



# HOTLINE

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February 2005

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT



by Rob Sumner, Executive Director

It was an historic first week in the Capitol, as the 2005 Georgia General Assembly convened with Republican majorities in both chambers and a Republican in the Governor's office. Legislative leaders and Governor Sonny Perdue seem determined to have a short and efficient session. It seems clear that they will focus on passing just a few bills – including ethics reform and the budget – and adjourning well before the end of March. The first days were primarily devoted to organization.

Eighteen Democrats were among the 117 Representatives who elected Republican Glenn Richardson Speaker of the House. Most of the Democrats voting for Richardson are members of the new "Rural Caucus" which could become an important "wild card" in any future power struggles.

### Highlights from opening week.

House rules were changed to require Rules Committee approval before amendments can be added to a bill on the House floor. This rule puts greater emphasis on the committee system, and should help prevent poorly thought-out amendments from becoming law. Another new House rule allows the Speaker to send three designated "hawks" to vote on legislation in any committee. The "hawks" are Reps. John Lunsford of McDonough, Tom Graves of Fairmount, and Stacey Reece of Gainesville. Democrats complained that this rule gives the Speaker "unprecedented" power to control legislation.

**Committee assignments complete in both chambers.** At this point, it is unclear which House committee will

have responsibility for construction trades legislation. When Terry Coleman became Speaker two years ago, he split the old Industry Committee into two committees, and sent all construction trades bills to the Governmental Affairs Committee chaired by Rep. Alan Powell. That committee is now chaired by Rep. Austin Scott of Tifton, but it is not clear whether all construction related bills will continue going to that committee. Speaker Richardson could decide to send these bills to the Regulated Industries Committee, now chaired by David Graves, or even to the Public Utilities Committee chaired by Jeff Lewis. Chairman Scott appointed Rep. Powell to be Chairman of the Subcommittee on Occupations and Licensing.

In the Senate, construction-related legislation will still be referred to the Regulated Industries & Utilities Committee, which is chaired again this session by Senator Mitch Seabaugh.

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### Ellen Whitaker Named Assistant Executive Director

We are very pleased to announce that Ellen Whitaker has been named Assistant Executive Director of the Plumbing & Mechanical Association of Georgia. Ellen has served as Member Services Coordinator on a part-time basis for the past two years.

We are fortunate to have someone of Ellen's experience and talent on the PMA management team. She has served as a Senior Vice President and a Director of Customer Service for national financial institutions. Ellen earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Studies from State University College in Buffalo, NY.

Greg Martin, who served as PMA Assistant Executive Director for three years, is now devoting more time to his duties as Executive Director of another trade association and is no longer working with PMA. Greg has contributed greatly to the professional management of PMA and we wish him continued success in all his endeavors. Thank you, Greg, for all your great work on behalf of PMA!

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



### 2004 - 2005 President Chip Greene

One of PMA's main focuses during this time of year is keeping an eye on what is happening in the state legislature. At one time, I used to wonder why PMA spent so much time on legislative work. Regulations and codes are an integral part of our businesses. And since legislators are not contractors, they do not always make decisions with full knowledge of the effect they have on our industry. That is why we have a lobbyist to be our eyes and ears while the legislature is in session and why it is also important that they hear from our members directly from time to time about what is important to us.

On January 26th, we had a board of directors meeting at the Capital. After the meeting several of us made the rounds and talked to several of our legislators about issues that we were concerned about. For example, one item that is being considered this session is tort reform. I think the majority of us agree that there ought to be some kind of limits on jury awards (can you say MOLD?). However, the trial lawyers are not for this and they are

making sure they let the legislators know. It was stated that the calls legislators have had about this issue are 50 to 1 against tort reform. Now do you think we need to be spending time following legislation and making those legislator contacts?

The highlight of the day was an impromptu visit to Secretary of State Cathy Cox's office. We took a chance on being able to see her and at first it did not appear that we would get to see her. However, she came out of her office soon after we arrived and we were able to speak with her about 5 minutes. She remembered our state convention at Ponte Vedra three years ago! Secretary of State Cox has announced her candidacy for Governor. She has done a good job as Secretary of State, promoting decentralization of various departments of her office such as the licensing board and automating the voting process.

Your legislator wants to hear from you. Many of them are small business owners just like us. They represent us and they can better do that when we let them know our position.

