

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



Special Session Snap-Shot



By Dawn A. Randolph, MPA

I am about to have my fifth State Senator and third State Representative all with different District numbers. With a mobile society one would think I had moved a lot. But no, I have lived in the same area for 20 years in two different homes only 3 miles apart. Why so many different elected officials you wonder? One word - reapportionment.

Here is a summary of what took place during the Special Session. I am sure each person reading this is wondering now who their representative will be or could be after the next election. You can go to the [Reapportionment Committees Website](#) to view each map and get the technical statistics. If you really want to have fun you can go to the [technical page](#) and view in [Google Earth](#). This is really quite interesting because it includes demographical statistics.

Anyone unable to click the links above can paste the URL into your browser:

http://www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011_12/house/Committees/reapportionment/gahlcrMaps.html

<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Joint/reapportionment/en-US/default.aspx>

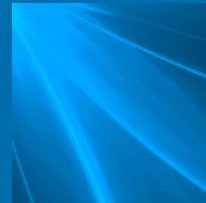
<http://www.google.com/earth/download/ge/agree.html>

Georgia has been a fast growing state and each time we have gone through a Census we have had to move the district lines around to account for the change in population causing a fast changing political environment. The redistricting process in Georgia is compounded

In This Issue

[Special Session](#)

Special
Announcements



State Use Council

Sept. 22, 2011

9:30AM - Tour

10:00AM - Council
Meeting

Location: Recycletronics,
7000 Cobb International Blvd.,
Kennesaw, GA 30152
(770-426-1700)

GATES Board Meeting

October 21, 2011

9:30AM

Location: Goodwill
Industries of Southern

because we are being watched very closely by the US Justice Department to ensure compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to protect the rights of voters in the minority. During each political redistricting there has been a lawsuit by one or the other party to counter against the lines and the impact on the voting rights of various segments of the population or the obscure gerrymandering trying to place voters into more favorable district for an incumbent legislator or member of Congress.

This year the process was entirely directed by the Georgia Republican Leadership in the House and Senate for the first time since Reconstruction. Maps were released on August 12th, the Friday before the Governor called the special session to start August 15th. As expected the new districts strongly protected the majority party, as they had in previous times when the Democratic Party was in control. This has always been a political process first and foremost in which the majority party tries to maintain or grow control by creating favorable districts during election time.

As a quick reminder there are 180 in the House with the current composition at 117 Republicans, 62 Democrats and 1 Independent. The Senate has 56 Senators with 36 Republican and 20 Democrats. Looking at the House first there was plenty of anger from Democrats when the maps were unveiled. The top complaint was the merger of several incumbent white women Democrats with African-American Democrats primarily in the Atlanta Metro area. The House map places 20 incumbents into 10 House Districts, 12 of those are Democrats and 8 are Republicans. This may potentially lower the projected Democratic seats from 63 to 57 and create a super majority with as many as 123 seats for the House Republicans. That would give the Republican Party in the House a 2/3 vote on all legislation, including constitutional amendments. The House passed its map by a vote of 108-64 with no changes on Thursday, August 18th.

The Senate moved simultaneously with the House in passing its own redistricting map. The new map could result in the Republican majority picking up two seats for 38 members of its caucus and the Democrats holding the 18 remaining seats. This map also passed easily by a vote of 35-18 in the Senate. The most glaring change is the merging of Senator George Hooks (D-Americus), the longest serving member with Senator Freddie Powell Sims (D-Dawson) into a minority-majority district.

Each Chamber than passed the other Chambers map with no changes early the next week and moved on to the Congressional maps.

Due to population growth, Georgia will pick up one Congressional seat to go from 13 members to 14. The new map can be viewed at the same location as the legislative maps on the Websites above. Since the population grew the most in the northern part of the state, the map reflects a new district (District 9) around Hall County with no incumbent. While at the same time it knocks out Rep. John Barrow (D-District 12) from his home in Savannah giving that area to Rep. Jack

Rivers Columbus, GA

**State Use Council
Mtg**

January 26, 2012

10:00AM

Location: Sloppy Floyd
Bldg. Atlanta, GA

**GATES Board
Meeting**

February 3, 2012

9:30AM

Location: Tommy
Nobis Center, Marietta,
GA

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*Charles Hall,
chall@asginfo.net*

Kingston (R-District 1). This change drops the minority African-American population from 43% to 34% in the new 12th District. Rep. Barrow said he would move from Savannah to a new location in the newly drawn district and run on his independent record. He could be joined by several Republican current legislators. The list is getting longer every day with names such as Rep. Ben Harbin (R-Evans), Rep. Lee Anderson (R-Grovetown), Rep. Jon Burns (R-Newington) and Senator Greg Goggans (R-Douglas).

In other parts of the state Congressmen are deciding where they will run and we will see many people flirt with the idea before they have to make a commitment during qualifying next spring. There will be many current and former legislators eyeing this new opportunity but it is too early to tell how it will all line up. The way the Congressional Maps are drawn they favor a 10-4 split with 10 Republicans and 4 African-American male Democrats if incumbency holds.

The Governor has already signed the House and Senate maps. He should be signing the Congressional map shortly. This is certainly not the end of this battle. It is certain the Democratic Party and citizens in various parts of the state will challenge the maps in court. First the new maps must be reviewed and receive pre-clearance from the US Dept of Justice or Governor Deal could file a lawsuit in federal court to by-pass the review. However, Governor Deal has indicated he will probably work with the Justice Department first. In terms of majority-minority districts the new State House map moves them from 42 to 49 and the Senate districts from 14 to 15. In some of the newly formed districts minorities comprise as much as 72% of the population. House Minority Leader Stacey Abrams (D-Atlanta) fears the state has been re-segregated and Senator Carter stated; "The majority party wants to destroy districts where multi-racial collations in Georgia elect Democrats". While both Senator Mitch Seabaugh (R-Sharpsburg) and Rep. Roger Lane (R-Darien), chairs of the Reapportionment Committees, believe the majority party has complied with the Voting Rights Act, which only protects majority-minority districts. In the end a court battle will ensue and time can only tell what that will mean for November 2012.

The legislature was also allowed to take up two other issues. The first was approving the suspension of the gas tax increase that Governor Deal put on hold in late June. The tax was set to increase 1.6 cents because of the increase in gas prices. Both chambers approved unanimously. The second was to move the T-SPLOST (Transportation - Special Local Option Sales Tax) from a July primary vote to a November General Election Vote. However, several factors began to emerge with one group wanting all tax issues, including those by local governments, moved to November. The local governments however prefer to hold their tax referendums at other times. Many legislators have served in local government and realized the issue was not viable for county and city governments. So they issue fell to the wayside due to a lack of understanding to build a consensus to pass the date change. This issue will certainly be taken up again during the regular session come January.

The Special Session Adjourned on August 31, 2001. In just sixteen days, the shortest time ever, they passed three maps that will set the tone of Georgia's political environment for the next decade.

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Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports

44 Broad Street
Suite 503
Atlanta, GA 30303
Phone: 404-523-6674

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