

# Georgia insight

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*"She hath done what she could."  
Mark 14:8a*

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## Presidential Executive Order Created Multi-lingual Mess in U.S.

On January 31, 2007 thirty-two members of Congress introduced a bill to counteract President Clinton's Executive Order 13166 forcing government to serve applicants for services in their native tongue. It didn't pass. His order increased tax burdens of federal and local governments, such as Georgia that now offers driver's tests in eleven foreign languages – Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, French, German, Bosnian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Polish and Russian.

This year's opportunity to affirm English as our state's official language, actually, began with Representative Bearden's H.B. 21 in 2007. It died in the Judiciary Committee. Also in 2007, he introduced H.R. 413, proposing a constitutional amendment to require all state actions and documents to be done in English. It didn't pass in 2007, but is still alive and active this session. If it were to pass, it would, also, protect the rights of people that speak only English. They would remain eligible for all state programs, benefits and opportunities, including state jobs.

### *H.R. 413, English as Official Language*

#### **Lost in House 103 to 61, February 26<sup>th</sup>, Will be Reconsidered**

*Poll numbers.* If the polls are any indication of public sentiment, the 61 legislators that voted NO on H.R. 413 are out of step with the majority of Americans. Results were almost identical when Americans were asked whether English should be the official language of the U.S. Zogby reported that 84 percent said YES. Rasmussen reported that 85 percent said YES and another poll was even higher, with 87 percent saying YES.

*Why weren't 103 votes sufficient to pass H.B. 413?* H.R. 413 is a proposed constitutional amendment that requires two-thirds votes in both House and Senate. Two-thirds of the 180-member House is 120 and two-thirds of 56 senators is 38. Even if it passes both House and Senate, it would require a majority of votes on the November General Election ballot.

*But, H.R. 413 is not dead yet.* Although H.R. 413 failed to get the 120 votes necessary for passage in the House, Representative Bearden moved for reconsideration. His motion to reconsider passed 90 to 45, sending H.R. 413 back to the House Rules Committee. So, Rules members that voted NO on the House floor should be contacted first. Ask them to vote YES every time they have an opportunity to vote on H.R. 413.

**ACTION – Ask for YES votes from Rules Committee members** Hugley, 656-5058; Porter, 656-5058; Mosby, 656-0287; Parham, 656-0202; Randall, 656-0109; and Smyre, 656-0116.

One Rules Committee member failed to vote on the House floor. Please contact him and ask that he vote YES on H.R. 413.

**ACTION – Ask for a YES vote from Rules Committee member** David Casas, 404 656-0254.

**ACTION – Ask your representative to vote YES when H.R. 413 gets a House floor vote.**

If you don't know your representative's name, contact The Secretary of State's Poll Locator Service, [www.sos.state.ga.us/cgi-bin/Locator.asp](http://www.sos.state.ga.us/cgi-bin/Locator.asp). Or you may call 1 888 265-1115 and press 1.

**[Note:** Phone calls are tallied. Emails may not be read. For legislators' phone no. see [www.legis.state.ga.us](http://www.legis.state.ga.us).]

February 29, 2008

## *The Rights of Embryos*

Most are familiar with the 35-year-old battle between those who want to preserve life and those who want to abort babies. Some want to stop abortion, altogether, but others see it as a money-maker, a way to get rid of inconvenient births and unwanted mouths to feed. Almost 50 million abortions have been reported in the United States since 1973, if you don't count the number of embryos killed or left to die in laboratories. That situation is the subject of recent legislation.

**H.R. 536 still alive but tabled February 20<sup>th</sup>.** Almost a year ago Representative Martin Scott introduced the "Paramount Right to Life" amendment, H.R. 536 on March 20, 2007. Since life begins when a human egg is fertilized, (a) the bill gives legal status to the human embryo and (b) sets standards for medical workers and facilities that do in vitro fertilizations. (c) Facilities and professionals performing that service would be responsible for keeping the embryos safe. (d) No human embryo could be farmed or cultured, solely, for research or any other purpose. (e) It would be illegal to sell a human egg, a fertilized human egg or human embryo, since (f) an embryo is a human being with rights. (g) It is not the property of a medical facility or clinic where it's housed or stored and where (h) it receives a personal identification. (i) As a person with identity, the embryo would be entitled to sue or be sued and (j) if it develops into an unborn child and, ultimately, is born alive, it will have inheritance rights.

