



2011 Special Legislative Session on Redistricting and Reapportionment August 15-31, 2011

The call issued by Governor Nathan Deal included three specific items:

1. Redrawing district lines for Georgia's House, Senate, and Congressional Districts
2. Ratification of the Governor's executive order suspending a scheduled increase in Georgia's motor fuel tax.
3. Consideration of legislation that would change the date of the 2012 TSPLOST from 31 July 2012 to the general election date of 6 November 2012.

The first week of session saw quick action by both the House and Senate. Each chamber passed their respective maps in very short order after one day of committee hearings. Each map passed the respective chamber by a strict party line vote (House 108-64 and Senate 35-18). The Senate map may be found [here](#) and the House map can be found [here](#). There was a great deal of discussion in both chambers about the fairness of the maps, but it was generally accepted that the minority party had little rational for their arguments because of the process of the 2001 session on redistricting in which they completely controlled the legislative process.

At one point in the process, it was thought that some slight changes might be made to the House map because the map divided Governor Nathan Deal's home county of Hall. However, those changes didn't cause much of a change in the process. The Senate quickly considered and passed the House's proposed map and the House responded in kind. The Governor signed both maps, and they will now be sent on to the United States Department of Justice for preclearance required under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

One of the hottest topics of debate during the state legislative map process was the pairing of incumbents, which substantially affected urban Democrats in Atlanta and a few Republicans in rural Georgia. Some of the pairings include:

- Rep. Elana Parent (D – Atlanta) and Rep. Scott Holcomb (D – Atlanta)
- Rep. Stephanie Stuckey - Benfield (D – Atlanta) and Rep. Howard Mosby (D – Atlanta)
- Rep. Elly Dobbs (D – Atlanta) and Rep. Sheila Jones (D – Atlanta)
- Rep. Simone Bell (D – Atlanta) and Rep. Ralph Long (D – Atlanta)
- Rep. Mack Jackson (D – Sandersville) and Rep. Sistie Hudson (D – Sparta)
- Rep. Rashad Taylor (D – Atlanta) and Rep. Pat Gardner (D – Atlanta)

- Rep. Bob Hanner (R – Parrott) and Rep. Gerald Greene (R – Cuthbert)
- Rep. Barbara Sims (R – Augusta) and Rep. Earnest Smith (D – Augusta)
- Rep. Gene Maddox (R – Cairo) and Rep. Darlene Taylor (R – Thomasville)
- Rep. Mark Hatfield (R – Waycross) and Rep. Jason Spencer (R – Woodbine)
- Senator George Hooks (D – Americus) and Senator Freddie Powell-Sims (D – Albany)

Additionally, the General Assembly approved a Congressional District (CD) map that substantially alters current districts. The broad general effect of this map is to solidify CD 8 for Congressman Austin Scott (R – Tifton); substantially alter CD 6 for Congressman Tom Price (R – Roswell); substantially alter CD 12 and put Congressman John Barrow (D – Augusta) at risk; solidify CD 2 for Congressman Sanford Bishop (D – Albany).

The map also creates a new congressional district in Northwest Georgia composed of counties taken from Congressional District 9 (Graves). The seat is open. Congressman Tom Graves (R – Ranger) has been moved into the 14th Congressional District, composed of counties taken from the 9th Congressional District and the 11th Congressional District. Graves faces the potential of a challenge from the Rome / Floyd County area.

Currently, two candidates have expressed strong interest in the new 9th Congressional District. Rep. Doug Collins (R – Gainesville) is the Governor's Floor Leader in the State House and will be the favorite of Governor Nathan Deal and Speaker David Ralston (R – Blue Ridge). Martha Zoller is a popular conservative local talk show host and will present a substantial challenge from the tea party perspective. It is likely that at least one or two more candidates will join the race.

The Congressional map [can be found here](#). It passed the Senate on Wednesday, August 31, 2011 and was sent to the Governor for his signature.

The other items of the legislative session were taken care of in relatively short order. The Governor's suspension of the motor fuel tax increase was ratified with little discussion. The date change of the TSPLOST, however, proposed in HB 3ex, took a decidedly different route.

The legislation, sponsored by House Speaker Pro – Tem Jan Jones (R – Milton) moved very quickly through the House's committee process, despite strong opposition by the State of Georgia Tea Party. Various Tea Party factions in Georgia oppose the TSPLOST referendum as a tax increase, and inasmuch as the date change would increase the likelihood of success with the referendum, they opposed the legislation.

HB 3ex passed the House with very few votes in opposition, but ran into substantial problems in the Senate. As a constitutional amendment, the legislation required a two-thirds vote, and the Republican caucus was split due to the Tea Party opposition.

Additionally, Democrats, some of whom ordinarily would have been strongly supportive of the date change, unified in opposition to the legislation as a result of the heavy Democratic pairing in the House and Senate maps referenced previously.

After several days of tense discussions, Governor Nathan Deal and Lt. Governor Casey Cagle declared the legislation dead. Since that time, Governor Nathan Deal has stated that, while he is strongly supportive of the measure, he will not push the date change as a part of his legislative agenda in January.