

Transportation...from Page 1A

State Rep. Roberts' plan.

Converting to an excise tax dedicated to transportation will have the effect of moving the "fourth penny" revenue previously collected on motor fuel from the state's general fund to funding for transportation needs. This will result in an additional \$175 million in transportation funding per year, according to State Rep. Roberts' plan.

Any special purpose local option sales taxes on motor fuel currently authorized by the voters will be honored. Those SPLOST collections, which would be over and above the state's excise tax, would cease after their expiration dates as originally approved by local voters. Motor fuel would be ex-

empt from any future SPLOST, according to State Rep. Roberts' plan.

Local governments will be able to charge an additional excise tax of up to 6 cents per gallon (up to 3 cents for counties and up to 3 cents for cities) for local transportation projects by a vote of their county commission and/or city council. Any additional excise taxes local governments wish to levy on motor fuel beyond the limit would require a referendum offered to the residents of that jurisdiction, according to State Rep. Roberts' plan.

Alternative fueled vehicles will pay a user fee of \$200 for non-commercial and \$300 for commercial vehicles each year.

As these vehicles do not use gasoline, their owners do not currently pay their share of taxes devoted to the maintenance of the roads they use. This will provide equity among those who drive on our roads and ensure everyone pays their fair share. This fee will not be imposed on hybrid vehicles, which require purchase of gasoline. This revenue is intended to be used for transit systems, according to State Rep. Roberts' plan.

The legislation includes recapitalizing the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank so that a revolving, self-sustaining, loan/grant fund is created to incentivize governments, authorities, CIDs and

other entities to provide matching funds for local construction of projects. The Transportation Infrastructure Bank will be directed to assist tier 1 and tier 2 counties and encourage investment in every region of our state, according to State Rep. Roberts' plan.

A significant bond package will provide for critical bridge maintenance, transit system funding and other transportation projects across the state. This is a prudent way to provide more immediate funding for our transportation needs while leveraging the state's high credit rating to borrow at little cost to the state, according to State Rep. Roberts' plan.

Robbery...from Page 1A

Dyer said. "Later, in town, Josh Cramer's father contacts us. His son had called him and told him what he had done, adding that he was in trouble.

"We had the father call Josh Cramer on his cell phone. He told his father that he wasn't going to tell him where he was at; he was on the

run," Sgt. Dyer said. "We kept deputies out most of the night. The next morning, we got a call from Josh Cramer.

"He told me that he knew that local law enforcement wasn't going to stop looking for him, and that he was willing to turn himself in to local law enforcement," Sgt.

Dyer said. "He said that he and Ryan Wigley would turn themselves in to me at 6 p.m. that evening. Both of them showed up at the jail, and they turned themselves in."

Cramer and Wigley were both charged with robbery, Union County Jail records show.

As for the victim's purse, they dumped the contents out on the roadway, most of which was discovered, Sgt. Dyer said.

"We couldn't get the money back," he said. "There was about \$300 in the purse. Cramer and Wigley spent most of it on groceries and beer."

Allison...from Page 1A

continuing to work on my own legislation with the Department of Motor Vehicles as well as a resolution for tax reform dealing with income tax credits. I will have more on that next week.

Thursday we passed HB 75, the Amended Budget for FY2015, which adjusts state funds by \$276.1 million to a total of \$21.1 billion for the year ending June 30, 2015. The increase includes \$191.7 million

for the mid-year adjustment for K-12 Education. * Please keep in mind that this is NOT the budget for FY2016 that has been at the forefront of many discussions.

Something of great concern to many is the news coming from our Chairman of the House Transportation Committee announcing plans and instruction for a transportation overhaul to fill the \$1.6 billion gap we are facing for projects

and maintenance. The actual bill was not dropped and available until late Thursday evening, though, so I am still in the process of mulling over it. You can view the entire legislation (HB 170) at www.House.GA.gov. Once I have had the opportunity to review the bill and consider the implications and outcomes, I will be happy to field questions and feedback with your concerns.

We ended our week with

Savannah Day at the Capitol and I am looking forward to reconvening on Monday for another full week after the Super Bowl.

Thank you for allowing me to represent you under the Gold Dome. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

House District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison, (R-Blairsville) represents Towns, Union, Rabun counties, and a portion of White County.

TVA concludes drawdowns on Lake Chatuge

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Good news, Lake Chatuge lovers – the Tennessee Valley Authority is no longer imposing a drawdown of Lake Chatuge.

According to a press release issued by the North Carolina Department of Transportation in August, the NCDOT was working with TVA "to draw down the levels of the Chatuge Reservoir in Clay County dur-

ing the final stages of a bridge replacement project."

The timeline for the project had the drawdown lasting until mid-January, which was when TVA began allowing Lake Chatuge to fill up again toward normal winter levels.

"We have since released that restriction and are filling Chatuge back up to a more normal winter level, but that will be depending on how much rainfall and runoff we get," said James Everett of TVA.

The drawdown of the lake began in September, and took the lake down to about 1,913 feet above sea level, which was roughly 4-5 feet below normal winter levels.

"They were aware that we couldn't hold it down indefinitely because we've got other objectives that we're trying to meet," said Everett. "That's been several weeks ago, I guess, that we started holding back as much flow as we could to try to get our winter pool back up to a more normal level."

A new bridge was constructed between August of 2013 and October of last year to replace the old NC Highway 175 Bridge in Clay County, NC, and the drawdown was to assist in the demolition of the old bridge.

"The bridge over the Chatuge Reservoir was built in 1942 and is considered functionally obsolete and structurally deficient," according to the August press release. "This means that although the bridge is safe, it doesn't meet current or future traffic demands and requires costly maintenance to remain functional."

Demolition on the old bridge is still underway, but no longer requires the lowered lake level.

"The contractor is still working to remove the old bridge," said NCDOT Communications Officer Jordan-Ashley Walker. "They have almost completed removal of the superstructure and all but one of the bents (supports). They are going to hire divers to aid in the removal of some of the footings, which are underwater. TVA has brought the lake elevation back to 'normal' winter pool level. We anticipate the contractor to complete total removal of the old bridge within the next couple of weeks."

Looking ahead, the lake



Tom Barnett

will fill to normal winter levels for the time being.

"All we are allowing Chatuge is to go back to its normal winter average," said Travis Brickey with TVA Public Relations. "We don't typically

allow the tributary reservoirs, which Chatuge is one of them, to fill for summer recreation, which we try to get there by first of June – we typically start that, on average around the system, in mid-March. So, we are still a good month and a half, two months away from that."

Currently, the lake is still a few feet below normal winter levels of around 1,917-1,918 feet above sea level. Come mid-March, TVA will allow the lake to start filling to normal summer levels, pending rainfall and runoff.

"We don't have any kind of spigot or anything – we wish we did," said Brickey. "We just hold on to more water when it rains and runs off into the lake. We don't have any way of filling it other than just Mother Nature."

Dementia Workshop

What an amazing wealth of information was shared on Friday at Union General Hospital at the Alzheimer's/Dementia Workshop.

Thank you Ms. Green for your enthusiasm, knowledge, and willingness to share. So much to learn about this horrible disease but you pointed us in the right direction and reminded us that we are not in this struggle alone. Thank you to the staff of the hospital for making this available to us.