

Georgia insight

Sue Ella Deadwyler
www.georgiainsight.org
"She hath done what she could."
Mark 14:8a
"... and having done all ... stand."
Ephesians 6:13c

Good Bills to Support in 2018

S.R. 587, Declare English Georgia's Official Language by Senator Josh McKoon

S.R. 613, Declare English Georgia's Official Language by Senator David Shafer

Both bills propose a constitutional amendment to declare in the *Constitution of the State of Georgia* that English is this state's official language as specified in a 1996 Georgia law.

Meaning, if passed, English must always be the language used in any official state action which binds or commits Georgia or gives the appearance of presenting official state views. Since 1996 that has been a legal requirement, but it has not been reflected in the State Constitution.

Three critical reasons for declaring English the state official language emerged during the S.B. 519 debate 22 years ago. Those statements are even more relevant in this effort to memorialize the law in the *Constitution of the State of Georgia*. Those reasons are as follows:

- (a) If society is to thrive and communicate at an "optimum level," we must speak a common language.
- (b) Society is recognizing so many cultures that few common interests remain.
- (c) Language is the easiest interest to keep in common.

ACTION – SUPPORT S.R. 587 and S.R. 613. Call Rules Committee Senators Mullis, Ch., 404 656-0057; Hill, V-Ch., 656-5038; Millar, Sec., 463-2260; Albers, 463-8055; Butler, 656-0075; Cowsert, 463-1366; Gooch, 656-9221; Henson, 656-0085; Kennedy, 656-0045; Miller, 656-6578; Shafer, 656-0048; Tate, 463-8053; Thompson, 463-1318; Tippins, 657-0406; Unterman, 463-1368, and Wilkinson, 656-5257.

Veterans: Housing and Hospitals

H.B. 719 introduced by Representative Sandra Scott on January 23rd (a) defines a veteran as a former member of the armed forces of the U.S. or a state National Guard and (b) requires housing authorities to develop and implement policies that grant housing preferences to such veterans who are homeless. Then, it (c) outlines the criteria used to determine homelessness.

H.R. 888 introduced by Representative Jason Spencer January 18th creates a joint Study Committee on Converting Closed Hospitals to Veterans Homes. In addition to creating the study committee, H.R. 888 reveals these facts from the National Rural Health Association:

- Since 2010, 82 rural hospitals in the U.S. have closed; 700 more may close within ten years.
- Six Georgia rural hospitals closed since 2013 sit unused for governmental or public purpose.
- A 2016 report says over half of Georgia's remaining rural hospitals are at risk of closure.
- The U.S. has roughly 10 million veterans aged 65 and over, the largest number ever.

ACTION – SUPPORT H.B. 719 and H.R. 888. Call Defense & Veterans Affairs Com. Representatives Bill Hitchens, Ch., 404 656-0152; John Deffenbaugh, V-Ch., 656-0202; John Pezold, Sec., 656-0188.

NOTE: While the Senate published a list of all 56 senators' offices, staff, and contact numbers, the Georgia House has not done likewise. The House list indicates occupants and chairmen in capitol and LOB offices, but some are not listed.

SUGGESTION: Call 404 656-5015, the Clerk's Office, to ask for your representative's office. Your voter registration card indicates your senate and representative district numbers. If that's not handy, call your local library, give your home address, and you will be told the names and contact numbers for your senator and representative.

January 2018

Oppose S.B. 320

S.B. 320 Public Elementary and Secondary Schools Deemed Voter Registration Agencies, introduced January 11th by Senator Steve Henson, requires public schools to give to each parent or guardian, as part of the enrollment or change of address process, a Secretary of State (SOS) mail voter registration application, along with other SOS forms. Each school must transmit completed voter registration applications to the SOS at least once a week, or at the end of each business day during the 15 days before the registration deadline for primaries or elections.

ACTION – OPPOSE. Call Ethics Committee Senators Burke, Ch., 404 656-0040; Ligon, V-Ch., 463-1383; Butler, Sec., 656-0075; Harbison, 656-0074; McKoon, 463-3931; Miller, 656-5678; Stone, 463-1314; Thompson, 463-1318; Watson, 656-7880; and Williams, 656-6127.

Support H.B. 680 and S.B. 309

“On and after January 1, 2019, no primaries in this state shall be conducted on direct recording electronic (DRE) voting systems.”

