

Your Georgia General Assembly has more than crossed the halfway point of the 2021 legislative session. By the end of the week, we completed legislative day 27 and are moving closer to the end point of the 40-day session which will be targeted for the end of March.

Of special note is us Republicans looking for ways to return taxes to the taxpayers or spur economic activity and job creation. We passed House Bill 593, known as the Tax Relief Act of 2021. This bill is simple as it increases the standard deduction for taxpayers that are single and heads of household from \$4,600 to \$5,400, taxpayers that are married and filing a joint return from \$6,000 to \$7,100, and taxpayers that are married and filing individual returns from \$3,000 to \$3,550, beginning tax year 2022.

To help bolster teachers volunteering to work in low-performing schools or in rural districts, we easily passed H. B. 32. This legislation creates a refundable income tax credit for a teacher recruitment and retention program managed by the State Board of Education. Eligible teachers include those with a bachelor's degree in education from a postsecondary institution in Georgia that has a teacher certification program certified by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Additionally, a teacher must accept their first school-year contract in the 2021-2022 school year in a high-need subject area in a rural school or a school that performed in the lowest five percent of schools in this state and must hold a valid five-year induction or professional certificate from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. The recruitment and retention program is limited to 1,000 participating teachers. Participating teachers are eligible for a refundable tax credit of \$3,000 per each school year for no more than five years.

Another tax incentive bill, H.B. 587, or the Georgia Economic Renewal Act of 2021. This bill is one of the Governor's priority in providing economic incentives for manufacturers of medical devices and pharmaceuticals. The credit of \$1,250 per job is available for jobs that qualify for the current job tax credit or quality jobs tax credit to the extent that those jobs are engaged in the activity of manufacturing medical equipment or supplies or manufacturing pharmaceuticals or medicine. The bill also extends to high impact aerospace defense projects. A "high-impact aerospace defense project" must be constructed by a business enterprise that is a prime aerospace defense contractor with greater than 40 percent of its revenues from sales to the United States government in its most recent tax year and must be certified by the commissioner of the Department of Economic Development as materially supportive of the mission of the Georgia Joint Defense Commission and the Governor's Defense Initiative. The bill allows a high-impact aerospace defense project to start claiming manufacturing facility tax credits in the tax year in which the taxpayer achieves 1,000 jobs and a \$500 million investment; however, the taxpayer must certify that it will later achieve 1,800 jobs and an \$800 million investment. This is designed to build the military cargo aircraft in Georgia, and these are strong paying jobs that require many employees to construct.

Also, to prop up our tourism industry that is one of Georgia's economic leaders, we easily passed HB 586 which exempts from state and local sales tax, exemption for the sale of tickets, fees, or charges for admission to a fine arts performance or exhibition conducted by a 501(c)(3) organization or a museum of cultural significance, provided that the organization's or museum's primary mission is to advance the arts in Georgia.

We will return to the State Capitol on Monday, March 8. I encourage you to contact me with your input and thoughts on proposed legislation or current events that may impact our community. I am in 226-A of the State Capitol. My office phone number is [\(404\) 656-5115](tel:4046565115) and

my email is ron.stephens@house.ga.gov. I look forward to continuing this session and serving all of you.