



The Sentinel

Association of Georgia Surveyors

August/September 2005

"If ye love wealth greater than liberty, the tranquility of servitude better than the animating contest for freedom, go home and leave us in peace. We seek not your council nor your arms. Crouch down and lick the hand that feeds you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen."

--Samuel Adams

Officers

President: Terry M. Scarborough, PLS
 Vice-President: Douglas Sherrill, PLS
 Secretary/Treasurer: Dwight Kilby, PLS
 Legislative Rep: Lane S. Bishop, PLS
 AGS Contact Information
 Phone: (678) 608-3326
 Email: AGS@AGSonline.org
 Website: www.agsonline.org

THE SAMSOG "KNEE-JERK" REACTION TO VETOED HOUSE BILL 444 – POSTED ON SAMSOG WEBSITE MID MAY - 2005

Dear SAMSOG Members:

It is with regret that I inform you that Governor Sonny Perdue has vetoed House Bill 444, our bill to require a 4 year degree for licensure as a land surveyor. The Governor made this uninformed decision late on Tuesday afternoon. I will attempt to provide a concise synopsis of a rather complex chain of events.

The veto is a result of the campaign initiated by the Association of Georgia Surveyors (AGS), and their desire to significantly expand the definition of land surveying in the State of Georgia. As you recall, this small group attempted to add on additional language to House Bill 444 in the Senate and this became known as the Senate add-on language.

This language dealt with the definition of land surveying and specifically with the amount of hydrology work that a land surveyor can perform. The language was so broad that there was no support for it—in fact, at the Senate Committee hearing on the matter, the following groups spoke strongly against it:

Association of Consulting Engineering Companies (ACEC)
 Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG)
 Georgia Municipal Association (GMA)
 Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD)

Based on the strong opposition it became clear to us (the Legislative Committee) that if the language were added on our Bill would not pass out of the Legislature. Thus, SAMSOG opposed the add-on language as well. No individuals or groups were present at this committee hearing to speak in support of this amendment. The Senate committee voted unanimously against the amendment and ultimately House Bill 444 was passed out of the Legislature with overwhelming support and was sent to Governor Perdue for his signature to become law.

The Association of Georgia Surveyors then began to lobby the Governor to veto House Bill 444 because it did not contain the Senate add-on language. They commenced their lobbying efforts via their "President's" close ties with Governor Sonny Perdue. This small group of individuals, led by their "President", were successful in convincing the Governor that the 4 year degree requirement will somehow alter the current definition of land surveying, and would lead to an erosion of the scope of land surveying services currently available to land surveyors. The sponsor of the bill, Representative David Graves, worked tirelessly with us to get our bill signed by the Governor. The Governor, unfortunately, was very misinformed by this group. As stated earlier, the "President" of the Association of Georgia Surveyors is a close personal friend of the Governor. This relationship was used to exert the maximum amount of influence possible to ensure that House Bill 444 was vetoed. Ultimately, they were successful in obtaining the Governor's veto.

Below is a statement regarding the veto obtained from the Governor's website on Wednesday, May 11, 2005.

"VETO NUMBER 3 – HB444"

HB444 changes the educational and professional requirements for engineers and land surveyors, essentially phasing-out the acceptability of apprenticeship experience and requiring a bachelor's degree. This legislation would ultimately, unnecessarily and inappropriately shut out many individuals from land surveying and likely result in increased costs to the

consumers. I believe that the underlying purpose of this bill can be better addressed through considering scope of practice as opposed to educational requirements. Therefore, I VETO HB444. – Governor Sonny Perdue"

I want you to know that I am confident that we, SAMSOG, did all that we could do to prevent this from happening. The Legislative Committee, the Executive Committee, and our lobbyists worked professionally and diligently to debate the merits of the content of House Bill 444 with all of the interested parties.

SAMSOG had the full support of the leadership of both Houses of the Legislature. These individuals worked with us to attempt to convince the Governor not to veto our bill. The State Board of Registration supported this bill and lobbied the Governor extensively to sign our bill. Several Engineering Societies lobbied for a signature as well.

SAMSOG attempted several times to arrange a face-to-face meeting with the Governor—which he declined to do. Our Legislative Committee Chair, Trent Turk, and I communicated daily with Ms. Terri Demayo King of the Governor's office over the past two weeks. We presented the merits of the case at face value. We argued extensively that the legislation was desperately needed for our profession, and was in no way related to the "definition of land surveying", as the other group argued.

In an attempt to work with the Association of Georgia Surveyors and save House Bill 444 from being vetoed a dialogue was established with the "President" of AGS. I wrote a letter to their "President" and pledged to work with them, as members of SAMSOG, in 2006 on the definition of land surveying if they would simply not lobby against our current bill, HB444. An olive branch was extended to them in an effort to establish dialogue between their "group" and our organization regarding their concerns about the definition of land surveying.

In my opinion, Governor Perdue never considered the actual merits of our bill. Our Governor based his decision solely on politics and the information the Association of Georgia Surveyors provided him. He declined to meet with SAMSOG and others to discuss the merits of these issues. Were informed that the Governor actually made a statement during the process to the effect of, "Well, if I want a piece of property surveyed, I want to get it surveyed by a surveyor and don't want to have to hire an engineer." Obviously, the Governor had been grossly misled regarding the content of our bill and it's purpose. He had obviously not considered the information we had diligently placed before his staff for his consideration.

