



**2010 Legislative Session**  
**Friday, February 26, 2010**  
**20 Legislative Days Down...20 Legislative Days to Go**

**First Week of Recess Concludes and Work Continues on the Budget**

The legislature will conclude the first week of a two week hiatus today. The focus of this two week break is the budget crisis. Lawmakers continued to look very closely at all departments and agencies to evaluate where a \$1.2 billion gap can be closed in the state's \$18 billion budget. In these unprecedented times spending cuts are not the only things that are being discussed. The Governor has put forth a plan for a hospital bed tax, cigarette tax, and there has also been discussion of various fee increases. While Senate and House leadership remain committed to delivering a fiscally conservative budget without increasing the tax burden on Georgia citizens, they recognize all options must be on the table. Still other possibilities are a buyout of state employees close to retirement and thousands of potential layoffs of those that hold state jobs. The General Assembly will remain in recess next week to continue to work on these tough decisions required to balance the budget.

**Cable Television Association of Georgia Continues Challenge of EMC Letters of Intent**

Thanks again to all EMCs for the extraordinary efforts last week to review and respond to Georgia EMC's request for a letter of intent to execute the GEMC-CTAG 2008 Model Agreement in a manner satisfactory to EMC Board and Management's conditions. The EMCs' timely response to fulfill our commitment to Lieutenant Gov. Cagle and Senate Leadership serves to underscore the credibility EMCs have built in our state. Georgia EMC presented our letters of intent to Casey Cagle's Chief of Staff, Bart Gobeil, and reviewed representative scenarios. Bottom line: Bart said "they're (cable) better off than they were in January..." meaning they didn't have 100% commitments to the model agreement less than 8 weeks ago. However, playing Devil's advocate Bart anticipated cable would take issue with some of the nuances in some letters as potential flashpoints (i.e. - pre-conditions to the model for code violation corrections, outstanding payment balances and/or length of current contract remaining before model). Georgia EMC reminded Bart of the following critical points:

- (1) Existing code violations and outstanding payments cannot be ignored before model agreements are executed;
- (2) Legislators and CTAG all agreed that any legislation would NOT affect existing contracts - only future contract negotiations; and

(3) EMCs delivering 100% commitment to the model agreement is absolutely consistent with our commitment to the Senate.

Unfortunately, but as expected, upon receipt of our letters CTAG and Comcast lobbyists immediately began telling Senators that all EMCs did not fulfill their commitment with letters of intent, precisely as Bart Gobeil anticipated. It didn't take long for CTAG and Comcast to revert back to their campaign of misinformation.

We urge all EMCs to contact your Senators with the following positive message, and remain confident that we have fulfilled our obligation to bring closure to this issue:

***Thank you for listening to our safety and cost concerns for our member-owners with SB328. Consistent with Georgia EMC's commitment made Feb. 5, all 42 EMCs submitted letters of intent to execute the GEMC-CTAG 2008 Model Agreement. Copies of these letters have been provided to Lieutenant Governor Cagle, Sen. Chip Pearson and the Cable Television Association of Georgia. If interested, copies may be obtained from Georgia EMC Government Relations at 404-521-7644. Thanks again for your continued leadership and we trust this statewide commitment by EMCs will bring this matter to a successful conclusion. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions on this or other issues.***

Please send copies of your e-mails, other correspondence and any replies to [Rachael.young@georgiaemc.com](mailto:Rachael.young@georgiaemc.com). Thanks again for your great support of our efforts.

### **Governor's Transportation Bill Receives First Hearing**

On Wednesday, February 24, Rep. Jim Cole (R-Forsyth), who serves as Governor Perdue's Floor Leader in the House, presented HB 1218 – The Governor's Transportation Resources bill. As outlined previously, the legislation would allow 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. The hearing also laid out a timeline for legislators to consider which contained the following information:

- \* By Aug. 15 of this year, the planning director is to provide local governments with the criteria by which a projects list must be developed. This will include an estimate by the state fiscal economist of how much each of the transportation districts can expect to raise through the sales tax increase.
- \* Local governments will have until Sept. 30 to submit comments on the plan criteria.
- \* By Nov. 10, local governments in each district are to have their representatives for the regional roundtables. These are to consist of the chair of each county council and one mayor from each county. Counties where more than half the population lives in municipalities will get another representative selected by the mayors of the county.
- \* By Nov. 15, the final criteria will have been ironed out and the process of working out the project list between the state planning director and the roundtables will begin.
- \* By Oct. 15, 2011, each roundtable is supposed to have agreed on its project list, along with the estimated cost of each project. Should they fail to do so, the planning director has the authority to send a project list to the local governments in a district.

Rep. Cole made it clear at the hearing that many provisions of the bill are still open for debate in the legislature; however reports indicate that the governor's office is not willing to discuss any

option for counties to opt out of participating in the regional funding mechanism. Follow-up subcommittee meetings to further discuss the legislation have been scheduled for Tuesday, March 2 at 1:00 p.m. and then again on Thursday at the same time.

### **President's Day Dinner Features Newt Gingrich**

The Georgia Republican Party held its annual President's Day Dinner this past Wednesday and Newt Gingrich addressed the crowd as keynote speaker. Representative Wendell Willard (R-Sandy Springs), who serves as chairman of the House Judiciary committee joined his key staff and Georgia EMC Family of Company representatives for a table at the dinner, which is sponsored annually by ACRE in support of federal elections in Georgia. Similarly, ACRE supports a comparable table at the Georgia Democratic Party Jefferson-Jackson Dinner each year. The "JJ" dinner is scheduled for next month.

### **7<sup>th</sup> Annual Agriculture Week Kick-Off Celebration on March 16**

On Tuesday March 16, Georgia EMC is a co-sponsor for Governor Sonny Perdue's Agriculture Advisory Committee's 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Agriculture Week Kick-Off Celebration at the Georgia Freight Depot. Georgia EMC will have a booth displaying information about Green Power EMC to the attendees. The Governor's Agriculture Advisory Committee is expecting approximately 800 visitors to the event including state constitutional officers, state agency heads, legislators and staff from the General Assembly, school representatives from Future Farmers of America, 4-H members, Young Farmers, and friends of agriculture and agribusiness. The event consists of food, music, exhibits and concludes with a special program with Governor Perdue.

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