



# Georgia Farm Bureau Federation LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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## This Week

The General Assembly was not in session this week, but that did not mean legislators were not hard at work. The second week of session is historically reserved for budget hearings and on Wednesday the joint House and Senate Appropriations Committees began hearing from state department heads. Over the next couple weeks legislators will be forced to make some difficult decisions in order to fill budget shortfalls caused by declining revenue numbers.

Due to the budgetary constraints, one of Georgia Farm Bureau's priorities is already facing resistance. Our members support funding of the Homeowner's Tax Relief Grants. However in a hearing on Wednesday, Governor Perdue noted the difficulty of funding the measure.

## Transportation Bill

Senate Bill 39 is a bill enacting a 1 percent sales and use tax to fund transportation projects in special transportation districts. In its current form, this bill will not levy a tax on off road diesel. SB 39 States, "The levy provided for by this article shall not apply to and shall not be levied on: (1) The sale or use of any type of fuel used for off-road heavy-duty equipment, off-road farm or agricultural equipment..." There has been no action on the bill in the Senate, but transportation is sure to be a major topic of discussion this year.

# Farm Bureau Day at the Capitol

## Tuesday, February 10th

If you haven't already, you need to mark your calendars for **Farm Bureau Day at the Capitol on Tuesday, February 10th**. Farm Bureau Day is a great event, and your participation shows the strength of agriculture in Georgia.

Orientation begins at **9:30a.m.** in the Blue Room at the historic Georgia Railroad Freight Depot, located next to Underground Atlanta. Lunch is at 12:00 noon. Please invite your legislators to attend. Free parking will be available at the Turner Field - Gold Lot and shuttle service will run from **8:00a.m. until 3:00 p.m.** The backbone of Georgia Farm Bureau is local involvement and **You** are the key to our legislative success.

## Legislation of Interest

**HB 14- Elections; nonpartisan; certain officials-** Representative Kevin Levitas- This measure will require non-partisan elections and of sheriffs, district attorneys, and solicitor generals. *Governmental Affairs*

**HB 22- Safety belts in pickup trucks**

Representative Mary Oliver- This legislation requires the use of safety belts in all passenger vehicles, including pickup trucks. *Agriculture and Consumer Affairs*

A similar bill, **SB 5**, has been introduced in the Senate by **Senators Don Thomas, Jack Hill, Seth Harp, Doug Stoner, Judson Hill, and Curt Thompson.** *Public Safety*

Also, **SB 23** by **Senators Lee Hawkins** involves failure to wear seatbelts as evidence of negligence. *Judiciary*

**HB 26- Recorded deeds of mineral rights-** Representative Scott Martin- Requires recorded deeds to disclose the inclusion or exclusion of mineral rights. *Unassigned*

**HB 39- Tobacco tax-** Representative Ron Stephens- This bill raises the excise tax on cigarettes by \$1.00 and on smokeless tobacco by \$0.15. Georgia Farm Bureau policy opposes further increases in tobacco taxes. *Ways & Means Committee*

**HB 43- Scrap Metal Processors; Photo ID-** Representatives Billy Mitchell and Daryl Jordan- Requires that the identity of non-licensed sellers of scrap metal be verified by photo identification. GFB policy calls for "strict enforcement of the laws and penalties against metal thieves and the buyers who facilitate this illegal trade. At the time of a scrap metal transaction, buyers should require proper identification of the individuals selling the material and a clear description of the items being offered for sale." *Judiciary NC*

**HB 46- Exemption for off road diesel taxes-** Representatives Jay Roberts, Rich Golick, Jimmy Pruet, Jim Cole, Larry O'Neal, Ellis Black- Extends tax exemption through May 31<sup>st</sup> 2009 for dyed fuel used exclusively for agricultural purposes, timber growing or harvesting purposes, or mining or construction purposes. *Ways & Means Committee*

**HB 62- Cancelable educational loans; State Veterinary Education Board-** Representative Gene Maddox- Encourages new vets to practice in rural areas and aides them in paying off educational loans. *Agriculture & Consumer Affairs*

**HB 67- Suspension of Sales/use tax on food and beverages-** Representative Chuck Sims- Provides for a partial suspension of food and beverage exemptions for a limited period of time. *Ways & Means*

**HB 75- CUYA-** Representative Gerald Greene- This legislation would expand the definition of eligible participates into the Conservation Use Program. The original intent of CUYA was to help protect the family farm; GFB will closely monitor the progress of this legislation. *Ways & Means*

**HB 85- Nonpartisan Elections-** Representatives Alan Powell and Kevin Levitas- Authorizes the General Assembly by local law to provide for the nonpartisan election of clerks of the superior court, sheriffs, tax receivers, tax collectors, and tax commissioners. *Government Affairs*

**HB 109- Cockfighting Punishments-** Bob Bryant, Mickey Stephens, Ron Stephens, Earl Carter, J. Craig Gordon and Burke Day- Relates to “gambling on, owning, possessing, keeping, or training a cock for cockfighting...allowing such activities on a person's property shall constitute a felony”. *Judiciary NC*

**HR 1- Valuation Freeze on residential and nonresidential property** Representatives Edward Lindsey, Jerry Keen, Jay Roberts, Bob Bryant, Burke Day, and Kevin Levitas- This resolution will freeze the valuation of residential and nonresidential real property except for certain adjustments. *Ways & Means Committee*

**HR 25- Foreign Oil Dependence-** Representatives John Lunsford, Kevin Levitas, Ron Stephens and Butch Parrish- Urges the President and Congress of the United States to support legislative efforts to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil. *Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications*

**HR 30- Limit exemption periods for sales and use taxes-** Representatives Tom Rice and Tom Graves- A Constitutional Amendment that requires future exemptions from sales and use taxes to not exceed four years in duration. *Ways & Means*

**HR 32- Offshore Drilling-** Representatives Timothy Bearden, Sean Jerguson, Barry Loudermilk, Charlice Byrd and Bobby Franklin- Urges Governor Sonny Perdue to proceed with leases for the exploration and drilling for oil and natural gas off the Georgia coast. *Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications*

**SR 2- Taxes- Local ad valorem reduction option-** Senators Mitch Seabaugh, Chip Rogers, Tommie Williams, Ronnie Chance- Authorizes the reduction or elimination of local ad valorem taxation and replacement with a sales and use tax at any rate not to exceed 1 percent. *Finance Committee*