New Business Item #14

COUNTY AGENDA REQUEST

Department:	Board of Commissioners	Presenter(s):	Chairman Steve Brown
Meeting Date:	Monday, February 17, 2014	Type of Request:	New Business

Wording for the Agenda:

Consideration of Chairman Brown's recommendation to adopt Resolution 2014-09 in support of Legislative Transparency in the Georgia General Assembly.

Background/History/Details:

The Georgia Legislature is prone to amend bills on the last day of the General Assembly. These last minute changes do not allow for Georgia citizens or the news media to review the amendments that could have far-ranging impacts on the State of Georgia. This practice only serves to undercut governmental transparency and rightfully deepens citizens' distrust in their government.

State Senator Josh McKoon has asked the Senate to change its rules so that lawmakers receive the final version of bills at least 24 hours before they vote, and for the final legislative drafts to be posted online in order to be accessed by citizens and the news media.

Senator McKoon has also asked the Senate to begin officially recording all votes on proposed amendments to bills, rather than using a show of hands which does not record individual votes.

Resolution 2014-09 supports Senator McKoon's initiative in the Georgia Senate and further calls on the State's House of Representatives to pass the same measures while inviting the full Fayette County Legislative Delegation to offer their support to these efforts.

What action are you seeking from the Board of Commissioners?

Approval of Chairman Brown's recommendation to adopt Resolution 2014-09 in support of Legislative Transparency in the Georgia General Assembly.

If this item requires funding, please describe:

Not Applicable.

Has this request been considered within the past two years?	No	If so, when?	
Is Audio-Visual Equipment Required for this Request?*	Yes	Backup Provided with Request?	Yes

**** All audio-visual material must be submitted to the County Clerk's Office no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. It is also your department's responsibility to ensure all third-party audio-visual material is submitted at least 48 hours in advance.***

Approved by Finance		Reviewed by Legal	
Approved by Purchasing		County Clerk's Approval	Yes
Administrator's Approval			

Staff Notes:

County of Fayette;
State of Georgia

RESOLUTION 2014 - 09

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF LEGISLATIVE TRANSPARENCY IN THE GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

WHEREAS, given the opportunity, the Legislature has been prone to amend bills on the last day of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Citizens of the State of Georgia and the news media are not allowed to review the last-minute amendments which affect the governance of their state; and

WHEREAS, the Citizens of the State of Georgia are growing tired of the justification given by legislators voting for harmful bills as they did not know the bill was amended or they did not have time to read the bill; and

WHEREAS, transparency promotes honest government and protects Citizens from harmful special interests; and

WHEREAS, State Senator Josh McKoon has asked the Senate to change its rules so that lawmakers get the final version of bills at least 24 hours before they vote, and to post the final legislative drafts online for Citizen and news media access; and

WHEREAS, State Senator Josh McKoon has also asked the Senate to begin officially recording all votes on proposed amendments to bills rather than using a show of hands which does not record individual votes;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Fayette County Board of Commissioners does hereby formally support Senator McKoon's rule change proposals for the Senate and we request that the State House of Representatives also pass the same measures, assuring the Citizens of governmental transparency, and inviting our full Fayette County Legislative Delegation to offer their support.

So resolved this 13th day of February 2014, by the FAYETTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

FAYETTE COUNTY, GEORGIA

Attest:

_____
Steve Brown, Chairman

_____
Floyd L. Jones, County Clerk

- *5 Feb 2014*
- *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*
- *By James Salzer jsalzer@ajc.com*

Conservatives seeking clarity on pending bills

Groups want more time to review bills ahead of vote.

A coalition of conservative lawmakers and groups is calling for changes to allow legislators and the public better understand what the General Assembly is voting on.

Sen. Josh McKoon, R-Columbus, said he has asked the Senate to change its rules so that lawmakers get the final version of bills at the end of each session — called conference committees reports — at least 24 hours before they vote on the measures. The reports would also be posted online for the public to see ahead of time.

Typically, lawmakers get final agreements on bills on the last day of the session with little time to read what they are voting on. In some cases, entire new proposals are attached to bills and there is scant time to debate the measures.

"Anybody who has been here on the 40th day (of sessions) knows the games that get played," McKoon said. "If you are a legislator who doesn't know what's in the bill, how can we expect the public to have any idea what's in a bill and have any opportunity for meaningful input?"

On the last day of the 2012 session, a conference committee of House and Senate members rewrote a bill on hunting and fishing licenses so that it would seal the records of some ethics cases filed against politicians. The measure passed the Senate at 10 p.m., but after the media and a few lawmakers found out what had been added to the bill, the House killed it.

McKoon is also asking the Senate to begin recording all votes on legislation. Currently, votes on many proposed amendments to bills are done by a show of hands, so there is no record of how individual lawmakers voted.

McKoon's proposals, which will have a tough time passing the Senate, are part of the agenda of the Capitol Coalition of Conservative Leaders, which includes the Atlanta Tea Party, Georgia Conservatives in Action and Georgia Right to Life, among others. The group released its agenda Tuesday.

The agenda includes legislation to outlaw abortion coverage in health plans offered through state or federal laws and regulations, a bill to prohibit taxpayer funds from being used to implement the Affordable Care Act, a proposed constitutional amendment to prohibit the use of foreign laws to resolve Georgia court cases, a measure to help end Georgia's involvement in Common Core national academic standards and another to limit the collecting and sharing of student and teacher data.