



The Capitol Report March 10th, 2006

Provided by The Georgia Railroad Association

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Monday will be the 30th legislative day for the Georgia General Assembly, marking the deadline for bills to clear their House of origin. After Monday, just ten legislative days will remain. Expect adjournment sine die before April 1.

Bill Status Report

HB 715 - Substitute version of this bill would require each local school district to survey their established bus routes annually. The school district is then required to submit to the Department of Transportation a list identifying each rail crossing that does not have active warning devices. As originally introduced, this bill would have required placement of lights, bells and gates at grade crossings used by school busses. The substitute passed the House Transportation Committee, but remained in the Rules Committee and will not be considered further.

HB 1106 - would exempt trucks hauling construction aggregates from penalties for exceeding axle weights. The exemption would not apply to trucks exceeding the 80,000 pound gross weight limit. Recommitted to Senate Transportation committee. It is expected to come out of committee next week.

HB 1275 - This GRA proposed legislation provides for the revocation of the commercial driver's license for a minimum of one year to a maximum of three years of anyone convicted of cargo theft from a railroad or other common carrier. The bill passed the House and is now in the Senate Transportation committee.

HB 1313 - The House Judiciary Committee this week approved yet another substitute version of the administration's eminent domain bill. HB 1313 provides that neither the state nor local governments shall use eminent domain unless it is necessary for public use. The bill further provides that "The public benefit of economic development shall not constitute a public use." This bill will likely be on the House calendar on Monday.

HB 1359 - The House will consider on Monday this bill to create the "Georgia Assignment Pool Underwriting Authority." The bill would provide that when claims exceed premiums collected from subscribers, self-insured employers shall be assessed an amount not to exceed \$2.00 per covered person per month. Multiply the number of covered employees and dependents by two dollars and then multiply by 12 months, and many self insured employers would have a six or seven figure increase in the cost of their group health plans.

HB 1588 -- GRA proposed legislation that would prohibit anyone from adversely possessing property from a railroad company. The bill was introduced too late in the session to expect any movement. However it will initiate dialogue between potential supporters and opponents. It is GRA's goal to work out any concerns during the off-session and come back in 2007 with an agreed upon bill.

HR 1464 – The Ways & Means Committee approved Chairman Larry O'Neal's resolution to create the "House Comprehensive Tax Reform Study Committee." The Resolution is now on the House General Calendar.

HR 1537 –resolution creating a House Study Committee on Rail Crossing Safety. The study committee would primarily look at school bus safety at railroad grade crossings. Currently in House Transportation Railway Subcommittee and apparently dead for this year.

SB 285 –a GRA bill to repeal antiquated portions of the Georgia code relating to railroads as well as provisions that have been pre-empted by federal law. Passed the Senate in 2005 and now in House Transportation sub- committee. GRA will attempt to move this bill during the final 10 days of the session.

SB 529 – The Senate passed the "Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act" this week by a vote of 40-13. This comprehensive measure will regulate illegal aliens. The only provision related to employers would deny deductibility for state income tax purposes of wages paid to illegal aliens. Employers would not be penalized for reliance on identification and employment authorization documents such as the Federal I-9 form.

Announcements:

- Welcome, to new GRA member, Southern Electric Railroad Co., which serves the Georgia Power plant in McIntosh. T. Roy Harrell will represent Southern Electric Railroad on the GRA Board of Directors.
- Congratulations to former GRA President Ben Tarbutton, III of the Sandersville Railroad on his appointment to the Board of Regents for the University System of Georgia.
- Associate members need to elect a Board member to replace Dave Sprinkle whose term expires in June. The nomination process will end March 20. If you wish to run you must be aware of the two year commitment. You will be asked to participate in all conferences, board meetings and assist the planning committee for the Annual Conference held each spring. Please submit your nominations to Wilbon Etheridge at wilbone@railcarmgt.com
- Janet Doyle, formerly with Progress Rail passed away this week after a two year battle with cancer. She leaves behind a husband and two young children. GRA extends our deepest sympathy to the Doyle family.

2006 Associate Members – Thanks to the following companies for their support of the Georgia Railroad Association.

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Mark your calendars for the GRA Spring Conference
May 31 – June 2 at Lake Lanier Islands.

GRA members are reminded that information on the goods and services of associate members is available on the web site, www.georgiarailroad.org.

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