



2010 Legislative Session
20 Legislative Days Down...20 Legislative Days to Go
February 19, 2010

Georgia Legislature Slows Down the Clock

On Thursday of this week, the House and Senate adopted a joint adjournment resolution which puts both chambers in recess until Monday, March 8th while lawmakers try to work with Gov. Sonny Perdue to resolve the 2011 budget while awaiting February revenue numbers and several other variables upon which the Governor has based his 2011 Budget. The recess could delay the end of the session well into April.

EMC “Letters of Intent” Ready for Lt. Governor Cagle As Promised

Consistent with Georgia EMC’s pledge two weeks ago on Feb. 5, we assembled letters of intent to execute the 2008 GEMC-CTAG Model Agreement for CATV pole attachments from 42 of 42 EMCs today, Friday, Feb. 19. These letters clearly demonstrate that EMCs throughout our state are committed to working together and striking a fair and reasonable balance in compromise, while remaining unbowed when it comes to attempts by special interests to shift unwarranted costs onto our member-owners. This should effectively close the debate on CATV pole attachments before the General Assembly for the foreseeable future, but your government relations team at GEMC will remain vigilant in watching for any further attempts by CATV interests to advance onerous proposals. Thanks to all the EMCs for your strong grassroots efforts, and for the very prompt responses in a short time period to deliver our letters of intent.

Forestry Products Fairness Act Introduced

Legislation referred to earlier this year as the Georgia Forestry Products Fairness Act was introduced this week in the form of SB 409. The intent of the bill, introduced by Senator Ronnie Chance (R-Tyrone), is to ensure equitable treatment of any person, company, partnership, or other entity involved in the commercial use of raw forest products in receiving tax breaks, credits, or rebates granted. In the legislation the term “raw forest product” is defined as product derived from woody biomass, forest wood waste, or any wood chips or fibers recovered from forest wood waste. The bill in its current form is not problematic, however, the GEMC Government Relations continues to monitor this bill and remind legislators that existing forest products entities have benefited greatly from much of the renewable legislation\tax incentives\credits intended to spur development of new business across the state.

http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2009_10/pdf/sb409.pdf

Governor's Water Bills Undergo Review and Changes

The Governor's water legislation, SB 370 and HB 1094, underwent changes in committee this week. The bills contain seven sections: sections 1 and 2 direct several state agencies to develop programs and incentives to address water conservation; section 3 instructs the EPD and DNR to form and conduct leak detection and repair programs; section 4 requires the EPD, State Soil and Water Conservation Commission and Department of Agriculture to establish a program to encourage voluntary monitoring of surface-water withdrawals by permittees; section 5 addresses sub-metering of residential, commercial and industrial units; section 6 amends state codes to require the installation of low-flow plumbing fixtures; and, section 7 amends state codes to require the installation of high-efficiency cooling towers in new construction permitted on or after July 1, 2012. There was considerable discussion and debate in the Senate Natural Resources Committee and the House Environmental Quality Subcommittee concerning these measures. Three amendments were adopted to address agricultural use concerns, sub-metering with only a requirement for new construction, and a prohibition of counties and municipalities from charging a fee for the installation of privately owned meters or other devices that measure water use. SB 370 by Senator Ross Tolleson (R-Perry) passed the Senate Natural Resources unanimously and moved to the Senate Rules Committee. HB 1094 by Rep. Lynn Smith (R-Newnan) was amended in the subcommittee but remains there for further review before moving to the full committee. http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2009_10/pdf/sb370.pdf

River Basin Transfer Act

Draft legislation to address interbasin transfers was previewed this week. The potential legislation by Rep. Tom McCall (R-Elberton) will prohibit any interbasin transfers without a permit from the Environmental Protection Division. Any transfer of more than 100,000 gallons per day requires that an application be sent to the EPD Director and, when feasible, the permittee must return the nonconsumptive portion to the basin of origin. Furthermore, water users receiving the transfer must implement water conservation procedures. Any permits issued will be for a period of ten years with the review of the EPD Director in the fifth year. The Director will have the ability to make modifications at that time. There are numerous other considerations for any transfer to take place. There have been a number of concerns raised by the business community including that the bill may run counter to the State Water Plan, which directs the DNR Board should consider interbasin transfer permitting criteria. Indications are the bill will receive the full scrutiny of the legislative process.

