

# State salaries, travel Website makes public records more public

Georgia residents can see exactly how their state tax dollars are being spent, thanks to a new website that allows users to access government expenditures including state employees' salaries and travel expenses.

Monday, Gov. Sonny Perdue announced the launch of the Open Georgia: The Millen in Government at [www.open.georgia.gov](http://www.open.georgia.gov).

"The Open Georgia website makes state government more transparent to its customer, the taxpayer," Gov. Perdue said. "By being willing to further open the halls of government to

the public, we give citizens more confidence that their tax dollars are being spent wisely."

The site lists salaries for everyone from bus drivers to GBI agents to school and college employees.

Besides salaries, the site gives users online access to spending for professional services, as well as state financial reports and program reviews.

Users can search by name, title, description and agency.

The Open Georgia site is the result of Senate Bill 300, the Transparency in Government Act, sponsored by Senators

Chip Rogers and Chip Pearson.

"This is a great day for Georgia taxpayers," Sen. Rogers said. "We have taken a major step towards fully open and easily accessible accounting of how every state tax dollar is spent. The very best way to prevent wasteful government spending is to let those paying the bills see exactly where their money is going."

The website is maintained by the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts. In 2010, it will be expanded to include grant and contract payments to vendors by state agencies.

## Jon Burns

### LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

As the 2009 Legislative Session convenes this week, we will be addressing issues that are being discussed around kitchen tables throughout the state of Georgia. As Georgians in every corner of our state closely watch their bottom line during this economic downturn, it will also be a tough session for lawmakers as we determine the fate of state programs and projects as we face a budget deficit.

Since state tax revenues are lower than had been projected, we will have to address spending cuts for the last six months of the current fiscal year. Gov. Sonny Perdue has proposed a large program funded on borrowing, but has not detailed how he would spend the money. We are also waiting to see how much President-elect Obama's stimulus package will affect individual states. Once these two issues are clarified, we will have to roll up our sleeves and determine the most responsible way to proceed.

In regard to taxes, both House and Senate leaders have expressed support for plans to cap property taxes, although the details have not been agreed upon. We recognize that any tax relief would be welcomed by the citizens of Georgia, but we must be

diligent so that any such legislation does not get drowned by dissenting legislators in a myriad of party-line details.

Roads and transportation will also be a major issue this session. As the more populous cities in the state experience an increase in traffic congestion, and as rural areas desire roads to entice employers, at the same time environmental groups want a mass transit system. All three interests are being represented as business groups and environmentalists are jointly lobbying for a constitutional amendment that would allow a group of counties to impose a regional sales tax to support transportation projects. The proposal would have to be passed by voters in the 2010 general election, so there is time for us to carefully consider all of the ramifications.

Trauma care is an issue that lawmakers have wrestled with for years and one that will likely be another top priority. Because there is a dire need for a dedicated funding source for a state-wide network of facilities to provide advanced trauma care, including specialized equipment, air transportation for patients, and physicians, this is a cause for legitimate concern. Without a

solution, there is a concern that trauma centers could be forced to close amid recent operating losses in the millions of dollars. Because of the dire need coupled with a suffering economy, this will undoubtedly be a hot-button topic again this year.

The Savannah Port continues to create jobs and bring in significant revenue for the state, and because of this the harbor deepening project that the Georgia Ports Authority hopes to partially fund with money from the state will more than likely be approved. The Port wants to deepen the harbor from 42 feet to 48 feet to allow for larger vessels. Due to the budget crisis, it is more than likely that bonds will be issued to pay for this construction project. It is most likely that a final review of this project will take place later this year. Georgia's deepwater ports and inland barge terminals support more than 286,000 jobs throughout the state and contribute \$14.9 billion in income and almost \$3 billion in state and local taxes.

You are always welcome to contact me at [jon.burns@house.ga.gov](mailto:jon.burns@house.ga.gov) or at my office by calling 404-656-5105. This is a new phone number as my office is now 131 in the Capitol.

# Seniors getting largest social security increase since 1982

While the economy may be hurting, good economic news for senior citizens is coming from the Social Security Administration which has announced that seniors can expect a 5.8 percent benefit increase in 2009.

The largest benefit increase since 1982, this boost in funding will come in the form of a "Cost-of-Living Adjustment."

The 5.8 percent Cost-of-Living Adjustment is beginning with benefits that over 50 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2009. Increased

payments also will be coming to more than seven million Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries.

While benefits increase yearly to compensate for inflation, based on rises in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' "Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers," the largest increase in 26 years in Social Security is more than welcome in the current economy.

These changes, though, will not necessarily come as a blessing to all, as more payout by the

Social Security Administration necessarily means more pay-in by taxpayers around the country.

Of the estimated 164 million workers who will pay Social Security taxes in 2009, about 11 million will pay higher taxes as a result of the increase in the taxable maximum.

Information about Medicare changes for 2009 can be found online at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

More information about Social Security benefits can be found at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).

# Getting ready for tax season

**By Alicia Saile**  
Social Security Public Affairs Specialist, Georgia Area Director's Office

The holidays have passed us by, the new year has begun, and tax season is right around the corner. The earlier you prepare for the looming April 15 tax deadline, the easier it will be to file your taxes.

Here are some helpful hints as you begin getting ready for tax season.

