



News From

Rep. Rick Crawford

House District 16

December 2011

Dear Neighbors,

I have been honored to serve as your State Representative since being elected in 2006. Growing up on my grandfather's farm in the Antioch community, I learned early on about faith, family, hard work and community. When I cast a vote in the House of Representatives, I always keep in mind the values we share.

I am married to the former Susan Pinkard of Rockmart, and we live in the Fish Creek community with our daughter Janae and our son Parker. 2011 has been a hectic year in our household after I made a career change, leaving my law practice of nearly 20 years to become a political science professor at Shorter University.

I am sending this newsletter in an effort to keep you informed on the happenings in your legislature. During the 2012 legislative session, which begins January 9, I will resume sending weekly reports to the local newspapers. Should you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

Again, thank you for the honor of representing you in the Georgia House of Representatives.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Rick



Rep. Rick Crawford (left) and House Speaker David Ralston (right) welcome Blake Dodd (second from right), then a Cedartown High School senior, who served as Chaplain of the Day in the House of Representatives during the 2011 session, along with (L-R) his grandmother Sherry Jackson, brother Wes Dodd and mother Mia Dodd.

New law strengthens immigration enforcement

Approved during the 2011 legislative session, HB 87 requires businesses with at least 10 employees to use the E-Verify system to determine the work eligibility of all new hires and empowers local and state police to detain people accused of other offenses while their immigration status is checked. The new law also increases the penalty for using fake identification to get a job and cracks down on those who, while committing another offense, harbor or encourage illegal immigrants to come to Georgia. Other major issues from the 2011 session include:



HOPE Scholarship Changes:

HB 326 reduces the benefits for most HOPE Scholars to 90 percent of their tuition, and that percentage could increase or decrease in future years based on the rise or fall of lottery funds. Students with a high school grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.7 and at least

a 1,200 on the SAT and are able to maintain a 3.3 GPA in college will retain full HOPE benefits for tuition.

Full-Day Pre-K: Responding to the voices of educators, parents and lawmakers from across the state, Gov. Deal reversed course on his proposal to reduce the instruction day for Georgia's pre-kindergarten program from 6.5 hours to 4 hours. His new proposal, which became part of the 2012 state budget, restores the full-day program and instead shortens the Pre-K year from 180 days to 160.

Sunday Alcohol Sales: SB 10 authorizes the Sunday package sale of alcoholic beverages in communities where voters approve such sales in a referendum.

Public Safety: SB 36 establishes an electronic database to monitor the dispensing of prescription pain killers, which are often widely abused. SB 88 requires the use of a child booster seat up to age 8, with an exemption for children who are taller than 4 feet, 9 inches.

Rep. Rick Crawford

House District 16

P.O. Box C

Cedartown, GA 30125

Phone: 770-748-4090

E-mail: rickcrawford@bellsouth.net

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MAJOR ISSUES FOR 2012

The 2012 session of the Georgia General Assembly will convene Monday, January 9. Major issues on the agenda include:

Tax Reform: Sweeping tax reform legislation introduced in 2011 never reached a vote in the House when it was pointed out the changes would result in higher taxes for many Georgians. Proposed changes include large tax breaks for corporations and tax increases on Georgia families in the form of reinstating the 4 percent state sales tax on food and expanding the sales tax to certain services.

Transportation, replace paragraph:

Transportation: A proposal has been made to change the election date for the regional sales tax (T-SPLOST) vote from July to November. If approved, the tax would be levied in the regions where approved by the voters and pay for transportation improvements in those regions over the next 10 years.



Criminal Justice: A special council has recommended an increased use of probation and flexibility in sentencing for non-violent offenders. This is largely in response to our increasing prison population.

Requirements for Assistance: Legislation has been introduced to require drug testing for those receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits. A separate proposal would require those receiving unemployment benefits to complete 24 hours of community service each week.

School Funding: Lawmakers will consider recommendations on revising the state funding formula for local public school systems. State funding has been cut by billions of dollars over the past nine years.

Right to Life Amendment: I am the primary sponsor of a proposed constitutional amendment declaring that the paramount right to life begins at the moment of conception. This will require a two-thirds vote in both the House and Senate and be approved by the voters to become law.

Polk County Homestead Exemption: Legislation I authored to protect Polk homeowners passed the House in 2011 and is now pending in the Senate. This legislation creates an additional homestead exemption to offset the difference whenever the assessed value is raised by more than 10 percent. It also protects seniors with very low incomes by exempting the first \$75,000 of their home's value from taxes. These changes would apply to both county and school property taxes. This legislation must pass the Senate and be approved by Polk voters in 2012 in order to take effect.



Rep. Crawford and Speaker Ralston congratulate Kimberly McGuinness, chair of the Georgia School for the Deaf School Council and 2010 recipient of the Presidential Citizens Medal, during a special recognition in the House of Representatives during the 2011 session. Also pictured is Kimberly's daughter Julia, then a student at GSD.

GEORGIA REDISTRICTING UPDATE

In an August special session, the legislature adopted new boundaries for Georgia's House, Senate and Congressional districts.

Under the plan, Polk County would remain intact in the 16th House District. However, the 16th House District would lose the current Floyd County precincts and pick up some precincts from Bartow and Haralson counties. Polk County would continue to make up about three fourths of the new population in the new district.

The redistricting plan is currently undergoing a required review by the U.S. Justice Department and a federal court challenge to determine compliance with the Voter Rights Act. Depending on the outcome of these reviews, changes could be required.

Redistricting at the federal, state and local levels is required every 10 years following a U.S. Census count to ensure that citizens have equal representation in the legislative branch of government.