



2018 LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

March 30, 2018

The 2018 legislative session of the Georgia General Assembly came to a close late last night with positive results for our state and metro Atlanta.

MAC's public policy team has worked hard with members of the General Assembly and Governor Deal to advance policies that promote economic growth, support our business climate and enhance our quality of life while preventing harmful measures from passing. Importantly, the Georgia General Assembly continued to prioritize transit expansion and funding with the historic passage of HB 930. HB 930 will create a 13-county regional transit agency that will plan and coordinate transit in the region. HB 930 will also enable transit funding referenda in Gwinnett, Cobb, and Fulton counties. Finally, the FY2019 budget includes \$100 million in bonds for transit projects statewide.

Several pieces of legislation supportive of business are headed to Governor Deal's desk. Highlights include a rewrite of the Georgia tax code reducing income tax rates; a streamlined application for freeport exemptions; an elimination of tax on foreign-derived income, which Governor Deal has already signed into law; and a new incentive to help recruit colocation data centers to our state. Additionally, MAC's public policy team successfully fought multiple attempts to advance legislation which included discriminatory language that would harm the business-friendly climate we have proudly developed. Bills that didn't make it past the finish line include a measure that would have allowed for adoption agencies that receive government funding to discriminate against certain types of families based upon the organization's religious beliefs.

Governor Deal now has 40 consecutive days to sign or veto all legislation that passed, but history suggests he'll sign the vast majority of the bills that reached his desk – largely because he works directly with legislators to fix his concerns before and during session. This is Governor Deal's final bill signing period, and the Metro Atlanta Chamber is deeply grateful for his servant leadership that has made Georgia the No. 1 state in the nation for business for five years in a row. He steered our state through the depths of the Great Recession with a laser focus on economic development, new jobs, investment in education, and criminal justice reform. He succeeded, and Georgia is better off because of his wisdom and service.

For a more detailed look at bills our team engaged on this session, please refer to the document below.

Hala Moddelmog
President and CEO, Metro Atlanta Chamber

BUSINESS CLIMATE

HB 61 (Rep. Jay Powell) - Requires online retailers with more than \$250,000 in sales or 200 transactions annually in Georgia to remit state sales tax, or send notices of taxes due to customers spending at least \$500 with the retailer. **PASSED**

HB 159 (Rep. Bert Reeves) - Updates the state's adoption laws for the first time since 1990. Language that would have legalized discrimination in the adoption process was removed from the bill. **SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR**

HB 696 (Rep. Trey Kelley) - Creates a sales tax exemption on equipment for data center co-locations that meet an investment threshold of \$250 million by 2028. **PASSED**

HB 888 (Rep. David Knight) - Simplifies the application for freeport exemptions for stored goods kept in inventory for less than one year. **PASSED**

HB 918 (Rep. Chuck Efstrotation) - Updates Georgia's tax code for calendar years 2017 and 2018, aligning it with the changes made to the I.R.S. code in late 2017. This legislation doubles Georgia's standard deduction in 2018, and reduces corporate and individual tax rates from 6% to 5.75% in 2019. It also includes a trigger to further reduce income tax rates to 5.5% for the 2020 tax year, pending a vote by the General Assembly in 2019 and the Governor's signature. **SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR**

HR 993 (Rep. Chuck Efstrotation) - Authorizes a constitutional amendment creating business courts with statewide jurisdiction with judges appointed by the Governor and approved by the majority vote of the House and Senate Judiciary committees. **PASSED**

SB 2 (Sen. Mike Dugan) - Expedites the licensing and permitting process for small businesses by removing duplicate and needless regulations. This legislation will impose fees on agencies if they delay the issuance of licenses or permits. **DID NOT PASS**

SB 233 (Sen. Marty Harbin) - Adopts the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. **DID NOT PASS**

SB 315 (Sen. Bruce Thompson) - Creates the new crime of unauthorized computer access even when no information is stolen or altered. **PASSED**