(k) Donors claiming parental rights over the embryo formed with their egg and sperm would be granted those rights. If donors do not claim their rights as parents, a court could appoint a temporary guardian until the embryo is adopted and implantation occurs. On February 20<sup>th</sup>, after some six hours of hearings in the House Judiciary Committee, H.R. 536 was tabled.

**H.B. 1358 was introduced after H.R. 536 was tabled.** Representative James Mills introduced H.B. 1358 February 28, 2008, as the "Human Embryo Protection Act." It's different from H.R. 536 in that it amends Georgia law rather than the constitution. It defines "in vitro" as meaning outside the human body. It defines "in vitro human embryo" as a human organism composed of one or more living human cells and human genetic material, so unified and organized that it has the potential to develop into a human fetus when implanted in a female human uterus.

H.B. 1358 provides that (a) an in vitro human embryo is a legal person to be created only for initiating a human pregnancy in the uterus of a human female in the treatment of infertility. The human embryo (b) will be given identification by the medical facility where it is developed (c) and is not the property of a physician or facility or the donor of the sperm or ovum. (d) Egg and sperm donors that claim rights as parents will be granted those rights. (e) Unclaimed embryos will be appointed guardians and (f) may be adopted for implantation. As a separate legal person, (g) embryos have the right to sue or be sued and (h) may *not* be intentionally destroyed. Any (i) embryo that develops into a fetus and is born in a live birth, as a result of that embryo's adoption by another couple, shall not have inheritance rights from the biological parents.

**Nonviable embryos.** Unless it's frozen for preservation, an embryo that does not further develop over a 36-hour period is considered nonviable and not a legal person.

**ACTION – Support. Contact House Judiciary Committee** Representatives Willard, Ch., 404 656-5125; Lindsey, 656-0296; Hatfield, 656-0109; Bruce, 656-0314; Crawford, 656-0213; Fleming, 656-5024; Golick, 651-7737; Jacobs, 656-0152; Lane, 656-0109; Oliver, 656-0265; O'Neal, 656-5103; Stephenson, 656-0126; Teilhet, 656-0298; Thomas, 656-0314; Tumlin, 656-0177; (ex-officio) Wilkinson, 463-8143

## ***Alcohol Sales: S.B. 385, In Limousines & S.B. 454, On Sundays***

Of the many bills to expand alcohol sales, I've picked up five of this year's Senate bills and one from 2007 that affect geographic areas where alcoholic beverages may be sold. The 2007 bill introduced by Senator Seth Harp was left to die in committee, but he says it could be resuscitated this year. By that he meant he could attach it to one of this year's bills of the same subject. His chances for that increased, dramatically, this week when the Senate passed two bills extending the areas where alcoholic beverages may be legally sold.

**S.B. 454.** Under current law, towns and cities allowing the Sunday sale of alcoholic beverages may authorize their sale in a stadium, coliseum or auditorium owned by the local government, if the seating capacity is over 2,500. Alcohol may be sold between 12:30 p.m. and midnight. That's legal now. But, by adding only two words to current law, Senator Unterman's S.B. 454 gave that same authority to counties. *Her bill passed the Senate 30 to 20 on February 26<sup>th</sup>.*

**S.B. 385.** Senator Balfour introduced S.B. 385 to allow limousine carriers to be licensed to sell alcoholic beverages that would be consumed in the limousine during times regulated by local officials. The initial permit would be \$50, renewable every year at \$15 for each vehicle. However, the limousine carrier could not buy alcoholic beverages wholesale, but must buy from retail dealers. *S.B. 385 passed the Senate 40 to 11 on February 26<sup>th</sup>.*

Now back to Senator Harp's statement. The bill he hopes to attach to one of this year's bills is S.B. 26 he introduced January 22, 2007. S.B. 26 allows counties, towns and cities that have already legalized the sale of alcoholic beverages to have a referendum, so voters could decide whether beer and wine should be sold 24/7, which extends sales to anytime on Sundays.

It seems the majority of the Senate wants liquor sales to be extended and they're well on the way to getting it done with S.B. 385 and S.B. 454. After passing the Senate, both bills went to the House Regulated Industries Committee, where they'll be debated again and, possibly, changed. That's a logical place for Senator Harp to attach his bill from last year, but in this election year representatives might be hesitant to saddle themselves with a pro-alcohol vote.

