



## February 2018 Newsletter

The 2018 Legislative Session is well underway. We returned to the Capitol January 8th to complete the second year of the 154th General Assembly. I have a very busy legislative calendar with priorities to lower taxes, improve public safety, support veterans and first responders. In addition, I am also focusing on innovative solutions to traffic and transportation.

Kari and I celebrate a major milestone this month, our 25th wedding anniversary. We continue our tradition of eating at one of our favorites on Canton Street, Osteria Mattone. Our friends Ryan and Dan Pernice always make it a very special evening. This summer we plan to get away for a week to celebrate even more.



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### 2018 & 2019 Budget

As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I am involved in many budget hearings. We heard proposals from Governor Nathan Deal, state agency and department heads and many more statewide officials regarding the Amended FY18 and General FY19 budgets. The legislature then analyzes and allocates funding through the appropriations process.

I am happy to report that Georgia's budget continues to grow, this year surpassing \$26 billion for the first time. A growing budget is a sign of a healthy economy and I am proud to see us moving in the right direction with job creation and businesses moving to our great state. However, we continue to maintain our balanced budget and are spending at the same rate as 1999 per capita making Georgia one of the best and most fiscally prudent in the nation.

Included in this year's budget proposals are funding allocations encompassing several important departments. However, I am especially excited about the proposals for K-12 education and the criminal justice budgets. There is a nearly \$120 million increase to the Department of Education to account for enrollment growth and an additional increase of \$30 million in Equalization grants, bringing the total



to over \$614 million in additional funding for educating our youth.

## State Champs - Blessed Trinity!

I hosted members of the Blessed Trinity Catholic High School Football Team at the Senate Chamber Wednesday, January 24th to receive a resolution commending their 2017 Class AAAA Georgia High School Association (GHS) State Football Championship title.

We were thrilled to have some of the students who make up the Blessed Trinity Catholic High School Football team with us in the Senate Chamber. These students made us and their community proud. I could not be happier for my friend, Coach Tim McFarlin, who led the team this year; and I look forward to watching the Titans bring home many more championships in the future.

The entire football team was present in the Senate Gallery during the recognition and also got their picture taken with Governor Nathan Deal. Blessed Trinity defeated Marist in the 2017 Class AAAA GHS State Football Championship game held December 15, 2017. Blessed Trinity ended the 2017 season as the number one AAAA team in Georgia and number seven team among all schools and classifications in Georgia.



## Legislation

Our first legislative victory of 2018 came on the fifth day of session. House Bill 159, better known as the Adoption Bill, updates adoption laws in Georgia. This legislation passed with bipartisan support and will bring positive and necessary, changes to Georgia's adoption process which has been the same for nearly thirty years.

The bill would clarify who can adopt children, who can act as a parental guardian and the rights of the biological parents. Our goal in crafting this legislation was to always put the child first, and this bill allows parents, family members and close friends the flexibility to do just that.

I have also passed several bills through committees and the Senate to include eliminating tax credits which are not providing a return on investment (ROI).



## Fulton Property Tax Bills

I introduced and passed bills in the Senate to provide a long-term fix to the cities in North Fulton County as well as Fulton County Schools to address the tax assessment fiasco. This legislation will provide a floating homestead exemption or maximum cap of 3% on all three portions of your residential property tax bill. We want our home values to increase, but not at the penalty or expense to our families. This allows everyone to budget and provide the fairness and transparency needed. These bills currently reside in the House of Representatives for passage and then for the Governor's signature. You will have the final say and need to vote in favor of this important change on the November 6th ballot.

# PAYING TOO MUCH PROPERTY



## Honoring Heroes

I was proud to honor Captain Scott Stroup, the crew of Engine Seven and more than 60 firefighters from DeKalb Fire and Rescue on Thursday, January 25, 2018, for their heroic rescue at the Avondale Forest Apartments on January 3, 2018. Captain Stroup is also a member of the Roswell Fire Department. He and Deputy Chief Shane Dobson both participated in the first Roswell Rotary Patriot Flight in 2016.

It was truly an incredible honor to stand with these distinguished heroes in the Senate Chamber. Their selflessness and heroic efforts to save a young girl's life are truly commendable. This group is a wonderful example of all the men and women in fire services who risk their lives each and every day to save Georgia's citizens. They are the true heroes who run into danger when most are running away from it.

On January 3, 2018, a 9-1-1 call reported that a fire had started in the Avondale Forest Apartments. The caller stated that people were trapped on the third floor and needed immediate assistance. This rescue mission became a national story when footage surfaced of Captain Stroup safely catching a little girl that was thrown away from the fire by her father.



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