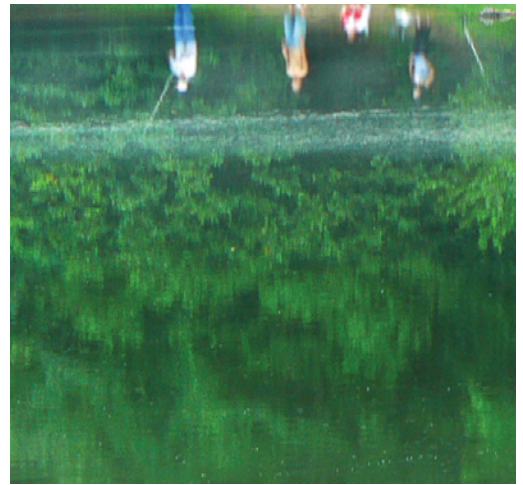


# Georgia House of Representatives, District 82



Legislative Update



# The 2007 Session

## By Rep. Kevin Levitas

**On April 20 of this year**, the 2007 session of the Georgia General Assembly was gaveled to a close after one of the longest and most contentious sessions in recent memory. One of the biggest challenges was passing the midyear supplemental budget bill (**HB 94**), which provides money for funding shortfalls in important areas like education, health care and emergency response (for disasters like tornados and wildfires). I worked to ensure that our schools—including those right here in our part of DeKalb County—as well as programs like Georgia's PeachCare for Kids health care program, received this critical supplemental funding.

In other budget news, the General Assembly also passed **HB 95**, the state budget bill for Fiscal Year 2008 (July 1-June 30). The \$20.2 billion budget includes money for land conservation, teacher pay raises, Internet crimes prosecution and other important programs.

My first session as your Representative was a productive one. During the budget-drafting process, I was able to respond to specific requests for assistance from parents, teachers and school administrators and am pleased to report that I was able to help get three local-assistance grants, totaling \$55,000, to help schools in our community.

During the session, I learned more about the intricacies involved in shepherding bills through the General Assembly and established good working relationships on both sides of the aisle. I helped to improve bills under consideration by the major committees on which I serve, including Judiciary Non-Civil, Science & Technology and Agriculture

& Consumer Affairs. Along with working on measures filed by my colleagues, I introduced legislation dealing with a wide range of subjects, including public safety, consumer protection, natural-resource preservation and election reform.

Among the other bills considered by the General Assembly, some of the more notable measures passed were:

**Tax Relief: HB 128** set a sales-tax holiday for clothes and school supplies from August 2-5 of this year as well as another tax holiday for energy-saving products from October 4-7.

**Returning Control to Voters: HB 181**, which I cosponsored, prohibits DeKalb County's past practice of issuing bonded indebtedness for public safety and judicial facilities without first getting voter approval and providing an itemized list of the projects being funded.

**HB 712** creates an advisory referendum for voters in DeKalb County concerning whether school uniforms should be required for students in kindergarten through fifth grades.

**HB 39** facilitates public access to government records by clarifying a provision of state law invoked



*Rep. Levitas with Lakeside HS Teacher Anthony Stinson (middle) and State Board of Education member Brad Bryant at the annual Teacher of the Year Finalists' Luncheon hosted by Georgia Power.*

# A Message from Kevin Levitas

improperly by the DeKalb County government to withhold documents from citizen review.

**Ethics Reform: HB 16** extends to all employees at the local level the same whistle-blower protections that state employees have when they file a complaint of fraud, waste and abuse in state programs and operations.

**Immigration Reform: SB 23** allows judges and parole board members to weigh a person's immigration status before determining bail, handing down a sentence or deciding on probation.

**SB 100**, which was vetoed by Governor Perdue, proposed increasing sentences for manufacturing, selling or distributing fake identification cards to between three and ten years in prison.

**Education Reform: SB 39** permits whole school districts to apply for charter status.

**SB 10** allows parents of special-needs children who meet certain criteria to use state money to send their children to private schools or to public schools outside of their home districts.