I think this situation can be summed up best by stating that through the aggressive efforts of a small group of well-connected land surveyors, one of whom is a close personal friend of the Governor, House Bill 444 was vetoed. "The "President" of the Association of Georgia Surveyors, who also is a member of SAMSOG, led this campaign. I personally call on this individual to resign his membership from SAMSOG given his actions over the past month and considering the fact that he chose to lobby against the efforts of our organization without so much as communicating with SAMSOG whatsoever.

As for where we go from here—I do not believe it would be prudent to push a 4-year degree requirement as long as Sonny Perdue is Governor of our state. I encourage each of you to remember this vividly as you head to the polls in the fall of 2006—I know that I will.

I wish to extend a sincere thank you to our Legislative Committee members and our lobbyists Freddi Hagin and Steve Neff, for their successful efforts in getting our bill passed for a second year in a row out of the Legislature. They worked hard for many hours and represented SAMSOG and our profession in general in a highly professional, and always ethical, manner.

If you have questions or comments on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Rod Abney, Jr., LS; SAMSOG President

PUBLISHED JULY/AUGUST 2005 ISSUE OF "GEORGIA LAND SURVEYOR"

AGS REBUTTAL – POSTED ON SAMSOG MESSAGE BOARD ON 5-19-05

Dear SAMSOG Members:

I am confident that the surveyors of our state are now beginning to see the trend of a small group of individuals who sit in the leadership of SAMSOG as they decide what is best for our profession.

From your posts, I see what I have always suspected. You, the membership, have not been informed about the decisions of the leadership and you have not been made completely aware of all the implications of their actions. They spend your money on frivolous lobbying efforts in an attempt to further the agenda of the engineering community as they pursue laws that will continue to restrict and ultimately eliminate surveying as an independent profession.

Have you ever thought of what would happen to the profession if apprenticeship were removed from the process? Those individuals who love the purity and art of the work but who, for whatever reason, cannot achieve a college degree would be absorbed by the engineer's sponge to be forever underpaid "technicians" while we lose the independence of private practice.

Our Governor, apparently, understands this obvious fundamental principle. In his wisdom he obviously made his choice to veto HB 444 because he saw, with great clarity, what was at stake.

To say that Governor Perdue is misinformed, uninformed, or made his decision solely on politics, and to imply that the Governor could be misled, or that he chose not to consider the information SAMSOG had "diligently" placed before his staff, is the height of arrogance.

The insulting remarks by SAMSOG's president as he encouraged the membership to vote against the Governor in the next general election, just because he vetoed a bill that was his executive duty to veto, proves the magnitude of Mr. Abney's impudence. These actions do not seem very professional or "Presidential."

I hope that SAMSOG will take the time to calculate the altitude of the lofty perch from which their "President" insults our esteemed Governor. I ask the membership to remember that the Governor's party is in power in the legislature. I implore SAMSOG to take an honest appraisal of the political health of that society now that HB 444 failed the government's process. Remember, the bill failed in 2004 as well. In the best interest of SAMSOG, I call upon President-elect Greg Johnson, P.E. to quickly draft an apology to Governor Perdue.

Meanwhile, the Association of Georgia Surveyors extends the warmest of invitations to each and every Land Surveyor of this state to join our society. We promise that, if you belong to AGS, you will enjoy a devotion to Land Surveyors in private practice. We invite all Land Surveyors and dual registrants as well to join in our efforts to protect and promote the future of our profession.

We also encourage you to retain your membership in SAMSOG as well, since AGS sincerely hopes to work with SAMSOG next year as AGS moves an amended version of HB444 into law.

It is time to unify our profession and to strengthen our ranks so as to provide an enduring assurance that the Surveying profession will remain independent and will flourish with modern application of the talents of our brother and sister Land Surveyors.

Sincerely,
Terry M. Scarborough, PLS
AGS "President"

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:

A rallying cry goes out to all Georgia Land Surveyors. Join us, help us, as we (AGS) guard our livelihoods.

With your help, AGS will remain vigilant in its mission to protect, promote, and unify our profession. We have much to do. We have proven that the truth is the best approach to gaining political support. Now, we must continue our efforts to ensure that the "home-town" Georgia surveyor is not overlooked and "swept under the rug." AGS believes that HB 444 was contrived by Metro-area surveyors and others, who, in fact, are in "servitude" to large, corporate engineering firms. One only needs to look at the roster of SAMSOG officers to get an idea of the injustice of that society. The Surveying and Mapping Society of Georgia is top-heavy with Professional Engineers and Landscape Architects, and Land Surveyors employed by engineering companies. The President-elect is a P.E. He enjoys the "tranquility" of full-time employment with Georgia Power Company. How could he have respect for you and me, Georgia's "home-town" surveyor? How could he know or care about the fact that you have labored long and hard to build your business, one that your children aspire to inherit and use to fulfill their dreams of proprietorship?

With arrogance, SAMSOG has insinuated that our Governor cannot read and/or comprehend. Remember, Governor Perdue was Senator Perdue for many years. Prior to that, he had been Chairman of the Houston County Planning and Zoning Commission. During his distinguished tenure as Senator and as Chairman he routinely analyzed the very types of issues that SAMSOG, so naively, accused this brilliant man of ignoring, and being uninformed or misinformed about. I will assure you, Governor Perdue saw through the SAMSOG "smoke and mirrors" instantly.

At last, a great man sits in the Governor's office. A man of honesty and integrity. A true Georgian and patriotic American. He is the great redeemer of hometown values and traditions.

For the good of the Surveying profession and for the virtues of truth and fairness, join us as we support Governor Perdue, as Governor Perdue supports us, and as we work together to promote and protect our futures.

Ever vigilant, I remain,
Terry M. Scarborough, PLS
AGS President