



2017 SESSION OF THE GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

VETO MESSAGES

VETO NUMBERS 1 AND 2

HB 131 and HB 132 House Bills 131 and 132 relate to repealing the constitutional amendment creating the Fulton County Industrial District (FCID) and then annexing the property into the City of South Fulton. The FCID is the only portion of Fulton County that remains unincorporated after the creation of the City of South Fulton in 2016. The FCID, however, cannot be annexed by any municipality due to a pre-existing local constitutional amendment to the Constitution of Georgia and enabling legislation. There has been continued debate between the City of Atlanta and the City of South Fulton as to which city this district should belong, the cities and property owners involved, though, need to first come to an agreement to determine the future of the FCID. For the foregoing reasons, **I hereby VETO HB 131 and HB 132.**

VETO NUMBER 3

HB 174 House Bill 174 expands the permissible medium of payment allowed under insurance policies. Currently, Georgia law provides that it shall be unlawful for any insurer to provide in a policy or contract of insurance that the amount of any loss or indemnity accruing thereunder shall be payable in anything other than legal tender of the United States. O.C.G.A. § 33-24-43. To be clear, this statute does not prevent alternative methods of payment that are not legal tender of the United States when the insured accepts such payment as satisfaction of a claim—such a statute would be impractical and in need of serious revisions—rather, the statute refers to forms of payments that an insured would be *legally required* to accept in accordance with their policy. HB 174 would expand this statute, permitting insurers to contractually require payment of claims via forms other than legal tender including general use gift cards, thereby compelling an insured to accept such a form of payment. A general use gift card is not an appropriate means of payment for most losses or indemnities which may accrue under an insurance policy as, generally, this form of payment is not deductible to cash, its value cannot be deposited into a bank account, there are no or few recourses for a lost or stolen value card, and the card may be subject to expenditure limits with retailers. For the foregoing reasons, **I hereby VETO HB 174.**



VETO NUMBER 4

HB 359 House Bill 359, while well intentioned, creates a parallel and unchecked system to our Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), unintentionally placing children at risk. The Power of Attorney created by HB 359 allows parents and “agents” to go around the well-established confines of legal adoption and/or our child welfare system, granting a power of attorney for a child to an individual, or even a non-profit corporation, with no oversight. The state has dedicated significant resources to the Department of Family and Children Services during my time as Governor in order to improve the safety and outcomes for children in foster care. The state should consider all options that help in streamlining the process for a child to be adopted, placed into a loving home, or improved foster care environment; however, creating a parallel system in which DFCS has no oversight runs contrary to the progress the state has made in strengthening our child welfare system.

In light of the fact that a comprehensive rewrite to the adoption code failed to pass this year, I encourage the Leadership of both chambers, supporters of this legislation, and the child welfare advocacy community to work together over the next year in crafting legislation that continues to strengthen our existing system and streamlines the processes of adoption so that children may reach permanency more quickly. I believe a comprehensive foster care/adoption reform legislative package is in Georgia’s best interests in 2018. For the foregoing reasons, **I hereby VETO HB 359.**

VETO NUMBER 5

HB 425 House Bill 425 encourages the State Board of Education to implement assessment opt-out procedures and encourages the allowance of paper-and-pencil formats for such assessments. First, as I stated in my veto of SB 133 last year, local school districts currently have the flexibility to determine opt-out procedures for students who cannot, or choose not to, take these statewide assessments and I see no need to impose an additional layer of state-level procedures for these students. Additionally, encouraging the administration of assessments in paper-and-pencil format impedes the state’s priorities of returning test data to districts as quickly as possible, and reducing the opportunity for cheating. For the foregoing reasons, **I hereby VETO HB 425.**



VETO NUMBERS 6 AND 7

HB 439 and HB 440 House Bill 439 de-annexes two parcels of land from the City of Atlanta. House Bill 440 then annexes these two parcels into the City of Sandy Springs. I do not feel that these bills received the proper amount of discussion during the legislative session and require more time for all parties to discuss the effects of these bills. For the foregoing reasons, **I hereby VETO HB 439 and HB 440.**

VETO NUMBER 8

SB 125 Senate Bill 125 authorizes physicians to delegate their authority to prescribe hydrocodone compound products to physician assistants. This language would add several thousand prescribers to our healthcare system and, as a result, create the potential for hundreds of thousands more opioid prescriptions to be issued. Like many other states, Georgia is currently in the grips of an opioid abuse epidemic and this change is incongruent with the state's efforts to quell that problem. For the foregoing reasons, **I hereby VETO SB 125.**

VETO NUMBER 9

SB 222 Senate Bill 222 creates the Local Government 9-1-1 Authority and makes significant changes to the fee collection and disbursement process for local public service answering points. The authority created by SB 222 is a quasi-independent authority with little oversight from, or coordination with, the state. The lack of oversight could lead to obvious negative consequences stemming from the absence of accountability, and further the lack of state coordination could hamper local and state joint responses in emergency situations. Finally, the bill states that the authority, executive director, and staff would be appointed or hired after July 1, 2017, but fees collected that fund the authority would not be collected until July 1, 2019. This would result in a two year period with no funding for the authority or its staff.

I do, however, believe that public service answering points are essential for the effective operation of police, firefighting, and ambulance services. In order to keep the 9-1-1 reform process moving, I plan, by executive order, to establish a Local Government 9-1-1 Authority to be housed at the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMHSA). Additionally, I will be creating and appointing the position of executive director for this authority to oversee the day-to-day operations. In order to have a better state-wide public safety



communications network and 9-1-1 service it is necessary to locate this authority within GEMHSA, which handles all other aspects of emergency management for the state. I look forward to working with the General Assembly next year to codify the executive order and enact additional measures to strengthen 9-1-1 services throughout the state. For the foregoing reasons, **I hereby VETO SB 222.**