

OPEN LETTER TO ALL GSFA MEMBERS

from President Scott Carter

S. B. 186JUST DROPPED

March 1, 2011

There has been a significant piece of legislation dropped today. It is S. B. 186. As a Board, we feel it imperative that you are made aware of this legislation as soon as possible. This is a bill that will create the *Georgia Department of Fire Safety*. Under the new administration in Atlanta there is a major effort to 'streamline' state government. Our Association, along with the GAFC, had been approached by State leaders to provide input into discussions that will have a major impact on the Georgia Fire Service.

There were several key factors early in the discussion - where are services duplicated, as a firefighter who has issues, who do you call, and how does State government support local fire service communities.

We have had opportunity to provide input into the drafting of this Bill. Our Association has been well received so far in this process. It appears that this will be a good bill, long term, for the fire service. Some of what this Bill will accomplish is:

1. It will combine multiple different state agencies into one. This will allow for local fire departments to have a one-stop shop for the needs of the fire service. Instead of being bounced from one place to the next, there will be one place to go.
2. It will stop duplication of services and provide seamless support for the fire service. This Bill will combine the State Fire Marshal's Office, GFST&T, GFA, and all of the fire service portions of the Insurance Commissioner's Office.
3. The fire service will have a Governor's Cabinet position that will allow the fire service to speak to and deal directly with the Governor's office on issues that affect us.
4. The Bill places as a primary mission of this Department to 'empower local jurisdictions' with assistance to enhance their service on a local level.
5. This Bill will create a Commissioner who is accountable for and to the fire service of Georgia. This Commissioner will be advised by an advisory council and the GSFA has a direct seat on that council to ensure that your voice will be heard.

As I said earlier, from what we have seen and from what input we have had to this point, your GSFA Board feels that this is a positive move. We want to make sure that this is a transparent process and we are watching this legislation very closely. Over the next few weeks you will begin hearing rumors and rumors about rumors.

As a Board, we pledge to you that we will pass along to you all facts as we receive them so that you may make an educated decision concerning this issue. I would ask that you please pay close attention as we send out information, and also that you please provide feedback to us as we forward - and most importantly, please get involved.

There are still many questions to be answered, and we will work diligently to address these as we progress.

Once S.B.186 has been read, you can go to the following website to read the content of the legislation:

www.legis.ga.gov