SB 328 (Sen. John Albers) - Prevents the state of Georgia from enforcing a new tax on multinational corporations on foreign sourced income derived from controlled foreign corporations, which the state has never done before. This tax was a product of the internal revenue code update bill passed earlier in the session and would have impacted many of our multinational headquartered companies. **PASSED**

SB 375 (Sen. Bill Ligon) - Allows child placement agencies with state contracts to refuse service to prospective adoptive or foster parents, based on the agency's sincerely-held religious beliefs. **DID NOT PASS**

SB 432 (Sen. John Albers) - Institutes a 5-year review cycle of tax credits and exemptions to measure their economic and fiscal impact. **DID NOT PASS**

SR 673 (Sen. David Shafer) - Denounces the National Football League for declining AMVETS advertisements during Super Bowl LII. **PASSED**

SR 711 (Sen. Butch Miller) - Commends the NFL and recognizes the February 4, 2018 handoff from the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee to the Atlanta Super Bowl Host Committee, and the economic impact Super Bowl LIII will have on the state of Georgia. **PASSED**

EDUCATED WORKFORCE

HB 217 (Rep. John Carson) - Authorizes the Public Education Innovation Fund Foundation to receive private donations to be used for public school grants. It also creates an income tax credit for those qualified education donations. **PASSED**

HB 781 (Rep. Kevin Tanner) - Permits E-SPLOST taxes to include maintenance and education programs as authorized expenditures. **DID NOT PASS**

HB 787 (Rep. Scott Hilton) - Creates a needs-based aid program within the Georgia Student Finance Authority for students attending University System of Georgia schools. **PASSED**

HB 928 (Rep. Rick Williams) - Extends HOPE Scholarship eligibility from 7 to 15 years after high school graduation. **DID NOT PASS**

SB 3 (Sen. Lindsey Tippins) - Enacts the CONNECT Act (Creating Opportunities Needed Now to Expand Credentialed Training). The bill requires career-oriented learning experiences for middle and high school students through internships, cooperative education, and employability skill development. **PASSED**

SB 401 (Sen. Lindsey Tippins) - Sets up a full report of school counselor duties to better define counseling in schools and the important role counselors play in assisting students with life choices. This bill also defines the agreement between YouScience of the Department of Education in assessing career aptitudes and interests of students which will help parents and students make more informed choices regarding post-secondary options. **PASSED**

TRANSPORTATION

HB 150 (Rep. Alan Powell) - Allows the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA) to collect unpaid toll violations from state tax refunds by the Department of Revenue, and extends the sunset on Consumer Price Indexing for the calculation of motor fuel taxes to 2022. **PASSED**

HB 642 (Rep. Chad Nimmer) - Would have created a special improvement district (SID) to help fund the completion of the Atlanta BeltLine. **DID NOT PASS**

HB 898 (Rep. Alan Powell) - Streamlines the process of licensing for fleets of over 100 vehicles. **PASSED**

HB 930 (Rep. Kevin Tanner) - Establishes the "ATL", the Atlanta Transit Link, a regional transportation authority, and enables transit funding referenda in Cobb, Fulton, and Gwinnett counties, which could take place as soon as November 2018. **PASSED**

SB 89 (Sen. David Shafer) - Creates a program within GDOT to fund rail infrastructure capital improvement. **DID NOT PASS**

SB 379 (Sen. Burt Jones) - Would have transferred control of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport from the City of Atlanta to the state of Georgia. **DID NOT PASS**

SR 882 (Sen. Burt Jones) - Creates a Senate study committee to evaluate the operations of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, and recommend legislation it deems appropriate. **PASSED**

NATURAL RESOURCES

HB 684 (Speaker David Ralston) - The \$25.8 billion FY2019 budget, which includes \$200,000 for the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District. **PASSED**

HB 919 (Rep. Sam Watson) - Would have reinstated a sales tax holiday for WaterSense and Energy Star products. **DID NOT PASS**

HB 929 (Rep. Chuck Efstoration) - Allows for additional renewals of the City of Atlanta's water and sewer projects and costs tax (MOST) which is critical to continuing water/sewer infrastructure upgrades. **PASSED**