



LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

The Legislative Committee met via conference call to discuss the legislative priorities for the organization in 2020. The committee settled on continuing our efforts on HB 545 – Right to Farm and SB 211 – the Fake Meat Bill.

This past year has been a very active year on the legislative front. In the General Assembly, the Georgia Cattlemen's Association pushed for the passage of HB 545, the Right to Farm Bill. The bill had been passed the prior session through the House of Representatives, being carried by Representative Tom McCall and with wide support from many representatives. Senator John Wilkinson spearheaded the bill through the Senate Ag Committee, with amendments being made to address concerns within the bill. After its passage through committee, the bill was heard on the floor and then tabled for future consideration. As we began to address the concerns of Senators before a final vote, COVID-19 began its impact on the state.

Additionally, we began the process of working through the grocer industry concerns with SB 211, the Fake Meat bill, which was being carried by Senator Tyler Harper. As Representative McCall, who carried this bill on the house side, worked to get the scheduled in committee once we addressed the concerns of the grocers. Through meeting with their representative, we were able to provide changes to the bill which would address their concerns while simultaneously strengthening the bill and set specific requirements for labeling of alternative protein products including lab-grown protein. Unfortunately, the bill was not able to be heard in committee due to the impacts of COVID-19.

Before the recess, GCA was able to address a couple of concerns with bills that may have impacted our industry. For example, one bill addressed implanting "animals" with electronic identification, as well as requiring veterinarians to report the electronic identification information of each animal they see. With the potential for electronic id within our industry, and that our industry isn't setup with the infrastructure needed yet for widespread adoption of Electronic ID, we were able to have this bill clarified to exempt livestock instead of including them with the bill's original target of pet animals like dogs and cats.

We hope that the General Assembly will be able to take up these bills once they reconvene in June, but there is no guarantee that they will be able to consider these measures among others. By law, the General Assembly only has to pass the budget before they adjourn the session. While the House of Representatives passed their version of the state budget before their recess, due to COVID-19, it's a good assumption that they will have to start from scratch. We have asked for additional bills to be considered, but await to hear if they will expand their consideration to these bills.