



CAPITAL RETAIL REPORT



December 4, 2009

"When Retail Works, Georgia Works"

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STATE ISSUES

Gwinnett County Property Taxes to Increase

If you have a store or distribution center in Gwinnett County you are going to receive an additional property tax bill in the first quarter of 2010. By a 4-1 vote, county commissioners approved a nearly 21 percent increase in its share of property taxes on Tuesday, December 1, 2009. The action means that for every \$100,000 of assessed value you will be billed another \$80 dollars.

Georgia House Speaker Submits Resignation



On Thursday, December 4, following a rocky month that included an attempted suicide and evidence provided by his ex-wife that collaborated rumors of an affair with a utility lobbyist, Representative Glenn Richardson, a Republican from Hiram, Georgia, announced his resignation as Speaker of House of the Georgia General Assembly. He will also resign as Representative from House District 19, both effective on January 1, 2010.

Susan and Glenn Richardson divorced in 2008. In a TV interview earlier this week, she said her ex-husband became irate when she started dating and sent her threatening text and phone messages last month when she left their children with him for a weekend and went away with a new boyfriend. She added that her ex-husband threatened to beat her up and to have state law enforcement track her down. She also said his suicide attempt was an effort to gain attention and persuade her to reconcile with him.

House President Pro Tempore Mark Burkhalter (pictured above left) will assume the role as Speaker until a new election can be held. That election must be held within 120 days.

It is commonly held that Burkhalter will serve as Speaker through the 2010 Session and that current House Majority Leader, Representative Jerry Keen from St. Simons Island will be elected as the third Republican Speaker since reconstruction.



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Ex-State Senator Kasim Reed Atlanta's New Mayor



Former State Senator Kasim Reed has emerged as the probable winner of the runoff election between Reed and city council member Mary Norwood. Reed leads Norwood by 758 votes out of a total of more than 83,000 cast – a margin of 0.92 percent. The hotly contested election, where race became an issue, drew 11,000 more voters than the general election in November.

Since the margin is less than one percent Norwood will ask for a recount as allowed under state statute.

Senator Pre-Files A Health Care Choice Measure



[SR 794 - Health Care Freedom of Choice Constitutional Amendment](#) and [HR 1086 – Would Disallow Compelling Participation Health Care System](#)

State Senator Judson Hill from Marietta, Georgia and State Representative Calvin Hill from Canton, Georgia have pre-filed legislation that would protect a person's right to make their own health care choices. The legislation would preserve the rights of individuals to pay directly for medical care - something not allowed in single-payer countries such as Canada - and prohibits any individual from being penalized for not purchasing government-defined insurance.

The measures would require a constitutional amendment, needing the approval of both two-thirds of the Senate and House before being placed on the ballot before the voters in 2010.

Called the Health Care Freedom of Choice Constitutional Amendment, the legislation was modeled after the American Legislative Exchange Council's (ALEC) Freedom of Choice in Health Care Act, which protects the individual rights of patients to obtain the health insurance of their choosing and to pay directly for medical care. Georgia joins the ranks of legislators from 14 other states who have already filed or pre-filed similar legislation. Legislators in another 10 states have publicly announced their intention to file the legislation. The legislation passed in Arizona earlier this year, Hill said.



http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2009_10/fulltext/sr794.htm

http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2009_10/fulltext/hr1086.htm

EnergySTAR Rebate Program Set for Presidents' Day

The federally funded EnergySTAR Appliance Rebate program being administered in Georgia by GEFA, the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, will begin President's Day, February 15, 2010 and will continue until all rebate funds are exhausted.



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To prepare retailers for that promotion GEFA will be hosting a webinar to explain the State Appliance Rebate Program guidelines and procedures on December 15, 2009. I will send a link for this event out to you as soon as it is available from GEFA.

As we reported to you on September 5th, the purpose of the program is to save energy and stimulate the economy by encouraging consumers to replace old appliances with new ENERGY STAR qualified models. This program is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and a total of \$9,293,000 has been allocated for Georgia.

