

## **ABC of Georgia Legislative Report – 1/23/2009**

The legislature adjourned for the week due to the MLK Holiday and the Presidential Inauguration, but a significant amount of activity occurred nonetheless. This week focused on the Governor's budget.

House and Senate budget writers heard from state department heads mostly about the momentous number of cuts they propose to balance a budget with \$2 billion less in revenue than the previous fiscal year. The Governor's budget does not include any anticipated Federal funds that President Obama says he will aim toward states to help them balance their budgets. However, legislative budget writers definitely anticipate using Federal relief to avoid many of the cuts and revenue enhancement – particularly a tax on hospitals and insurance providers – found in Governor Perdue's budget.

While downsizing government was the theme of the week, a noteworthy amount of construction is planned both to meet the state's capital needs and to create what Governor Perdue calls "Georgia's stimulus plan." The governor proposes about \$1.2 billion in new construction from roads and streets to a host of capital building projects at dozens of state facilities across Georgia – double normal levels of construction spending.

The specific projects to be funded with \$1.2 billion in bond proceeds will be unveiled later in the session, but it does not include any infrastructure spending coming from the Federal government's planned capital stimulus; nor does it include additional transportation projects that may come from an expected increase in transportation spending that the Governor, Speaker and Lt. Governor say will be enacted no later than 2010.

In addition to the budget, ABC's legislative team has also worked to engage Georgia's elected leadership in the national debate on the so-called "card check" legislation and PLAs.

ABC was a forming partner in Georgia's new "Save our Secret Ballot" coalition that is working to mobilize political opposition to the Employee Free Choice Act. Our team meets with Gov. Perdue early Monday to seek his support to protect the secret ballot in union elections and to sign an ABC National-requested letter to President Obama opposing the use of PLAs in the planned stimulus program. The letter being presented to Gov. Perdue says:

- The state does not want a PLA requirement on infrastructure spending stimulus money
- The state does not want the Obama administration to repeal President Bush's anti-PLA Executive Order 13202
- Real stimulus can't happen with out-of-state workers getting work
- PLAs increase the cost of construction, which will harm the state budgets – the four schools for the price of five argument

Also, at our request, two legislative resolutions aimed at protecting secret ballot union elections were among the first legislative actions introduced. The first is HR 22, by Reps. Lunsford, Lindsey, Levitas, Keen & Jones, which proposes a constitutional amendment requiring any elections for public office, public initiative, referenda or “designations or authorizations of employee representation...” to be done by secret ballot.

The other is HR 23 by the same legislators calling on Georgia’s congressional delegation to vote against any legislation that infringes on employees’ right to a secret ballot in union elections. You can read the language of these resolutions by logging on to <http://www.legis.state.ga.us> and clicking on the “legislation” tab.

Finally, we are working with Sen. Eric Johnson to draft a Senate Resolution calling on the Georgia congressional delegation to reject PLAs in the Federal stimulus program. We expect that resolution to be introduced when the General Assembly returns to Atlanta next week.

Progress is also expected in developing new opportunities for construction trades training within the state’s technical and high schools. Speaker Richardson has put his weight behind a bill that will be introduced by Rep. Fran Millar that will require a technical training curriculum in every school system. The speaker sees it as a way to cut high school drop outs by giving kids an alternative to the college prep path that most schools are geared for today. We plan to meet with Rep. Millar to talk about his bill, get more details and urge that it be used to help train young men and women in construction careers. We will also meet with Sen. Johnson to talk with him about his ideas on incentivizing schools to focus more on training non-college bound students for construction-related occupations.