

# PTA Takes Action

## Advocating for every child

Georgia PTA's weekly update on legislative activity – April. 25, 2010

We're down to the final two days of the legislative session, April 27 and April 29. For the most part, the committee hearings are done and now it remains to be seen what bills make it to the floor of their respective chambers to be voted on. Many amendments will be made these final two days and the language can change drastically in the final hours. Both chambers have to agree on the final version after all the changes and amendments are made. We'll send out a final update when the session is over to recap what passed but if you want a detailed understanding, plan to attend CLT in June and hear the legislative recap from those who monitored the legislation all session. If you're interested, join us at the Capitol to see the legislature in session and what happens to the bills the final two days.

## Gun Legislation

This session several gun bills were proposed and reported on. This week **SB 308** passed out of committee on Thursday afternoon and is now eligible for a floor vote in the House. This bill would prohibit guns in all government buildings, including schools, but it now allows guns in school parking lots and removes the 1,000 foot safety zone around schools. In many schools, parking lots are used as playgrounds during the school day. It was modified to continue the ban on guns in places of worship and bars (but a bar owner may now expressly allow them). It removes the ban on guns at sporting events so guns could be carried at the Georgia Dome. It also redefines what constitutes a weapon to include pistols, revolvers or any weapon designed or intended to propel a missile of any kind as well as basically any knife with a blade longer than two inches, straight-edge razors, knuckles, any bat, club or other bludgeon-type weapon or any flailing type instrument like a nun chuck. This is important legislation and one with which you should become familiar.

## Legislation to Watch

Every week we will report on legislation that we believe is critical to you. Please note, if National or Georgia PTA has an established position, a local unit cannot take an opposing position.

**HB 23:** Drivers causing an accident while using specified wireless devices shall have stronger penalties than those not using such devices. Drivers under age 18 cannot use a cell phone nor text message while driving. Exceptions are made for driver emergencies, reporting an accident or criminal activity, or using while parked. Penalty is 1 point on the drivers license and/or a fine of \$150. **PTA SUPPORTS the restrictions on under age 18 drivers. SUPPORT PASSED House DO PASS in S.Public Safety DV**

**SB 360:** Use of a cell phone or texting while driving is a misdemeanor. Exceptions are in an emergency, reporting or averting a crime, public safety personnel and public utility service folk. Fine is \$150. Those

age 18 and under will get their unrestricted drivers licenses delayed for a year upon a second offense. **PASSED Senate DO PASS in H.Public Safety & Homeland Security**

**SB 457:** Empowers a high school cluster to petition the local board of education to become a conversion charter. Requires a referendum in the attendance zone of such high school cluster. **House:** Instead of the referendum, requires a 60% favorable vote by parents and faculty in all the schools in the cluster and approval by the local school councils. **PASSED Senate PASSED House DV**

**SB 340:** Every year, local school systems and private schools must transmit to GA School Finance Commission an electronic transcript of courses and grades for each freshman, sophomore and junior high school student, grading scales used in the school, state required test scores for the purpose of calculating the GPA for potential HOPE scholarships. **Currently, only the seniors' records must be sent. Now you'll know if you're child is eligible for HOPE.** **PASSED Senate and House TGFS**

**HB 908:** Local school systems will be exempted from meeting the QBE expense controls (OCGA 20-2-167) and allowed options to use 20 Additional Days of Instruction (OCGA 20-2-212) during the school year for extra instruction to students who need it through June 30, 2013. Local school systems may operate with a system average relative to class size. ***If there are two or more classrooms serving the same grades, the system stays in compliance as long as the average of the all the classrooms for that grade have the same number of students as the individual class size itemized for that grade and program in the bill.*** **TGFS**

**SB 496:** Creates a new HOPE college opportunity grant for students from low income families if money appropriated from the lottery. Has all the requirements of the current HOPE scholarship except for the B average. About 97% of those receiving PELL grants have family incomes of less than \$40,000; 80% have family incomes of less than \$30,000. GA Student Finance Commission will administer the program, and use the PELL grant process as a basis for evaluating students. As with the other HOPE, students must be a graduate from a GA high school and a legal resident for 12 months, or if not a graduate from a GA high school, they must be a resident for 24 months. **PASSED Senate PASSED in H. Higher Education**

*Key: HR- House Resolution, HB – House Bill, SR – Senate Resolution, SB– Senate Bill  
CA – Constitutional Amendment TGIS – To Governor for signature DV – Differing versions*

## **FY 11 Budget**

**The Senate passed their version of the FY 11 budget this week. The House and Senate versions now must be worked out in conference committee. Several areas of interest for education:**

- School nurse funding was cut an additional \$750,000 (total \$2.3M) on top of the cuts proposed by the House (\$1.6M)
- Governor's Honors Program, agreed with House version to reduce program to four weeks this summer but eliminated all funding for the summer of 2011
- Restored funding for CRCT testing in 1st and 2nd grade and for ITBS and PSATs
- Increased cuts to transportation funding
- Senate restored some funding for GA Council for the Arts

For additional information, go to Capitol Watch on the Georgia PTA website:  
[www.ciclt.net/gapta](http://www.ciclt.net/gapta)