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May 2010 Town Hall Meetings

In order to keep you informed as to legislation that passed during this General Assembly, as well as other State issues that affect our communities, we have scheduled three Town Hall Meetings during the month of May. I would like to hear your comments and concerns and what you believe should be on our legislative agenda for the future. I hope that you will be able to attend one of these meetings. Together, we can build a better community and a better State. The meetings are scheduled as follows:

Tuesday, May 4,
Trinity Presbyterian Church, 3003 Howell Mill Rd., Atlanta 30327
6 to 7 p.m. (before the NPU C meeting)

Thursday, May 20,
City of Atlanta, Police Dept., Zone One Precinct Office, 2315 Donald Lee Hollowell Pkwy., Atlanta, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., (before the NPU G meeting)

Tuesday, May 25,
Atlanta Job Corps office, 239 West Lake N.W., Atlanta, 30314, 6 to 6:45 p.m. (before the NPU J meeting)

State Representative Elly Dobbs*GEORGIA LEGISLATIVE REPORT*

May 3, 2010

Greetings!

The 2010 session of the General Assembly concluded Thursday evening. Having started Jan. 11, this was the longest legislative session on record since the 1880s.

On Thursday, Sine Die, the House was in Session from 9 a.m. until midnight. Many bills were passed during the last day. Some of the more important pieces of legislation are discussed below. In addition to passing the Budget bill, a Transportation bill, an Ethics bill and a comprehensive Property Tax bill, I was delighted that legislation providing a mechanism to fund the Trauma Care system for Georgia also passed.

I will be hosting three Town Hall meetings this month to give you an opportunity to learn more about what transpired at the Capitol these past three months. The first meeting will be this Tuesday. Information about the these meetings is located in the left column of this newsletter. I hope that you will attend one of the town hall meetings.

In addition, I qualified for re-election to another term as the Representative for District 53. I do not have opposition. Therefore, I am honored to continue to serve as your State Representative and look forward to another two years serving in the House.

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 Approved by the House of Representatives**

FY 2011 Budget: The 2010 session of the Georgia General Assembly came to an end late Thursday night, several hours after lawmakers finalized a \$17.9 billion state budget for fiscal year 2011. The new budget reflects an overall revenue reduction of more than \$3 billion from two years ago. The majority leadership approved a hospital tax and fee increases totaling around \$275 million but refused to consider measures that would improve sales tax collections, roll back hundreds of millions of dollars in tax credits or raise the cigarette tax.

As a result, this budget will cause more layoffs



Dancing Stars of Atlanta to benefit Alzheimer's Association

This year, to support those affected by Alzheimer's, I am participating in Dancing Stars of Atlanta benefiting the Alzheimer's Association, Georgia Chapter to raise funds and awareness to fight this disease. There are currently more than 200,000 Georgians with Alzheimer's disease, over 80,000 of whom reside right here in Metro Atlanta. I hope you will consider buying a ticket to the event or contributing to this cause. I know we can make a difference with your support! Help me to raise funds on my personal voting page. Each dollar I raise counts as a vote to win the People's Choice Award! It's easy to give online by following this link: <http://dancingstarsofatlanta.kintera.org/ellydobbs>. Thank you; together, we can help end Alzheimer's.

Join Crime Stoppers Atlanta

Help solve crime in our community - join Crime Stoppers Atlanta today! Serving all of Metro Atlanta, call 404-586-0180. If you witness a crime, call 404-557-TIPS (8477).

More information...

and furloughs for teachers and other state employees and shift the tax burden to local property owners. Public school funding through the Quality Basic Education formula is slashed by another \$527 million. I am pleased to report that nearly \$800,000 in funding for the Georgia Council for the Arts, which had been eliminated in the previous House budget, was restored by the Senate and remained in the final report.

The budget legislation, [HB 948](#), now goes to the governor for his signature. He can also veto specific line-item appropriations. The new fiscal year begins July 1, 2010.

Trauma Care Funding: Georgia voters will have a chance to approve a reliable funding mechanism that would help enhance the state's trauma care network following passage of [SR 277](#). The proposed constitutional amendment would implement a \$10 fee on auto license tags to bring in \$80 million each year for a trauma care trust fund. The proposal will be on the General Election ballot this November and requires a majority approval.

Property Tax Assessments: Lawmakers gave final passage to comprehensive property tax legislation Thursday. [SB 346](#) requires that every property owner receive an annual Notice of Assessment that includes the estimated property tax and expands the appeal time from 30 to 45 days. All relevant sales, including distress sales, must be included when determining Fair Market Value.

In other action during the final two days of the session, the House approved:

[HB 1069](#), which sets up tax loopholes for well-connected special interests while taking away a small \$26 tax refund that many of Georgia's working poor have received.

[SB 308](#), which expands the number of public areas where persons with firearms licenses can carry guns, and [SB 291](#), which would authorize the carrying of firearms in some areas of airports. Guns will be allowed in parks and historic sites, parking lots of universities, courthouses, jails, and in bars with the owner's consent. It would eliminate the ban on guns within 1,000 feet of schools and colleges. The bills now go to the Governor for his signature.

[SB 299](#), addressing problems with so-called "zero tolerance" school disciplinary laws, would prevent the immediate jailing of a student without a hearing and give judges more discretion as to how they handle cases. The zero tolerance were intended to crack down on serious charges of having weapons in school but have instead often resulted in students being criminalized for minor and insignificant infractions.

[SB 360](#), which bans motorists in Georgia from texting while driving, and [HB 23](#), which bans teenagers from talking on cell phones while driving. A violation of either law, if signed by the Governor, would result in a fine of up to \$150 and one point on the driver's license of the offender.

[SB 364](#), which would increase the penalties for criminal offenses in massage parlors and spas. The Senate agreed with House amendments, and the bill now goes to the Governor.

[SB 458](#), which would remove the exemption in Georgia's seat belt law for drivers and passengers in pickup trucks. Georgia was the only state with a seat belt law that still allowed the pickup truck exemption, which cost the state millions of dollars each year in federal highway funding. The bill now goes to the Governor for his signature.

[SR 821](#), which would change the Constitution to allow the state Department of Transportation to sign multi-year contracts without having the entire dollar amount of the contract set aside at the beginning. Supporters of the measure say the move would free up millions of transportation dollars that cannot now be used. The constitutional amendment must be approved by a majority of Georgia voters in November.

Legislation That Did Not Pass

Teacher Merit Pay: Gov. Perdue proposed to change how teachers are rewarded and punished. He had bills to pay them based on student performance and to strip them of their pensions if they tampered with the standardized tests that would be part of the evaluations.

Appointment of State Officers: The Governor wanted the Commissioners of Agriculture, Insurance and Labor as well as the Superintendent of Schools to be appointed, rather than elected, in the future. It would have taken a constitutional amendment requiring two-thirds approval of both houses and majority approval by the voters, but the proposal never had enough support to get out of committee.

Private School Vouchers: There was legislation to expand the state's voucher program that provides taxpayer funds for private-school tuition to handicapped students. The plan would have made vouchers also available to foster children and military dependents.

Insurance Sales: The Governor championed legislation to allow the sale of individual health insurance policies across state lines.

Mortgage Reform: After two years of committee discussion and intense lobbying by consumer groups, the legislature still failed to pass a bill designed to address some of the consequences of the rash of foreclosures.

Right to Choose: A push by Georgia Right to Life for legislation making it a felony for doctors to perform an abortion if the patient disclosed she was having the procedure because of objections to the race or gender of the fetus, or because she was coerced, never came to a vote in the House.

Elly's Legislation

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

Quick Links

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Representative Elly Dobbs

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