Chip

### IMPORTANT DATES

Feb 24 - 26	PMA Plumbing Review Course Atlanta
Feb 24-26	QSC Power Meeting XXII Savannah
March 4 - 5	PHCC Foreman/Superintendent Training, Macon
March 13	PMA 3rd Annual Bass Tournament
April 14	PHCC Legislative Conference Capitol Hill
April 15-16	PHCC Leadership Conference Key Bridge Marriott, Arlington, VA
April 20	PMA Board of Directors, Macon
April 21	PMA Joint Meeting with Georgia State Inspectors Association Macon
April 21	PMA Spring Golf Tournament Macon
<b>June 2-5</b>	<b>PMA Annual Convention King &amp; Prince Beach &amp; Golf Resort St. Simons Island</b>
Sept 7-10	PHCC National Convention "Network '05" Walt Disney World, FL

### NEW MEMBERS

On behalf of the members, directors, and officers of the Plumbing & Mechanical Association, we would like to publicly welcome as new members:

ASC Construction Equipment Volvo, **Scott Dietz**,  
Smyrna  
One Source Mechanical Services, **Emmet Riddick**,  
Alpharetta  
Blue Star Service, **Bernie Lee**, Macon

### LEGISLATIVE DAY & LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE SCHEDULED



State and Local Chapter Presidents, President-elects, Membership Chairs and Executive Managers are invited to the 9th Annual Legislative Day and Leadership Conference to be held in Arlington, VA April 14 -16, 2005.

For more information call (703) 237-8100 or go on-line to [www.phccweb.org](http://www.phccweb.org).

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT

### Key Bill Introductions.

**SB 3** Smith of the 52nd – would amend titles 9, 24, and 51 relating to civil justice, so as to change provisions relating to evidentiary matters and liability in tort actions; to change provisions relating to venue in actions with joint defendants; to change provisions relating to affidavits; to provide for defendants' access to plaintiff's health information in medical cases; to provide for offers for judgment, and other purposes. Favorably reported by Senate Judiciary Committee.

**SB 10** Meyer von Bremen of the 12th – would amend Titles 21, 42, and 45 to provide for the comprehensive revision of provisions regarding ethics and conflicts of interest. Referred to Senate Ethics Committee.

**SB14** Thompson of the 5th - would provide an income tax credit for expenses up to \$1000 associated with qualified improvement of single family residences owned and occupied by the taxpayer in a community improvement district. Has not yet received first reading.

**SB 18** Golden of the 8th - would amend employment security law to make employees discharged for absenteeism ineligible for unemployment benefits. Referred to Senate Insurance and Labor Committee.

**SB 30** Pearson of the 51st - would provide for inverse condemnation proceedings before a special master, allowing property owners to recover damages resulting from condemnation. Referred to Senate Judiciary Committee.

**HB 8** Oliver of the 83rd -- relating to fraud, waste and abuse in state programs and operations, so as to provide for "whistle blower" protection.

**HB 24** Royal of the 171st – would provide for gradual reduction and eventual repeal of the corporate income tax. The income tax on corporations would be abolished after January 1, 2011. Referred to House Ways & Means Committee.

**HB 59** Erhart of the 36th - would prohibit local governments from using their purchasing or contracting procedures to control or affect the wages or employment benefits provided by its vendors, contractors, or service providers. Referred to Intra-governmental Coordination Committee.

**HB 69** Holmes of ht 61st - would create a Georgia Housing Trust Fund and the Affordable Housing Guarantee Program for low income citizens. Would impose an additional real estate transfer tax of 20 cents on the first \$1000 and two cents for each additional \$100. Referred to House Ways & Means Committee.

**HB 83** Lunsford of the 110th - would allow small business to select group health insurance plans without mandated benefits. Referred to House Insurance Committee.

**HB 94** Borders of the 175th - similar to SB 18, would amend employment security law to make employees discharged for absenteeism ineligible for unemployment compensation. Referred to House Industrial Relations Committee.

**HB 184** Scott of the 153rd - relating to the State Licensing Board for Residential and General Contractors, to provide that all 14 members shall be appointed by the Governor. Current law provides that two members be appointed by the Speaker of the House and two by the Senate Committee on Assignments. Referred to House Governmental Affairs Committee.

**HR 1** Royal of the 171st – proposing an amendment to the Constitution to provide for limitations upon the rate of increase of the ad valorem tax millage rate and value of property. Referred to House Ways & Mean Committee.



*If you have any questions about legislation, please contact Danny Richardson, (pictured below) Legislative Chairman, [anny@richardsonplumbing.com](mailto:anny@richardsonplumbing.com); or Rob Sumner, Executive Director, [rsumner@plumbingpros.com](mailto:rsumner@plumbingpros.com).*

### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Bruce Brewer, **Fulton Plumbing, Htg, A/C** has been promoted to Service Manager. Bruce joined Fulton in April 2002 with 6 years of managerial experience. Bruce began his career in the plumbing industry in 1990.

### NEW MEETING LOCATIONS

"One of the key ingredients to a successful meeting is the location", cites PMA President Chip Greene. "The location needs to be convenient to the members, have great service and food, and provide a private area that facilitates a business meeting. We tried three new locations in January for the Northeast Metro Area, Northwest Metro Area and Central Georgia with positive feedback from all." "Meetings were also held in Columbus and Augusta at the end of the month. Contractor turnout and interest in industry issues was high at both meetings." For more information on when these areas will be meeting next, contact PMA Office at 770-271-9876. For a 2005 Area Meeting schedule go to [www.Plumbingpros.com](http://www.Plumbingpros.com).



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\* United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics  
† Injury Facts 2001 Edition, National Safety Council

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