



The Capitol Report February 23rd, 2004

Provided by The Georgia Railroad Association

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As the General Assembly has begun the second half of the 2004 legislative session, a three judge federal panel denied the Attorney General's request for a stay of the court's decision invalidating Georgia's House and Senate district lines. The court had given the state until March 1 to submit new maps or have the districts drawn up by the court. Despite the court's action, lawmakers seem intent on finishing the 40-day session as soon as possible.

Grade crossing liability bill will have a Senate committee hearing.

HB 1254 is now in the Senate Transportation Committee, where a hearing is anticipated February 24. GRA members who know members of the Committee may wish to contact them in support of HB 1254. Members of the Senate Transportation Committee are:

Tommie Williams of Lyons, Chairman
Don Cheeks of Augusta
Ginger Collins of Marietta
Liane Levetan of Decatur
Charlie Tanksley of Marietta

Mike Crofts of Conyers, V. Chairman
Joey Brush of Martinez
Nathan Dean of Rockmart
Valencia Seay of College Park
Steve Thompson of Powder Springs

Rep. Mickey Channell who introduced the bill in the House will present it before the Senate Transportation Committee. When the bill is on the floor of the Senate, Sen. Crofts is expected to carry the bill.

Railroad Injury bill to have a hearing before a House subcommittee.

A bill setting vague standards and harsh penalties relating to job-related injuries of railroad workers is expected to get a hearing this week in the Workplace Safety subcommittee of the House Industrial Relations Committee. HB 1324 would provide that "it shall be unlawful for a railroad company to deny or otherwise interfere with medical treatment for an employee who is injured during the course of his or her employment." Subcommittee members:

Karla Drenner of DeKalb, Chairman
Mike Barnes of Hampton
Mark Butler of Carrollton
Ron Stephens of Garden City
Rob Teilhet of Atlanta

Mike Coan of Lawrenceville
Barbara Bunn of Conyers
David Ralston of Blue Ridge
Curt Thompson of Norcross

GRA members who know members of this committee may wish to contact them.

Bill Status Report

SB 325 by Harp of Midland would amend Title 46 relating to operation of trains so as to provide that no railroad shall operate remote controlled locomotives. A carryover bill from 2003. Still in Senate Transportation Committee.

HB 1022 by McCall of Elberton would make technical corrections and eliminate antiquated sections of current law governing railroads. The bill deletes from the Georgia code those provisions preempted by federal law, as well as out-dated references to steam engines. For reasons that remain unclear, railroad unions are opposing this bill. Approved by House Transportation Committee and now on House General Calendar.

HB 1254 by Channell of Greensboro specifies that railroads have no legal obligation to petition for closure of a grade crossing, and that local governments have no legal obligation to approve a petition for closures of a grade crossing. Passed House and now in Senate Transportation Committee.

HB 1235 by Roberts of Ocilla would broaden the truck weight variances allowed for agricultural products. Current law provides for limited weight variances on county roads for forest products, live poultry, cotton, feed, granite, solid waste and concrete. HB 1235 would allow a 10% variance from the weight limits for all agricultural products within a 150 mile radius of the farm. The bill is still in the House Transportation Committee.

HB 1324 by Watson of Decatur would make it unlawful for a railroad to "to deny, delay, or interfere with medical treatment or first aid to an employee injured on the job. It would also be unlawful for a railroad to discipline or threaten discipline to an employee for requesting medical treatment. Still in House Industrial Relations Committee.

2004 Associate Members

The following associate members have joined GRA or renewed their membership for 2004.

Adams Warnock, Inc.	A & K Railroad Materials, Inc.
Century Group	Crouch Engineering
Full Service Railroad Consulting, Inc	Georgia Operation Lifesaver
Georgia Rail Consultants	Koppers Inc.
Healey Railroad Corporation	Lanier Steel Products, Inc.
Neel-Schaffer, Inc.	Palmer & Cay of Georgia, Inc.
Performance Railway Services	Pointer Smith Contracting
Progress Rail	Rail Training & Consulting
Southern Rail Leasing	Tifton Terminal Railway Museum
Trinity Rail Group	Zurich North America

GRA Membership dues are due March 1, 2004. GRA members are reminded that the GRA website, featuring links to associate members, is the best place to shop for goods and services. Go to www.georgiarailroad.org and search for goods and services by category.