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State Representative Elly Dobbs*GEORGIA LEGISLATIVE REPORT*

February 1, 2010

Greetings!

We are heading into the third week of the legislative session (including one week of hearings on appropriations and budgets). Monday is Day 9 of the 40-day session. This past week Atlanta's new Mayor Kasim Reed was welcomed and spoke to the House members, emphasizing the importance of a good working relationship between the City and the State. The Women's Caucus also honored Representative Jan Jones as the first woman in Georgia to be elected as Speaker ProTem of the Georgia House.



Beginning with this newsletter, I will occasionally include a public policy question or issue asking for your feedback. I find your input valuable in making decisions on bills that come before the committees on which I serve as well as on the floor of the House. This week you will find a question below on Texting while driving. I hope that you will respond to the issues that you feel are important. For those that did not have an opportunity to sign the petition for Roadsafe America last week, I have included the information again this week.

Feel free to circulate this email to friends and neighbors. You can subscribe to our newsletter by emailing newsletters@wordexpress.info or visiting my web site at <http://www.ellydobbs.com>. I also welcome any submissions for news stories or community events and information that would be interesting to those in our District. Please forward them to my email address at elly.dobbs@house.ga.gov.

As always, please do not forget to [contact me](#) with your views on any issue that needs to be addressed or whenever I can be of service to you.

Elly Dobbs**Legislation would check effectiveness of tax breaks**

In addition to the national economic recession, another contributing factor in Georgia's state budget deficit is the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been foregone through a number of special interest tax cuts and exemptions that have been implemented over the past several years. On Jan. 25, a House of Representatives subcommittee moved forward with legislation that would evaluate those tax breaks' impact on the budget and their success in achieving their intended goals.

[SB 206](#), which was approved by the Senate last year, would require the state Office of Planning and Budget to review the tax cuts, credits and exemptions to help determine whether they should remain in effect or be repealed. Many of the tax breaks were adopted in the name of job creation, but no studies have been published or made available to lawmakers as to their effectiveness in serving that purpose. SB 206 now goes to the full House Appropriations Committee for its consideration.



While that legislation moved forward, another package of proposed business tax breaks is scheduled to be introduced in the House in the coming week. The provisions of [HB 1023](#) and [HB 1024](#) would purportedly spur the creation of startup businesses and, in turn, generate new jobs. The legislation proposes waiving state business fees for starting a new business, income tax credits, unemployment insurance tax credits, elimination of the net worth or intangible tax, a 50 percent reduction in the capital gains tax and a phase-out of the sales tax deposit required of small businesses.

Similar legislation, [HB 481](#), was adopted in 2009 but was subsequently vetoed by Gov. Perdue because of its estimated \$1.2 billion on the state budget.

House Adopts Rule Changes: A series of rule changes in the House of Representatives, proposed by new Speaker David Ralston, earned unanimous approval Jan. 28. [HR 1168](#) eliminates the infamous "hawk" system, which gave certain Republican legislators the power to vote on any committee and change the outcome of legislation at the whim of the previous Speaker. The new rules also reduce the power of the Rules Committee to rewrite legislation and eliminate the previous ban on news media access to the House floor.

Legislators Furloughed: Due to the state's budget crisis, our public school educators and other state employees have had to take unpaid furlough days as a cost-saving measure. On Tuesday, a plan was announced for members of the General Assembly to take additional furlough days, which would save the state an estimated \$2.7 million. I support this plan because as elected officials we must lead by example. We are not and should not be excused from giving up part of our legislative salaries to help in the very difficult task of balancing this year's budget. By the end of fiscal year 2010, lawmakers will have taken 11 unpaid furlough days, including one day a month from August through December last year. Other state agencies have each taken between three and 12 furlough days.

School Funding Assistance: Due to state budget cuts over the past eight years, many of our local school districts across the state have had to increase class sizes or raise local property taxes, or both. In an effort to assist our local schools during these tight economic times, [HB 1020](#) and [HR 1023](#) been introduced to enable boards of education to use special project local option sales tax (E-SPLOST) revenues for maintenance and operating costs, as well as capital expenditures. Currently, our schools are restricted to using E- SPLOST funds only for construction and other capital projects. The special tax would continue to be levied only after voter approval in a local referendum.

Sign the petition for safer roads

I am on the Board of Directors of Road Safe America, a group trying to make roads in our country safer for all of us. This organization was created several years ago after Cullum Owings, the son of my good friends Susan and Steve Owings, was killed in an accident with a tractor-trailer on the way back to college. As a member of the Board I am reaching out to all of you to sign an on-line petition. This petition has a chance to make a real impact on pending decisions in Washington. Signing this Petition will:

- ~ Alert President Obama and other leaders that action is needed to reduce highway deaths.
- ~ Prompt political leaders to limit truck speeds by mandating use of speed governors.
- ~ Show national support for the use of safety technology on heavy commercial vehicles.

Please take a moment, go to the web site www.roadsafeamerica.org and sign the petition and ask others to do so as well. Thank you for your help to increase the safety of our roads.

[Sign the petition...](#)

Elly's Legislation

[Click here](#) to review 2009-10 legislation sponsored or co-sponsored by Rep. Elly Dobbs.

Question of the Week

Should texting while driving be illegal?

Two bills have been introduced in the House of Representatives that would make it illegal to send or read text messages on a cell phone while driving. Nineteen other states have outlawed texting while driving. Some research has shown that outlawing texting does not reduce accidents on our roads. Others indicate that it would make our roads safer. What is your position?

Do you think texting while driving should be illegal? Please [click here](#) to reply by e-mail.

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Representative Elly Dobbs

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