WEEKLY FORECAST: Warm days

Barbara Massey-Reece column: March 31

State Rep. Barbara Massey Reece Mar 31, 2010 💂



In the Wake of Another School

Shooting, Here's ...

In the past week, several Georgia hospital organizations announced their decision to support Gov. Perdue's proposal for a provider tax to offset the state's Medicaid deficit. For two years, the health care community and most legislators have opposed the governor's "bed tax" proposal.

The hospital leaders who have changed their positions apparently decided the tax was the lesser of two evils when compared to the governor's other recommendation of a 10.25 percent decrease in Medicaid reimbursements and reinstatement of the sales tax on nonprofit hospitals.

On March 26, a majority of the House of Representatives approved a revised version of HB 307, which would impose a 1.45 percent tax (reduced from the original proposal of 1.6 percent) on the net revenues of hospitals. Ambulatory surgical centers, critical access and psychiatric hospitals would be exempt. Under the legislation, the tax would expire on June 30, 2013. I voted for

the legislation because of the hospitals' agreement and the fact that it will bring in federal matching funds. FLOYD is now

HE BOOTH: ALEX ANTHOPOULOS Tax Reform Council The House voted 111-55 to approve legislation that would create a "tax reform council" made up largely of Republican officials,

legislative committees having a chance to review or amend them. I voted against the bill because of the partisan makeup of the council and the fact that removing the legislative committee process would reduce the role of the people's elected representatives in these very important decisions. 'Cross-Over Day' Action With only 10 days remaining in the 2010 session, House members dealt with a lengthy legislative agenda last week, including 15

including the current governor, and business interest representatives to review and recommend changes to the state's tax code. Under HB 1405, the recommendations for tax law changes would go straight to the House and Senate floors for a vote, without

hours on the House floor Friday, which was "cross-over day," the final day of the session for House bills to be approved in time to be considered by the Senate. Legislation approved and sent to the Senate included: - HB 938, which makes texting while driving illegal for drivers of all ages.

- HB 1019, which would allow citizens who live in areas affected by natural disasters to have their state documents, such as

marriage and hunting licenses, replaced at no charge within 60 days of the disaster in which they were lost.

- HB 1020 and HR 1203, which would allow school systems to use education special purpose local option sales tax (E-SPLOST) revenue for maintenance and operation expenses or to reduce property taxes. Currently, E-SPLOST money can only be used for construction projects. As a constitutional amendment, HR 1203 still needs two-thirds approval by the Senate and must be approved by the voters in November.

- HB 1023, which would give a small tax credit to businesses that hire unemployed workers. The legislation would also reduce the state capital gains tax if the state has \$1 billion in reserves.

- HB 1055, which would raise more than 80 fees charged by various agencies, bringing in an estimated \$96 million in increased revenues. These increases would affect a variety of services and permits ranging from business licenses to specialty car tags to

fireworks displays. I voted against this measure because of its effect on small businesses. Many of these permits or fees are for

services provided by counties. For example, the bill increases the filing fee for Superior Court and State Court by \$100, with the revenue going to the state's general fund, even though counties pay all the cost of State Court and half the cost of Superior Court. - HB 1059, which would allow yard trimmings to be sorted for recycling at licensed landfills. - HB 1184, which would allow Georgians to purchase health insurance across state lines. No amendments were allowed on this

bill. I spoke on the fact that 715,000 Georgians are diagnosed with diabetes, and another 350,000 have the disease but are undiagnosed. Currently, insurance companies are required to cover supplies, equipment, and education on disease management

programs. This will not be a requirement for out of state insurance companies selling in Georgia if this bill becomes law. Many other coverages will also be dropped, including screening tests for early detection of cancer. The public will need to be very careful in making sure insurance they purchase covers all their needs. Cordialmente le invitamos a la Iglesia Evangélica Shalom

"UNA COMUNIDAD DE FE El Culto de Adoración (en español) En las instalaciones de West Rome Baptist Church 914 Shorter Ave. NW • Rome, Georgia 30165 Favor de visitar a nuestro sitio de red o nuestra página de Facebook @iglesiashalom.rome - HB 1196, which would prohibit local governments from enacting building codes that require the installation of fire sprinklers in single-family residences or residential buildings with no more than two dwelling units.

- HB 1199, which would allow the Department of Natural Resources to undertake several privatization efforts, including the sale of state parks' naming rights to corporate sponsors.

- HB 1242, which would subject state Transportation Board members to the same ethics disclosure rules as legislators. Merger Rejected

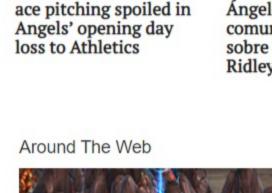
- HB 1233, which would authorize the Public Service Commission to charge utilities for fees paid to expert witnesses in rate

After a lengthy debate, House members voted to soundly reject a proposal by Gov. Perdue that would have merged the state Department of Corrections and the Board of Pardons & Paroles. HB 1030 was defeated by a vote of 100 in opposition to 59 in favor.

Rep. Reece may be reached at 404-656-7859 or barbara.reece@house.ga.gov. Rep. Reece serves on the Education Committee, State Institutions and Properties Committee, Science and Technology Committee, and the Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment Committee. She is also Secretary of the Rural Caucus.

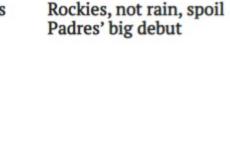
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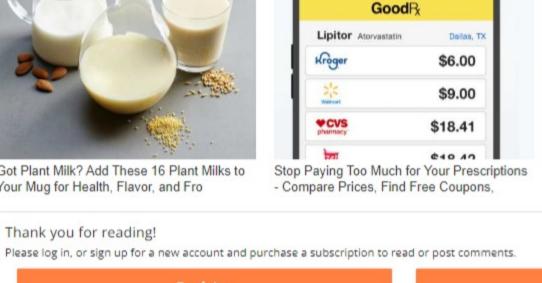
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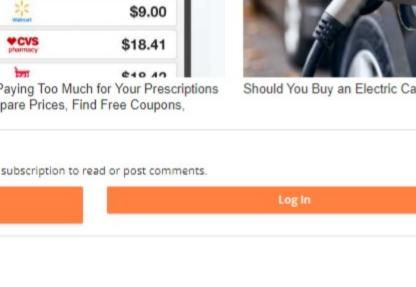
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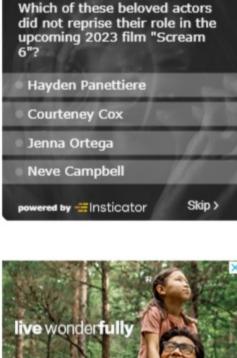
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