



*LEGISLATIVE Update*

*January 22, 2019*

### 2019 Brings Changes to State Government

#### **Week 1 Review**

New legislators were sworn in as the 2019 Georgia General Assembly convened on January 14<sup>th</sup>. Later that day, Governor Brian Kemp was inaugurated as the 83<sup>rd</sup> governor while Geoff Duncan was sworn in as the 12<sup>th</sup> Lt. Governor at an impressive ceremony held at McCamish Pavilion on the Georgia Tech campus.

After the closest race for governor in Georgia since 1994, Governor Kemp used his Inaugural Address, 'Eggs and Issues', and State of the State addresses to reach out to his political foes and placed a focus upon education and public safety issues. The busy week of outreach followed a transition period where the Governor appointed many agency heads and his office staff. The Governor chose Tim Fleming as the Chief of Staff. Other executives from the Secretary of State's office such as Chuck Harper (Deputy Chief of Staff), Lorri Smith (COO), Kelly Farr (OPB), and Lisa Durden (Appointments), joined respected veterans such as Greg Dozier (CFO) and former State Representative Mark Hamilton (External Affairs) on the Governor's staff.

Lt. Duncan built upon his General Election victory with a significant caucus vote that allowed his office to retain the traditional powers through the five member 'Committee on Assignments' consisting of LG Duncan, President Pro Tem Butch Miller, Majority Leader Mike Dugan, and Senators Bill Cowsert and Blake Tillery. Duncan further solidified his position by appointing an impressive staff including

Chip Lake as Chief of Staff and veteran House member Mike Dudgeon as his Policy Advisor.

The Senate remains solidly Republican with a 35-21 majority, but the margin narrowed as the Democrats flipped two seats in the metro area and held on to another Atlanta seat that the Republicans had previously held.

In the House, Speaker Ralston, Speaker Pro Tem Jan Jones, House Appropriations Chairman Terry England, and House Transportation Chair Kevin Tanner continue to lead from those positions. However, with the passing of Rep. John Meadows, Rep. Jay Powell (R-Camilla) is the new Rules Committee Chairman, and Rep. Brett Harrell assumes the Chair of the Ways and Means Committee.

The Democrats picked up a net of 11 seats in the House, but the Republicans retained a majority of 105-75.

### **General Assembly Overview**

This year, the session is getting off to a slow start with the first week, which was largely transitional and ceremonial, followed by this week's budget recess.

Furthermore, the initial scheduling resolution has the legislature in for three days (Mon., Tues. and Wed.) the week of January 28<sup>th</sup>, followed by a Tuesday through Friday schedule for the week of Feb 4<sup>th</sup>, with Friday, February 8<sup>th</sup> being Legislative Day 11.

The General Assembly is limited to 40 legislative days and the annual session normally ends around the first week in April.

### **GRA Issues**

The GRA Board is set to finalize the 2019-2020 agenda which will consist of seeking elimination of the sales tax on diesel used in locomotives, supporting smooth implementation of the short line tax credits, and opposing truck weight increases. The GRA looks forward to working with its members, allies, and the General Assembly on these important issues.