

## PTA

## Takes Action

### Advocating for Every Child

*Georgia PTA's Legislative Update for January 29, 2012*

After a week of budget review sessions the General Assembly reconvened and got back to the business of introducing, discussing and passing legislation. **There are several new bills that were introduced that will require our attention and advocacy.** See under yellow highlighting.

As legislation starts to be considered there will be emails sent asking you to contact your representatives and tell them how you feel about a particular bill. This isn't as intimidating as it sounds. A simple phone call where you just contact their office, talk to their assistant and tell them you support or oppose a bill can make a big difference. The whole process can literally be accomplished in a minute or two. During the session a phone call is far more powerful than an email.

#### What Happened this Week:

##### *Status of Existing Bills:*

**HB 713:** Delays for one year, until fall 2013, the implementation of career pathways. - **Passed House**

**SB 49:** Increases the compulsory age of attendance from 16 to 16½. **SUPPORT** There are several Senate and House bills attempting to increase the compulsory age beyond 16. If any of those bills start to move they will be reported in detail. **Passed Senate Ed.**

**SB 87:** Allows vouchers for children of active military or foster children. **OPPOSE Passed Senate Ed.**

**HB 187:** Exempts certain medically fragile students from the requirement of attending a public school for one year before qualifying for a special needs vouchers. **OPPOSE Passed Senate Ed.**

**HB 659:** Hazing bill - will be heard in subcommittee on Wednesday but no vote will be taken

**HB 731:** Parent Trigger Act - A majority of parents in a specially called meeting may petition the local school board to convert the school to a charter under certain circumstances. This bill was scheduled to be heard this past week but will now be heard this week.

##### *New Legislation:*

**HR 1162: Constitutional Amendment:** Changes the definition of special schools to include charter schools and would allow the state to take funding from local school systems to fund new charter schools that have been authorized by the state. **OPPOSE**

**HB 797:** Charter schools denied by a local board and subsequently approved as a state charter school would receive local tax dollar per student funds as calculated by the State. Charter applications would be simultaneously submitted to the local board, the state and the General Assembly. If a local board doesn't approve the charter the state is authorized to investigate withholding all funds from the local school system. Officials who are not accountable to the voters would be deciding how local dollars are spent. **OPPOSE**

**HR 1150/SB 738 (twin bills in House and Senate):** Defines division of Education SPLOST fund between county and independent school districts to be based solely on the FTE (full time equivalent) count. Each district would get funding prorated based on actual number of students in the system.

**HOPE Legislation:** Several bills were introduced to modify the qualifications for HOPE scholarships and grants:

- **SB 334:** Changes the Zell Miller scholarship by eliminating the current eligibility requirements and making the top 3% of the graduating class qualified
- **SB 335:** Eliminates maintaining a minimum GPA to retain a HOPE grant
- **SB 336** Caps who would be eligible to receive HOPE based on household income.

### Education Report - New Resource

The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE), a non-profit organization that conducts research and non-profit advocacy to influence education policy, presented its annual *Top Ten Issues to Watch in 2012*, which outlines the top education issues. The report is available electronically on the GPEE website: [http://www.gpee.org/fileadmin/files/PDFs/Top\\_Ten\\_2012\\_Final\\_01.pdf](http://www.gpee.org/fileadmin/files/PDFs/Top_Ten_2012_Final_01.pdf)

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**Stand Together, Power Up, Reach Out**