– H.B. 680

H.B. 680 Elections: Direct Recording Electronic Voting Systems Shall NOT be Used was introduced by Representative Scot Turner January 18th to change voting equipment used in Georgia’s primaries and elections. If H.B. 680 passes as introduced, effective January 1, 2019, the current electronic voting system would be replaced with a new system consisting of paper ballots, ballot marking devices specifically designed for marking paper ballots, ballot scanners, and automatic tabulating equipment to count the votes.

All such equipment must be Secretary-of-State -approved for use in polling places, and the SOS would be authorized to conduct pilot programs to test and evaluate the use of optical scanning voting systems and voter-verifiable ballots in primaries and elections in Georgia.

Beginning January 1, 2019, the State Election Board and local election superintendents would conduct “risk-limiting” audits after state-wide primary, general, and special elections and runoffs. Effective January 1, 2021, such audits would be done for all federal and gubernatorial primary and general elections. All ballots, whether cast in person, by absentee ballot, early voting, provisional ballot, or otherwise, would be subject to audit.

Any vendor who sells an electronic ballot marker that has not be certified by the SOS will be subject to a \$100,000.00 fine, payable to the State of Georgia, plus reimbursement of costs and expenses incurred by the governmental body in connection with the sale.

Local government must test the equipment on or before the third day prior to a primary or election, including special primaries, and the public shall be permitted to observe the tests.

ACTION – SUPPORT. Contact House Governmental Affairs Committee Representatives Ed Rynders, Ch., 404 656-6801; Fleming, V-Ch., 656-0152; Blackmon, Sec., 656-0177. Then call your representative per bottom of page one.

S.B. 309 Elections: Poll Times and Filling Vacancies introduced January 9th by Senator Josh McKoon (a) requires all primaries and elections in Georgia to open at 7:00 A.M. eastern standard or eastern daylight time and remain open until 7:00 P.M. eastern standard or daylight saving time. (b) If a vacancy occurs in Georgia’s representation in the U.S. Senate, and more than 12 months remain in the unexpired term of office, a special primary at the time of the next general primary will be held to fill the vacancy. (c) The governor may appoint a successor or choose another authorized option if 12 months or less remain in the unexpired term.

ACTION – SUPPORT. Call Senate Ethics Committee members listed under S.B. 320- above.

Free Speech to Replace “Safe Spaces”

S.B. 339

“The Georgia bill is on track to become one of the most far-reaching campus free-speech laws in the nation The Georgia Campus Free Speech Act will ban speech codes and so-called free-speech zones; discourage speaker disinvitations; allow persons whose free-speech rights have been violated by the university to sue; and in numerous other ways will safeguard freedom of speech in Georgia’s state university system.”

– Stanley Kurtz, PhD., Ethics and Public Policy Center Senior Fellow

S.B. 339, Board of Regents, University System; Establish Free Speech Policies, introduced by Senator William Ligon on January 22nd, requires the board of regents to develop a free expression policy containing, at least, thirteen specified criteria¹ to uphold the right to free speech under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. If passed, students and faculty would be free to discuss, protest and demonstrate as permitted by the First Amendment, provided the rights of others are not infringed.

The Truth about “Safe Spaces”

The origin of safe spaces goes back to the mid-1960s women’s movement and “outing opportunities” at gay and lesbian bars and consciousness-raising groups. Today, that LGBTQ focus has become a full-blown especially protected classification on many university campuses.

The February 2016, article by Gabrielle Kratsas, “20 Great Value Colleges with Safe Spaces,” explained the focus of safe spaces on campus. Universities were chosen based on retention rate and affordability. Georgia’s Armstrong State University in Savannah is number 18 on that list. The other southern² universities that made the cut are listed below, along with their rank.

Savannah’s Armstrong State University definition of “Safe Space” is quoted verbatim:

“Safe Space is a two-hour workshop to raise awareness and *knowledge of LGBTQ* issues and *suggest ways to serve as an ally to LGBTQ individuals*. Following the workshop, participants receive a Safe Space decal to display in their workspace, indicating to the campus community that they are knowledgeable and supportive allies. [Note the attempt to spread LGBTQ to everyone.]