**SB 168** requires local school systems to fulfill the communications needs of hearing-impaired students and guarantees that deaf students receive instruction in whichever mode or language is deemed necessary.

**In the District:** During the session, I participated in community meetings across our District and heard from many of you via email, letter and telephone about issues of interest and concern. I welcome your comments and encourage you to continue providing me with your input.

**In February, I hosted a well-attended town hall meeting** to provide an update on legislative activity and an additional opportunity to discuss issues. I will continue to hold these meetings each year. If your community organization or neighborhood association is holding a meeting that I could attend, please let me know.



*Rep. Kevin Levitas*

## Greetings,

I'm pleased to bring you this Legislative Update as your Representative in the Georgia General Assembly. I am working hard to represent your interests and values in the Georgia House of Representatives, including:

**Better Schools.** We need properly funded schools, a return to emphasizing fundamental skills over a constant stream of standardized tests, a strong HOPE Scholarship program, smaller class sizes and assurances that school tax dollars raised locally will not be unfairly redistributed to other regions.

**Stronger Neighborhoods.** As a husband and as a parent of two young children, I know how important safety is to our families. We need a justice system that will put and keep career criminals behind bars, and we need tougher DUI laws that will make our streets safer.

**Fairer Taxes.** No matter where they live in DeKalb County, DeKalb taxpayers should be charged a fair, uniform rate. We need laws to eliminate unfair property tax rates and to help our older neighbors afford to stay in their homes.

**Reduce Traffic.** We need twenty-first century transportation and growth planning, a modern public transportation system and well-designed work-live-and-play communities within urban centers. We must have a sensible, comprehensive regional transportation plan that lessens the call for more and more roads and that protects our disappearing green spaces.

I am honored to be your State Representative in the Georgia House, and with your help, I will continue to fight for our community and our state to improve the quality of life for all of us.

*Kevin Levitas*



**Sign up to get email updates by emailing me at [kevinlevitas@bellsouth.net](mailto:kevinlevitas@bellsouth.net)**





**Q. What was the biggest issue during this year's session of the General Assembly?**

Representative Levitas: *By far the most time-consuming and controversial issue during the 2007 session was Governor Perdue's veto on the second-to-last day of the session of HB 94, the supplemental state budget, which provides vital funding for schools and for other important programs like children's health care. After a very bitter and very public dispute involving House and Senate leaders and the Governor that included a veto-override attempt, the Governor rescinded his veto and instead removed a single budget item: a \$142-million refund to Georgia taxpayers that had been approved by the General Assembly. I am glad that the supplemental budget was finally approved, but I believe that the conflict, which hindered the overall legislative process, could have and should have been avoided so that the General Assembly could better serve the people of Georgia.*

**Q: What is the accomplishment of which you were most proud during your first session?**

Representative Levitas: *Being able to get additional funding into the state budget for schools in District 82. Although there are many important issues for our District, my top priority remains improving our schools. So I was pleased to be able to respond to specific requests for assistance from parents, teachers and administrators and to obtain some sorely needed assistance for them. I am eager to work with other schools to obtain similar grants next session.*

## Town Hall Meeting

**September 24 at 7:00pm**

**Heritage Hall of Shallowford Presbyterian  
2375 Shallowford Rd. • Atlanta, GA 30345**

# 2007 Highlights



*Rep. Levitas congratulates Christy Chang of Henderson Middle School during the Georgia Commission on the Holocaust's Writing Awards ceremony.*



*Rep. Levitas welcomes the Tucker HS boys state basketball champs to the Capitol.*



**Sign up to get Legislative Updates and Community Announcements via Email!**  
Send your email address to [kevinlevitas@bellsouth.net](mailto:kevinlevitas@bellsouth.net) with "**Newsletter**" in the subject line.

Rep. Kevin Levitas  
Suite 409  
Coverdell Legislative Office Building  
Atlanta, GA 30334  
404-656-0116 Legislative Office  
404-634-9171 Home

PRSRT STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT 3259  
ATLANTA, GA