



NEWS

AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM

1920 L Street, NW • Suite 200 • Washington, DC 20036
202.785.0266 • Fax 202.785.0261

WWW.ATR.ORG

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CONTACT: Jonathan Collegio
Paul Proski
202-785-0266

6 MARCH, 2003

Taxpayers Win in Georgia Senate Budget Vote!

Led by Senate Majority Leader Tom Price and Senate President Pro Tem Eric Johnson, Senate passes a true balanced budget for 2003 that does not resort to tax increases.

WASHINGTON – Georgia’s hardworking taxpayers were cheering, and Georgia’s big spending bureaucrats were blushing, when the State Senate passed Wednesday a true balanced budget for 2003 that raises no taxes. The approved budget achieves balance by cutting \$90 billion more than the proposal passed by the House and backed by Gov. Sonny Perdue (R).

Critics charge that the House-passed budget achieved an accounting balance only by drawing on state reserve funds. But Senators Eric Johnson (R-Savannah) and Tom Price (R-Roswell) refused to condone such deficit spending, and led the Senate to pass a budget that is truly balanced.

“Tom Price and Eric John Johnson are heroes in my book,” said taxpayer advocate Grover Norquist, President of Americans for Tax Reform. **“Thanks to their steadfast leadership, the fiscal mess left behind by the profligate spending of the Barnes era has been fixed without increasing the burden on Georgia’s taxpayers. The critical question is, does the Georgia House have anyone that can demonstrate similar leadership as the two bodies reconcile their versions of the budget?”**

The Senate action set the stage for a battle with the state House over final budget numbers. Until now, the House has been unwilling to pass the necessary spending cuts to avoid dipping into the state’s “rainy day” fund. That fund is vital to guard against future emergencies such as continued economic sluggishness, or even potential terrorist attacks.

Representatives from the House and Senate will begin meeting tomorrow in Conference Committee to work out the differences between the two bills. The Senate action puts added pressure on the House to deliver more spending cuts to bring the budget into balance.

“Maybe last night’s Senate vote will shame Georgia House members into fiscal responsibility,” Norquist continued. **“The Senate has shown that the budget can be balanced without tax increases and without accounting gimmicks, and essential services will still be protected. The House has no political cover. Will they vote for fiscal responsibility, or will they vote to protect special interest spending?”**

Americans for Tax Reform is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who oppose all tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Jonathan Collegio at (202) 785-0266 or by email at jcollegio@atr.org.