North Georgia Broadband Network Meeting Tentatively Scheduled

A meeting of the House Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Committee chaired by Rep. Don Parsons (R-Marietta) has been tentatively scheduled for Wednesday afternoon, February 24. However, due to the unexpected legislative recess, there is a possibility it will be rescheduled. The meeting is designed to discuss the North Georgia Broadband Network and committee staff report that current presenters include Richard Calhoun from the Georgia Technology Authority and Bruce Abraham from the Lumpkin County Development Authority. Both Habersham EMC and Blue Ridge Mountain EMC played critical roles in the formation of this important project and GEMC staff will work with the committee as the meeting agenda takes shape to ensure EMCs are represented properly. For a link to the North Georgia Network website containing the latest in project news, please visit: <http://ngnonline.net/Default.aspx>

Consensus Transportation Resources Legislation Introduced

Rep. Jim Cole (R-Forsyth), who serves as Floor Leader for Governor Perdue, introduced HB 1218 on Wednesday, February 17. House Speaker David Ralston and other top House leaders including House Transportation Chairman Jay Roberts also signed onto the bill, further indicating the commitment to work together to pass consensus transportation legislation this year. As written, the bill would call for a vote within each of 12 transportation regions coinciding with the

2012 presidential primary. Voters would vote up or down on a sales tax increase of up to 1 percent to fund a list of local projects approved by DOT's director of planning, the new position created by the legislature last year and appointed by the governor. A fact sheet on the bill from the governor's office is attached to this bulletin and the full bill can be found at: http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2009_10/versions/hb1218_LC_34_2523ER_EC_a_2.htm

Representative Jay Shaw to GDOT Board

Legislators from the 1st Congressional District on Wednesday elected Rep. Jay Shaw (D-Lakeland) to replace Roy Herrington on the State Transportation Board. Shaw will join former State Representatives Johnny Floyd and Bobby Parham among others on the board. Shaw's term will begin after he fulfills his commitment to serve in the legislature throughout this, his 17th session.

Georgia EMC Employees Welcome NRECA Annual Meeting

Georgia EMC employees were involved in a number of efforts leading up to and during the conference—from helping NRECA with side tour trips; planning, coordinating and staffing the Georgia Welcome Booth; working with foreign consulates in Atlanta and media on the International Program's relief efforts in Haiti; commemorative resolutions from the Georgia House and Senate recognizing NRECA and letters of welcome from Governor Perdue and Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed.

<http://www.ect.coop/special-reports/annual-meeting/emcs-ready-to-welcome-guests> is an article on the GEMC and FOC employee ambassadors and their efforts to welcome visitors to Georgia via the Georgia Welcome Booth, where our employees used promotional material from the Tourism Division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development and many of the major agricultural commodities in Georgia.

<http://www.ect.coop/editors-pick/volunteers-transform-school> is an article on the Touchstone Energy Community Service project which was hosted by GreyStone Power and involved a number of EMC and GEMC employees. This project is going to be especially well-received in connection with the Governor's Energy Challenge and Conserve Georgia initiatives.

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/02/18/haiti.electricity/index.html?iref=allsearch> is a story by CNN Reporter Tom Watkins on NRECA's International Program and Project Leader Myk Manon and his team's efforts to rebuild the electric infrastructure in Haiti. (See next paragraph for more on the International Program.) Ambassador Reda Mansour of Israel, Dean of the 60+ member Atlanta Consular Corps, was Georgia EMC's guest and after witnessing the program, pledged to send NRECA IPD Foundation information to all members of the Atlanta Consular Corp.

Visit the Member Center on Georgia EMC's web site, <http://www.georgiaemc.com/membercenter/login.aspx> to view pictures from the Touchstone Energy Community Service project as well as the NRECA International Luncheon. The Feb. 16 luncheon was a fundraiser to benefit NRECA's International Program whose mission is to bring electricity to developing countries. Approximately 700 folks from across the U.S. and overseas attended, including approximately 100 leaders from Guatemala, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Philippines, Yemen and Tanzania.



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