**Make sure your information matches ours.** Soon you will be receiving your W-2s from your employer(s) and tax information from the IRS. Carefully check your name, Social Security number and all of the data on your W-2s and on your Social Security Statement or card to make sure they match up. If you can't find your card or Statement but know your Social Security number, make sure the number and information is correct on your W-2s. A mismatch could delay your tax refund and cause problems with

your Social Security benefits in the future. Such errors are easy to fix now.

**A name change is the main change.** If you've legally changed your name due to marriage, divorce, court order or for any other reason, make sure you change your name with Social Security by applying for a new Social Security card. Make sure you change your name with your employer as well. If you change with one source but not the other, it could cause your earnings to be improperly recorded. A minor detail could cause a major mix-up. You can learn more about Social Security numbers and cards at [www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber).

**Don't forget the kids.** If you are the parent of a newborn, you want to make sure that the newest family member has a Social Security number too. Most people apply for their baby's Social Security card while they're still in the

hospital at the same time they apply for the birth certificate. But if you didn't, you'll need to apply for your child's Social Security number in order to claim the child as a dependent on your tax return. You'll also need it if you ever apply for government benefits on behalf of the child or your family.

**Go online if you can't find your 1099.** Social Security Benefit Statements (Form SSA-1099) for tax year 2008 are automatically mailed to beneficiaries and should be received by January 31, 2009. If you receive Social Security and haven't received your 1099 in the mail by the end of January, but need it to file a tax return, just go online. Beginning in February, you can request a replacement 1099 online at <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/i1099/main.html>.

For more information about Social Security, visit [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

# Legal Advertising

property attached to and constituting a part of said property, if any.

Said property will be sold subject to any outstanding ad valorem taxes (including taxes which are a lien, whether or not now due and payable), the right of redemption of any taxing authority, any matters which might be disclosed by an accurate survey and inspection of the property, any assessments, liens, encumbrances, zoning ordinances, restrictions, covenants, and matters of record superior to the Security Deed first set out above.

The sale will be conducted subject (1) to confirmation that the sale is not prohibited under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code and (2) to final confirmation and audit of the status of the loan with the holder of the security deed.

Notice has been given of intention to collect attorney's fees in accordance with the terms of the Note secured by said Deed.

Said property will be sold as the property of Joy L. Bracewell, the property, to the best information, knowledge and belief of the undersigned, being presently in the possession of Joy L. Bracewell, and the proceeds of said sale will be applied to the payment of said indebtedness and all the expenses of said sale, including attorney's fees, all as provided in said Deed, and the balance, if any, will be distributed as provided by law.

Regions Bank DBA  
Regions Mortgage as  
Attorney-in-Fact for  
Joy L. Bracewell  
File no. 08-007597  
L. J. SWERTFEGGER, JR.  
SHAPIRO & SWERTFEGGER, LLP\*  
Attorneys and Counselors at Law  
2872 Woodcock Boulevard,  
Suite 100  
Atlanta, GA 30341  
(770) 220-2730/CC  
[www.swertfeger.net](http://www.swertfeger.net)  
\*THE LAW FIRM IS ACTING AS A DEBT COLLECTOR. ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

JA7,14,21,28c  
gpn07

**-10A-**  
NOTICE TO DEBTORS AND CREDITORS

All creditors of the Estate of Paul O. Clifton, late of Jenkins County, Georgia, deceased, are hereby notified to render their demands to the undersigned according to law, and all persons indebted to said estate are required to make immediate payment to the undersigned. This 5th day of January, 2009.

Gary Clifton,  
Executor of the Estate of  
Paul O. Clifton  
Troy A. Gay  
Troy A. Gay, P.C.  
359 E. Winthrop Avenue  
P.O. Box 1200  
Millen, GA 30442

JA7,14,21,28p  
gpn06

**-12A-**  
NOTICE OF INCORPORATION

Notice is given that articles of incorporation which incorporate MILLEN NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD, INC., have been delivered to the Secretary of State for filing in accordance with the Georgia Nonprofit Corporation Code. The initial registered office of the corporation is located at 4459 Lewis Church Road, Millen, Georgia 30442, and its initial registered agent at such address is Shirley Carlyle.

R.H. Reeves, III  
Attorney at Law  
P.O. Box 690  
Millen, Georgia 30442

JA14,21p

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**-14A-**  
GEORGIA, JENKINS COUNTY

All creditors of the Estate of Russell Brown, deceased, late of Jenkins County, Georgia are hereby notified to render in their demands to the undersigned according to law, and all persons indebted to said estate are required to make immediate payment to me.

Dated, this 12th day of January, 2009.

Pearl B. Beaupre'  
as Executrix of the Estate  
of Russell Brown, deceased,  
late of Jenkins County  
JA21,28,FE4,11p  
gpn07

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**United Way of Jenkins County  
2009 Agency Applications**

United Way of Jenkins County is now accepting applications from **non-profit or government agencies** serving residents of Jenkins County. Applications may be obtained from the Jenkins County Family Enrichment Center at 527 Barney Avenue, Millen, GA. Completed applications must be returned to Julie Chance or Mandy Underwood at the Jenkins County Family Enrichment Center at 527 Barney Avenue, Millen, GA.

**Completed applications must be returned by  
12 noon, Monday, February 2, 2009.**

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