



## Capitol Connection E-Newsletter - September 2016

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### *Fall Meetings*

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### **2016 Legislative Leadership Conference Now Two Weeks Away – Register Soon!**

The Legislative Leadership Conference is now two weeks away. Attend this event to gain information and understanding on policy issues significant to Georgia's counties. Hear directly from ACCG's policy experts, political analyst Bill Crane and key state leaders on pressing and emerging issues all while networking with your county colleagues. Be sure to contact your county clerk to register today!

Those needing housing accommodations may contact the Holiday Inn at (912) 635-2211.

The full conference agenda can be accessed [here](#).

***Reminder: Appoint Your County Voting Delegate***

The primary charge of the Legislative Leadership Conference is for Georgia's county commissioners to finalize and adopt the 2017-2018 County Platform, the document that guides the policy staff's efforts before the General Assembly and Congress. County commissioners will vote on the County Platform, as well as the 2017 Legislative Agenda and top Legislative Priorities, during the business session on Thursday, Sept. 29, at 1:30 p.m. Please be sure to appoint your county voting delegate by Friday, Sept. 16, to ensure your county is represented during this important session.

Click [here](#) to obtain the voting delegate form. All forms should be sent to Rhonda Ligons via fax to (404) 525 -2477 or scanned in an email to [rligons@accg.org](mailto:rligons@accg.org).

### **Save the Date for 2016 Fall District Meetings**

Save the date for this year's Fall District Meetings! Taking place in each of ACCG's 12 districts throughout the state, these meetings allow county officials to engage in candid town hall discussions with some of Georgia's state legislators. Meeting attendees will also receive information on key county issues as well as an update from the ACCG policy staff on what to expect for the upcoming legislative session. So, mark your calendar and prepare to get engaged by attending the meeting(s) of your choice!

Registration will be available soon. More information can be found on the [ACCG website](#).

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### *Legislative Updates*

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### **ACCG Policy Council Recommends Platform, Agenda, and Legislative Priorities for 2017**

On Sept. 8, the Policy Council reviewed all recommendations from ACCG's seven standing policy committees regarding the policy platform for the upcoming year. In addition to discussing each platform change suggested by the committees, the Policy Council also recommended that a number of platform items form ACCG's affirmative policy agenda for the 2017 legislative year. Among those items, the Policy Council recommended that a smaller set of issues be established as ACCG's top legislative priorities.

To view a full copy of the recommended platform, click [here](#). The Policy Council recommends that the items highlighted in yellow form ACCG's legislative agenda for the next year. Items also designated with an asterisk (\*) were recommended as top legislative priorities.

If you have any questions about the recommended platform, please contact Nicole Logan with the ACCG Policy staff at [nlogan@accg.org](mailto:nlogan@accg.org).

### **Time to Update the CLC Network**

As the County Legislative Coordinator (CLC) Network serves the purpose of keeping county officials engaged in the legislative process while the General Assembly is in session, ACCG encourages counties to designate someone to serve as their CLC. Since its inception, the CLC Network has grown to show benefit to county officials not only while legislators are in session but year-round. To confirm, update, or appoint your county's CLC please contact Nicole Logan at [nlogan@accg.org](mailto:nlogan@accg.org) or (404) 522-5022.

## Federal News

### New Federal Safety Oversight Arriving for Local Transit Systems

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) finalized a rule outlining new powers to write and enforce national safety standards for local transit systems, a first step toward the agency's adopting a national safety program, with power to direct and withhold funding to local agencies. This could directly affect counties with transportation authorities. [More info.](#)

### DOJ Website Accessibility Rules

The Department of Justice (DOJ) is extending the public comment period on its proposed website accessibility regulation for state and local governments to Oct. 7. Under the new proposal, DOJ plans to revise Americans with Disabilities Act regulations to require state and local government websites to adhere to enhanced accessibility requirements. Counties are encouraged to send comments to DOJ before the Oct.7 deadline. More details and a sample comment letter can be found [here.](#)

County officials may direct all questions and concerns to ACCG Legislative Associate Kathleen Bowen at [kbowen@accg.org](mailto:kbowen@accg.org).

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## *Environmental News*

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### GA EPD Declares Level 1 Drought Response

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division recently declared a Level 1 Drought Response in 53 counties. A Level 1 Drought Response declaration mean local water utilities in the affected counties will be required to begin a public information campaign to help citizens better understand drought, its impact on water supplies and the need for water conservation. Access [this map](#) to learn which counties are affected.

Both groundwater and surface water utilities are required to circulate drought and water conservation information in one or more of the following: newspaper advertisements, water bill inserts, website homepages, social media and notices posted in public libraries.

Click [here](#) to read the notice from GA EPD.

### Reminder: FY 2017 Application Deadline for Nonpoint Source Implementation Grant

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division receives an annual grant under Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act to help prevent, control and/or abate nonpoint source pollution in support of Georgia's Nonpoint Source Management Program. GA EPD then conducts a competitive process to fund eligible projects that will lead to direct reductions in pollutant loads and measurable water quality improvements in impaired waters throughout the state. Public entities such as cities or county governments with Qualified Local Government status; regional and state agencies; authorities that

operate public services or delivery programs; regional commissions; county extensions; local school systems; and state colleges and universities may apply.

The deadline to apply is **October 31, 2016**. Visit [here](#) for more details.

Questions may be directed to Joyce McClain at [joyce.mcclain@dnr.ga.gov](mailto:joyce.mcclain@dnr.ga.gov) or (404) 651-8525.

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### *Court Rulings*

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#### **Ga. Supreme Court Rules that Exclusion of Low-income Housing Tax Credits from Property Tax Valuation is Unconstitutional**

In a September 12 decision, the Georgia Supreme Court ruled that a state statute which excludes low-income housing income tax credits from consideration in the ad valorem tax assessment process is unconstitutional, as it violates the taxation uniformity provision in Article VII, Section I of the Georgia Constitution.

A summary of the Supreme Court's opinion is available [here](#).

You can read the full opinion [here](#).

Any questions regarding this court decision or its impact on your county should be directed to your county attorney.