“Safe Space Learning Outcomes

1. Recognize appropriate and inclusive language regarding sex, gender and sexual orientation
2. Identify challenges specific to LGBTQ students
3. Name federal, state, local and Armstrong policies that concern the LGBTQ community
4. Identify biases around issues of sex, gender and sexual orientation
5. Describe strategies to support LGBTQ students and to respond to anti-LGBTQ behavior
6. Identify resources for LGBTQ individuals on campus, in the community and online”

ACTION – SUPPORT S.B. 339. Call Higher Education Com. Senators Millar, Ch., 404 463-2260; Martin, V-Ch., 656-7454; Beach, 463-1378; Hufstetler, 656-0034; Jackson, 463-5261; Jones, 656-0082; Orrock, 657-8728; Thompson, 757-0065.

¹ Examples: (a) First-offenders would be disciplined after a hearing; (b) second offenders may be suspended or expelled. (c) Student organizations could affirm their beliefs and screen members, accordingly. (d) No university could mandate “compelled” or “forced” speech; (e) unlawful speech could be regulated by policy. (f) A 15-member Committee on Free Expression would be created to report on September 1st each year. (g) A compelling governmental interest must be proven before expressive conduct is restricted. (h) Violators could be fined \$1,000 or damages, whichever is higher.

² University of Tampa in Florida (#17); University of South Carolina at Columbia (#10); Davidson College, Davidson, N.C. (#5). Retention rate and affordability determined rank. The University of Chicago ranked #1; Colorado’s Mesa University in Grand Junction ranked #20. The remaining universities were ranked accordingly.

Bullet-Proof Vests don't Prevent HIV Infection

H.B. 737 Law Enforcement Exposure to HIV, Hepatitis B or C introduced January 25th by Representative Clay Cox requires court ordered blood tests of individuals whose broken skin, or mucous membranes, blood or body fluids (other than tears, saliva, or perspiration) can transmit HIV, hepatitis B, or C to law enforcement officers – sheriff, deputy sheriff, police officer, policeman, peace officer, officer or member of the Department of Public Safety, or other officer of official with power to arrest and is responsible for enforcing criminal law.

Just as bullet-proof vests don't protect law enforcement against deliberate attempts to transmit HIV, hepatitis B or C, the general public is not protected from the same possibility. Therefore, the bill should be amended to criminalize attempted transmission of such diseases to others, including students, staff in schools, daycare, and higher education where the identity of HIV-infected individuals is kept secret to protect *them*, while *leaving their possible contacts at risk*.

ACTION – SUPPORT, but ask for amendments that include the general public, students, staff and daycare. Call Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee Representatives Alan Powell, Ch., 404 463-3793; Clark, V-Ch., 657-1803; Petrea, Sec., 657-1803. Then, call your representative as suggested at the bottom of page one.

Hate Crime Bills give Sexual Behavior Civil Rights Status

A hate crime is motivated by hatred of the victim's race, ethnicity, religion, or gender.

– Webster's New World College Dictionary

Chronology of Civil Rights Classifications

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 protected four categories: race, color, religion, and national origin. The Civil Rights Act of 1968, a.k.a. The Fair Housing Act, added “sex” to the protected list. The 1973 Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 protect the disabled. The Housing for Older Persons Act of 1995 protect the elderly.

The current purpose of hate crime legislation extends *civil rights status for sexual behaviors* to LGBTQIA¹ orientations. Previous bills failed, but the following were introduced this session.

H.B. 660 Enhanced Sentences for Crimes that Target a Victim introduced January 22nd by Representative Meagan Hanson requires harsher penalties if the victim, supposedly, is targeted based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, mental disability, or physical disability.

H.B. 663 Sentencing of Defendants Guilty of Crimes based on Bias or Prejudice introduced January 9th by Representative Karen Bennett requires harsher punishment for crimes based on a person's race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, or physical disability.

Although the Fair Housing Act of 1968 added the word “sex” to the protected civil rights list, these bills, attempt to add historically illegal sexual behavior – under the guise of sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity – to the already-protected list of civil rights for everyone, whether male or female, regardless of behavior.

ACTION – OPPOSE H.B. 660 & H.B. 663. Call Judiciary Non Civil Com. Representatives Rich Golick, Ch., 404 656-5943; Bert Reeves, V-Ch., 656-0298; Micah Gravely, Sec., 656-015; and your representative as suggested on page one.

¹ LGBT has expanded to include additional behaviors as follows: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual, which have prompted the creation of 55 new pronouns for addressing sexual orientations.