Council has taken a comprehensive look at what changes are needed to increase the effectiveness of our correctional efforts.

I want to commend the Council for the work they have done and my budget recommendations reflect their findings. To start, my budget proposes \$1.4 million to fund additional parole officers at the State Board of Pardons and Paroles. These officers will provide supervision to offenders who would otherwise serve their sentence and be released in our communities without any supervision.

Unless we provide the appropriate tools of supervision that facilitate a successful reentry into society, history has shown that offenders simply return to the prison population. Right now in Georgia, nearly one in three leaving our prisons are reconvicted within three years.

We must shut the revolving door! This is something we can do and with your help we will!

I am also recommending \$35.2 million for additional prison beds for those who pose a threat to our citizens. I am proposing to convert three Pre-Release Centers to Residential Substance Abuse Treatment centers, at a cost of \$5.7 million. We must make this investment ... If we fail to treat the addict's drug addiction; we haven't taken the first step in breaking the cycle of crime ... a cycle that destroys lives and wastes taxpayer resources! This is something we can do and with your help we will!

Because we are seeing an increased need for resources to work with violent youth offenders within our Juvenile Justice system, my budget includes funding to open a new Youth Detention Center, as well as funding for two security management and response teams.

I am also recommending \$10 million in next year's budget for the creation of new Accountability Courts – drug, DUI, mental health and veteran courts – all of which have proven to be both cheaper and more effective than traditional courts for those lower risk offenders falling under their jurisdiction. In fact, drug courts around this nation have proven to reduce recidivism by as much as 35%.

This evening, I want to tell you about a typical case that finds its way into a drug court. Sarah was a drug addict. The drug use that began as recreation resulted in a destructive cocaine and methamphetamine addiction. It took control of her life. At one point, she had no means of transportation ... she lost custody of her little girl ... she wound up homeless.

But I mention Sarah tonight because she exemplifies many of the goals we hold for our corrections system. Under the supervision of a drug court, piece by piece, she began rebuilding her life. With help, she beat addiction ... she won back her daughter ... she is now a sponsor helping other women who face the same trials ... and because she provides a powerful example of hope and redemption, I have asked her to join us in this chamber tonight.

Sarah and her daughter are here and I would be honored if you would give her a round of applause!

Sarah was given a shot a better life and she took it. Her story is not the exception ... it is playing out all across Georgia as people reclaim their lives through the work of accountability courts.

While these reforms require an initial investment, they will increase public safety, and ultimately save money by creating a more effective corrections system that rehabilitates people, closing the revolving door.

If we lock up an eighteen-year-old who has no skills and is unemployable; where will that individual be after completing a 15-year stint behind bars? Without a new approach that brings hope back into the equation, we will have spent \$270,000 and then have a 33-year-old with no skills who is more dangerous and even less employable than before. We can do better and with your help we will!

That is why we must focus on transforming our corrections system into a last resort of opportunity – a place where low-level offenders are reclaimed and restored to society as

functioning members of the community ... working to support their own families ... and paying taxes!

This evening, I am calling on the religious community, non-profits and charitable organizations to begin addressing the problem of reentry. We need you and the people around this state who care to lead bold new efforts in job training and job placement for prisoners reentering society. You can provide the bridge that will connect those who have served their time with a job and the dignity it provides! If they will do their part, and many of them will, we must do our part.

Let me be clear so that there is no misinterpretation – this is not a get out of jail free card. These reforms do not in any way diminish the seriousness of the seven deadly sins. If you commit one of these, you will spend time in our prisons. In fact, this transformation of our corrections efforts will ensure that we have the space and resources to incarcerate high-risk and violent offenders going forward.

First and foremost, the greatest need of our citizens is jobs and, for that reason, it is the last and brightest star in our constellation. Businesses require a talented workforce and strong infrastructure, but they also require a business environment that allows them to compete in today's global marketplace.

With that in mind, the Georgia Competitiveness Initiative pulled together business leaders and more than 4,000 Georgians across the state to develop a strategy that would improve our business case. And this morning, at the annual Eggs & Issues Breakfast, I outlined a three-part plan for strategic tax reform based on the work of the Initiative.

First, I am proposing the elimination of the sales tax on energy used in manufacturing, a move that will align us with many of our top competitors. This will have a dramatic impact on manufacturers' overall cost structure and vastly improve the competitive position of our producers.

Secondly, I am proposing sales and use tax exemptions for construction materials used in projects of regional significance, giving us an important tool when competing with other states for projects creating large numbers of jobs.

A third piece, we are proposing to restructure Georgia's Job Tax Credits and Quality Jobs Tax Credit programs. The programs now in place was created in 1994, at a time when the competitive landscape was far different than the one our businesses operate in today. We will modernize our job tax credits to better incentivize small business growth and to help every Georgia community compete with their regional peers.

My office is already working with House and Senate leadership to create legislation to this effect.

Georgians cannot compete for jobs that go elsewhere when employers make the decision that a neighboring state is a better place to do business. The job creators across this state have spoken and I ask all of you to join me in making these important changes. This is something we can do and with your help we will!

With a sluggish global economy we still face challenges, but we are beginning to see indications that things are stabilizing. Georgia's revenues trends have strengthened over the last 18 months and with sustained growth of this order, I believe real job creation is much closer than it was when we met on this occasion one year ago. Ladies and gentleman, the state of our state is strong!

In keeping with our mission to chart a course that fulfills the priorities of Georgians, we will follow these stars: providing strong, innovative schools geared for the modern marketplace ... providing practical tools for workforce development ... providing a modern infrastructure that moves people and products efficiently ... providing safe communities ... creating a business-friendly environment that attracts investment and puts Georgians in the best possible position to get a good job.

And when we have fulfilled these imperatives – which are the legitimate purposes of government – let us heed the admonition of Georgians who have asked us to do these few things well, and then to get out of the way so that they can live their lives in freedom and as they see fit!

If we do this, hardworking, self-reliant Georgians will propel our state into a prosperous future!

Thank you, and may God continue to bless this great state and our nation!

Senator Williams of the 19th moved that the Joint Session of the General Assembly be now dissolved and the motion prevailed.

The Speaker of the House, David Ralston, announced the Joint Session dissolved.

The Speaker called the House to order.

Representative O'Neal of the 146th moved that the House do now adjourn until 10:00 o'clock, tomorrow morning, and the motion prevailed.

The Speaker announced the House adjourned until 10:00 o'clock, tomorrow morning.