

Press Release

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CITY OF STATESBORO REACTS TO THE PASSAGE OF HR 980 IN THE HOUSE

STATESBORO, GA, AUGUST 14, 2007: The City of Statesboro's Mayor and Council Members are expressing their opposition to the July 17th passage of HR 980 in the United States House of Representatives. Sponsored by and voted for by Congressman John Barrow, HR 980 will mandate city governments to engage in collective bargaining with labor unions representing public safety officers, such as police officers and firefighters. The constitutionality of this legislation is being questioned by city officials. According to Mayor Bill Hatcher, "The 10th Amendment, which is more than 200 years old, clearly states that any powers not specifically given to the federal government are reserved to the states or the people. Exactly where in the US Constitution does it say that the federal government is authorized to determine whether there will be public employee unions in each state and its political subdivisions?" Although

Hatcher questions the constitutionality of the bill, if passed, failure to recognize and negotiate with these labor unions will result in a lawsuit against the City by the Federal Labor Relations Authority. "I am extremely upset that Congressman Barrow failed to discuss his intentions regarding this law with me, the City Council, and City Manager George Wood. This bill is an unfunded mandate that will cost the taxpayers of this city, county, and the state of Georgia millions of dollars in the near future" said Hatcher.

HR 980 will allow unions to bargain over employee hours, wages, benefits, and conditions of employment leading to higher taxes imposed on citizens. Wood stated, "Most of the public employee labor unions in this country are in the northeast, midwest, Florida, and California. If you overlaid a map of the areas with the highest taxes, on one with public employee unions, you would see a direct correlation. Unions result in higher property taxes and other local taxes for the citizens, period." Considering potential tax and budget implications, Statesboro City Officials are shocked and appalled that Congressman Barrow would sponsor such a bill.

"Besides the questioned constitutionality and tax increases, we are also apprehensive of the possibility of public safety employee work stoppages" stated Hatcher. Although there is a provision in HR 980 that prohibits these employees and labor organizations from engaging in strikes, it is not difficult to find cases where public employees have struck despite state laws

forbidding it. "As City Manager, I am very concerned that public safety officers in other jurisdictions have engaged in illegal strikes, putting the public at risk. If Congressman Barrow is concerned for our citizens and community, he should have discussed these issues with our elected officials" stated Wood.

Determined to fight HR 980, Mayor Hatcher has written letters to Senators Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson asking them to defeat this bill, so that the city's authority to govern their own public safety personnel is protected from unions. "I am urging our Senators to vote AGAINST this legislation because we have local governments, run not by unions, but by leaders elected by the citizens of that jurisdiction, to make local decisions" said Hatcher. If passed by the Senate, the bill will become law in two years. "I want to encourage the citizens of Statesboro to contact Senators Chambliss and Isakson and express their concerns with HR 980" said Hatcher.

For more information regarding the City of Statesboro's opposition to HR 980, please contact Public Information Officer Maggie Fitzgerald at (912)764-0649.

Contacts:

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