Products covered by the rebate program and the amount of rebate appears below.

Products to be Rebated	Rebate Level	Products to be Rebated	Rebate Level
Clothes Washer (7/1/09)	\$50	Water Heaters	
Clothes Washer (1/11/11)	\$99	Gas Condensing	\$99
Dishwasher (8/11/09)	\$50	Electric Heat Pump	\$199
Dishwasher (7/1/11)	\$99	Gas Storage (1/1/09)	\$50
Room Air Conditioners	\$30	Gas Storage (9/1/10)	\$99
Central Air Conditioner	\$99	Gas Tankless	\$199
Air Source Heat Pump	\$199	Solar – Electric	\$199
Oil Furnace	\$99	Solar – Gas	\$199
Gas Furnace	\$199	Refrigerators	\$50
Oil and Gas Boilers	\$199	Freezers	\$25

National Issues

The U.S. Senate Health Care Debate Has Begun

On Monday, November 30th the U.S. Senate opened debate on a sweeping bill to overhaul the nation's health care system. From the outset some Senate Democrats and all Republicans have voiced their problems with the 2,074-page bill that would provide health insurance to an additional 31 million people at a cost of nearly \$850 billion.



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Senate Majority Leader Democratic Harry Reid of Nevada has said that the debate is historic and that the bill would provide vital health insurance for almost all Americans. He also claimed that it would hold down spiraling health care costs.

In response, Republicans countered saying that the bill was too big, too expensive and would cause more harm than good. Republican Senator John McCain of Arizona called it a "sham" and a "2,074-page monstrosity full of measures that would impair the abilities, particularly of our senior citizens, to keep the benefits they've been promised."

While the Senate did vote 60-39 to launch debate on the measure, Republicans unanimously oppose the health care bill. Reid also will need 60 votes to eventually close the debate, and his ability to secure that support remains uncertain.

Amendments will be offered to delete or change controversial provisions, including creation of a government-run public health insurance option to compete against private insurers, tax increases and provisions intended to prevent federal tax dollars from paying for abortion except in cases of rape, incest or danger to the mother's life.

None of the forty Republican Senators supports a public option, but one -- moderate Olympia Snowe of Maine -- has discussed a trigger mechanism that would automatically initiate a public option if thresholds for expanded coverage and lower costs go unmet. The trigger idea is considered the lone chance of a compromise that could gain the support of any Republicans.

Independent Joe Lieberman of Connecticut says he also will prevent a final vote if the bill contains any form of public option. For Democrats, each vote is crucial. Overcoming a filibuster requires support every member of the Democratic caucus, so if Lieberman or others oppose a public option, Reid would need a GOP senator to switch sides on the bill to gain passage.

The bill includes tax increases aimed at those earning more than \$200,000 a year and insurers providing so-called "Cadillac" health plans worth more than \$8,500 a year for individuals or \$23,000 for families. It also would set a 5 percent tax on elective cosmetic surgery.

Both the Senate and House bills would require individuals to buy health insurance, with penalties for noncompliance. Unlike the House version, the Senate bill does not mandate that all employers offer health care.

Senate Democrats concede that some changes are necessary to get the health care bill passed so [please weigh in on the debate by contacting your senator at:](#)

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm?State=GA

Quote to Ponder

"About the time we can make the ends meet, somebody moves the ends." **Herbert Hoover**, thirty-first U.S. president

Thank you,



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About GRA: The Georgia Retail Association, with membership that comprises all retail formats and channels of distribution including department stores, specialty shops, discount stores, catalog sales, Internet sales, independent stores, and grocery stores, has been serving the state's business community since 1961. The Georgia Retail Association represents an industry with more than 49,501 retail establishments, and more than 789,000 employees - about one in five of Georgia's workers – with annual sales of more than \$144.52 billion.