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State Representative Elly Dobbs

GEORGIA LEGISLATIVE REPORT

January 19, 2010

Dear Anne,

The Georgia General Assembly completed the first week of the 2010 session under the leadership of our new Speaker of the House. This week, the House and Senate are concentrating on Appropriations Committee hearings so that the budget process can begin. Below I discuss some of the more relevant topics that will likely be considered this session.

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

New Speaker brings needed rule changes to House

The Georgia House of Representatives opened the 2010 legislative session of the Georgia General Assembly on Jan. 11 by electing Rep. David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) as Speaker of the House, replacing Glenn Richardson, who resigned in December. Actions taken by Speaker Ralston during his first week as presiding officer of the House have been encouraging. He has already made good on his pledge to change House rules in such a way that will foster more debate and dialogue among members - regardless of political party - as we deal with the state budget and other important issues.

Significantly, Speaker Ralston has done away with the previous regime's infamous "hawk" system, under which certain House members were authorized to go into any committee meeting and vote to help pass or defeat a bill at the whim of the majority leadership - a slap in the face of representative government.

Speaker Ralston is also committed to passing stronger ethics rules for the legislative branch of government in the wake of the Richardson scandal. Proposed legislation would restrict lobbyists' gifts to lawmakers in an effort to reduce the influence of special interests and give more power to the State Ethics Commission to investigate conflict-of-interest cases against legislators.

State of the State: Governor Perdue's final "State of the State" address to a joint session of the House and Senate on Jan. 13 was long on historical quotations, nostalgia and sentimentality but, unfortunately, completely devoid of any plans for dealing with some of Georgia's biggest problems. I am disappointed the governor chose not to address the state's record-high



unemployment, a lack of adequate funding for transportation, teacher furloughs or any of the issues currently plaguing the state. In the Democratic response, Georgia Labor Commissioner Michael Thurmond urged Republican lawmakers to join with Democrats to develop a comprehensive economic recovery plan that would provide jobs for unemployed Georgians.

Budget Hearings: The General Assembly will be in official recess the week of Jan. 18-22, first for observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday and then for Appropriations Committee hearings to begin the process of drafting the budgets for the remainder of the current fiscal year as well as fiscal year 2011. The governor is scheduled to make his budget recommendations to committee members Jan. 19. He will reportedly call for three more furlough days for educators and other state workers between now and June 30, the end of fiscal year 2010, as part of a \$1.2 billion overall budget cut. The governor's recommended FY 2011 budget totals \$18.2 billion, which projects an increase in state tax revenues of 4.2 percent.

Transportation Funding: For the past two years, the House and Senate have failed to agree on legislation that would provide a sufficient funding source for badly needed transportation upgrades across the state. The lieutenant governor and House leaders said this week they have abandoned plans for a constitutional amendment for a statewide sales tax for transportation, which the House passed last year. The Senate's proposed solution is a regional sales tax plan under which counties could band together to fund transportation improvements, if the voters in those counties approved the tax by referendum. The governor, meanwhile, said he would set aside \$300 million in bond funds to pay for major transportation projects. He also said he wants to see a series of regional sales taxes for road projects placed on the ballot in 2012 instead of this November.

Water Issues: The governor reported "a renewed spirit of cooperation" among Georgia, Florida and Alabama in the three states' ongoing water rights dispute. There has been a greater sense of urgency for Georgia since a federal judge's ruling last July restricting metro Atlanta's rights to use Lake Lanier as its main source of drinking water. Gov. Perdue said he is willing to call a special legislative session later in the year if an agreement cannot be reached during the regular session.

Elly's Legislation

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

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Representative Elly Dobbs

Representative Elly Dobbs represents the 53rd District (Fulton County) in the Georgia House of Representatives. Contact her at 512 Coverdell Office Building, Atlanta, Ga. 30334; by phone at 404-656-7859; or by e-mail at elly.dobbs@house.ga.gov. For more information, visit her web site at www.ellydobbs.com.

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