**ACTION – Oppose S.B. 385 and S.B. 454.** Contact Regulated Industries Committee Representatives Roger Williams, Ch., 404 656-3904; Tumlin, & Freeman, 656-0177; Dickson, 656-0202; Bearden & Jerguson, 656-0287; Freeman, 656-0177; Epps, Lord & Shaw, 656-7859; Billy Mitchell, 656-0116.

## ***H.B. 978, Illegal Alien's Car Confiscated for Traffic Violations***

Representative James Mills introduced H.B. 978 as a step toward getting illegal alien drivers off the road. It adds a new section to Georgia traffic laws to allow the confiscation of motor vehicles that are driven by illegal aliens when they're involved in traffic violations or accidents. A vehicle could be subject to seizure, meaning officers could take it, immediately, and hold it until the driver's nationality is proven. The seized vehicle would be, finally, forfeited if the illegal alien is convicted of charges. If the court should decide to sell the vehicle, payment may be made to the victims.

H.B. 978 was amended in the House Special Rules Committee that voted it out with only two dissenting votes on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Just nine days later, it passed the House 104 to 51 and is in the Senate Public Safety Committee now.

**ACTION – Support.** Contact Public Safety Committee Senators Murphy, Ch., 404 656-7127; Mullis, 656-0057; Chapman, 656-0045; Butler, 656-0075; Carter, 651-7738; Davenport, 656-7586; Douglas, 656-0503; Grant, 656-0082; Jackson, 656-5114; E. Jones, 656-0502; Seay, 656-5095.

## ***H.B. 1265 & H.R. 1363, “Freedom of Religious Expression Act”***

Ten years ago I reported a disturbing fact about the 1999 calendar printed by the United States Capitol Historical Society and endorsed by the U.S. Senate. On each day in December, the calendar mentioned a fact that occurred in the year 1799, but glaringly ignored the fact that December 25<sup>th</sup> is Christmas *every* year, although Good Friday and Easter *were* honored on that same calendar. I, also, learned that the 1997 national calendar had omitted Christmas, as well.

That happened ten years ago. So, I was encouraged last December when Channel 5, finally, had the words “Merry Christmas” behind their news anchors two or three days before Christmas.

In Howard County, Maryland high school students who are members of the well-known nationwide organization called Fellowship of Christian Athletes were forced to block out the word “Christmas” on their flyers and advertise their 2007 toy drive as “Operation Holiday Child”.

Confused officials in Charlottesville, Virginia decided to call the town’s annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony a “Grand Illumination.” But they added insult to injury, after their “grand illumination” ceremony. Their official caroling party sang along the designated route before ending at the town’s Free Speech Monument. That’s particularly ironic since the entire town’s population was denied the freedom to call their Christmas tree a Christmas tree. Things like that are happening all over the country, despite the fact that 96 percent of people polled in the U.S. celebrate Christmas in some form or other.

Back in Georgia legislators, repeatedly, introduce bills to protect our right to say “Merry Christmas” whether we’re at school, at the grocery store or in a government building. None of those bills has passed so far, but senators and representatives are still trying.

Representative Tommy Smith of District 168 introduced two very important bills on February 20<sup>th</sup>. His first is **H.B. 1265** that creates a new law protecting the constitutional rights of government employees, contractors, students, prisoners, wards of the state and everyone under the jurisdiction of government to use religious and cultural expressions to openly commemorate holidays without intimidation or fear of retribution. If it passes, they could, confidently, offer religious greetings, such as “Merry Christmas,” on the job, at school or on government business, because their right of religious expression in governmental areas would be protected.

Representative Smith, also, introduced **H.R. 1363** to add the same protection to the Georgia Constitution. If it passes the General Assembly and gets a majority of votes on the November ballot, it would clarify the religious expression rights we already have in our State Constitution.

Because it’s a proposed constitutional amendment, H.B. 1363 must receive two-thirds (120) votes in the House and two-thirds (38) in the Senate. If it should pass both House and Senate, the following question would be on the November General Election ballot:

“Shall the Constitution of Georgia be amended so as to provide that public employees and persons under public care or control shall not be restricted or discouraged from expressing greetings or salutations associated with any religious or cultural day or period of commemoration?”

**ACTION – Support both bills.** Contact Representatives Willard, Committee Ch., 404 656-5128; Tumlin, Subcommittee Ch., 404 656-0177; Bruce, 656-0314; Hatfield, 656-0109; O’Neal, 656-5103; Lindsey, 656-0298; Billy Maddox, 656-0109; Stephenson, 656-0126; Teilhet, 636-0298.

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