

PTA

Takes

Action

Advocating for Every Child

Georgia PTA's Legislative Update for January 15, 2012

The 2012 legislative session is underway and PTA advocacy has already begun. Bills held over from last year's session will continue to be followed as will new bills introduced this session. This session promises to be a busy one so to start the year prepared to advocate on a variety of issues, the Georgia PTA adopted the following:

Legislative Priorities:

Support Student Achievement:

- Support multiple criteria be used to determine promotion and retention and not rely on the results of a single test
- Support efforts to increase the graduation rate in Georgia
- Support efforts to increase the age a student can drop out of school
- Support a full-time school nurse in every school and other health initiatives because healthy children learn better

Support Family Engagement:

- Support multiple opportunities for parent/caregiver involvement in decisions regarding school policies and curriculum

Support Adequate Funding for Education:

- Support public K-12 schools with adequate state funding, reflective of the actual costs of providing the state-defined services
- Support equitable distribution of state funding to K-12 schools
- Support public funding for K-12 education in public schools exclusively
- Oppose any efforts to use public funds for private schools

Support Local Control/Local Decision Making:

- Support local property tax and education SPLOST tax revenue be under the control of the local Board of Education
- Support the right of local Boards of Education to manage and control local public schools.

Support Health and Safety:

- Support efforts to reduce bullying
- Support efforts to reduce childhood obesity

We will continue to monitor all legislation that affects children and youth and will provide a weekly summary of new bills and an update on bills that are moving through the legislative process. As always, we invite you to

check the Daily Reports filed by our Education Policy Specialist, Sally FitzGerald, who will provide additional details and insights to legislative and state school board activity. Go to the Georgia PTA website and click on [Capitol Watch](http://www.georgiapta.org). www.georgiapta.org

What Happened this Week:

On the first day of the session in an unprecedented move, the Senate passed two bills and moved forward one that had been tabled last year:

- **SB 184:** Prohibits the local boards of education from using a last hired/first fired policy when a reduction in force (RIF) is in effect.
- **SB 38:** Gives the State Superintendent additional hiring and firing authorization and increases the spending authorization limit from \$50K to \$250K on a transaction.
- **SB 87:** a voucher bill that significantly expands who could receive vouchers was removed from the table and assigned to the Senate Education committee for consideration.

Budget News:

As proposed in the Governor's speech: HOPE recipients will receive the same amounts next year that they received this year. Pre-K will add 10 additional instruction days to bring them up to 170 days.

K-12 enrollment growth will be fully funded with no austerity cuts applied. This hasn't been seen in many years and is a promising indication for the future. Funding for school nurses will have \$3.7M added back. Going forward, school nurses, transportation and school nutrition program funding will be added to the QBE funding (the formula that funds all K-12 education) so that as enrollment grows so will funding for these areas.

More details about the education budget will be revealed next week when the State Superintendent discusses the Department of Education's budget.

New Proposed Legislation:

HB 661: Requires charter schools to comply with the same certification requirements as those required of traditional public schools.

HB 705: Expands the definition of what comprises direct classroom instruction expenditure to include transportation, technology, media centers and guidance counselors making it easier for every school district to be in compliance with the 65% rule.

HB 706: Repeals several sections in Education Title 20 including the one that prohibits the use of personal electronic devices in the classroom. This paves the way for using smart phones and other devices in the classroom allowing teachers to take advantage of technology to enhance instruction.

HB 713: Delays the implementation of career pathways for a year.

HB 731: Parent Trigger Act - A majority of parents at a specially called meeting could petition the local school board to convert the school to a charter. The school must have not made AYP for two years in the same subject, been in existence for 10 years or longer, have lost accreditation or been placed on the step immediately preceding the loss of accreditation.

SB 291: Pre-K program funding would be moved to the general budget by 2013-14 and not be funded from lottery funds.

Important Dates: Mark your calendar and sign up now on the [GA PTA website](#) for:

Feb. 9 - Youth Advocacy Day

Feb. 28 - PTA Day at the Capitol

Karen Hallacy

GA PTA Legislative Chair

Stand Together, Power Up, Reach Out

Your Legislators:

State Senate - [Fran Millar](#) (R-40)

State House - [Scott Holcomb](#) (D-082)