

# Representative Gurtler's insight into upcoming legislative session

By Lily Avery  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Georgia House District 8 State Rep. Matt Gurtler spent the morning discussing the upcoming 2018 Legislative Session with the Mountain Movers and Shakers at its weekly meeting at Sundance Grill on Friday, Nov. 3.

Rep. Gurtler share with the group what he hopes to see come to pass in the approaching year.

Rep. Gurtler made quite a splash at the State Capitol during his freshman year in the Georgia State House of Representatives and while some may not agree with his policies and decisions, Gurtler fully intends to hit the ground running in the 2018 session.

“My priorities this session is going to be focusing on my bills,” said Gurtler. “I introduced a couple of bills, one is constitutional carry. It basically makes the Georgia Weapons License an option.” Constitutional carry, essentially, is a bill that would allow citizens who can legally possess firearms to do so in most public places. However, this would not replace Georgia’s current carry license and would leave it in place for reciprocity between the states.

“I think that it’s not the proper role of government to be charging people money, a \$15 million tax, on a right,” said Gurtler. “It becomes a privilege then. Twelve other states have already looked at this kind of legislation so we’re looking forward to finding more support for it this year in



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the state legislature.”

Another bill that Gurtler intends to continue with is a repeal of the Georgia State Hotel/Motel Tax. Introduced to the Georgia General Assembly and passed in 2015, this fee requires any facility that meets the qualification of a hotel to charge a fee to customers of \$5 dollars per night.

“This really affects our district a lot,” said Gurtler. “Georgia is the only state in the entire country that has this kind of tax, subsequently we also have the top four cities with the highest tax brackets for hotels and motels. Columbus comes in at a whopping 22.9 percent.

“When this was passed, it never went through a vetting process and this really affects

our district because of tourism. We have a lot of tourism here and it’s one of the biggest industries in our district.

“This really affects our small businesses because, for example, if a couple has a room for \$45 a night, then you add that \$5, it’s going to seem like a lot more than a hotel in a larger city that already has a higher rate.”

Several other representatives in the House have shown support for the repeal of the bill, which Gurtler sees as a promising sign for the upcoming assembly as he continues to campaign against the statewide tax.

In addition to policies and bills that Gurtler has introduced and supports, he also spoke

briefly on the current campaign for Georgia’s governor, offering advice for his constituents who may still be up in the air on which candidate they feel would be best for the job.

“With all of these candidates, I’ve had a lot of people ask who should they vote for,” said Rep. Gurtler. “Well, what I would suggest is to do some research. Look at the candidates voting records and see how that correlates with how you vote and what you believe in.

“There’s still time, so just make sure that you’re voting for who aligns with your beliefs. Just beware of all of the rhetoric with these candidates. You have to keep your elected officials accountable, myself included.”

Also during the meeting, Gurtler mentioned his ongoing internship program during the legislative session. For the 2017 session, Gurtler had two interns from Young Harris College who were given the opportunity to experience government proceedings first hand and walk away with a newfound knowledge and understanding of what exactly goes on in the state legislature.

“I’m trying to get young people involved in our government and what’s going on,” said Gurtler. “We’re not going to change things if people aren’t educated on what’s going on and I think it’s very important. What I’m doing is reaching out to all of the colleges across the district.

“These students can get to know the process and see what’s really happening in

## CCRPI...continued from Page 1A

previous year.

On average, Georgia high schools scored a 77 on the CCRPI, putting Union County High School 21 points ahead of the state average.

UCHS also scored eight points higher than the second

highest scoring school in the RESA, which was White County with a 90.

“CCRPI is influenced by many factors,” said Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield. “Success requires the efforts of everyone in the school

district – students, parents, and our community partners.

“Union County Schools continue to excel at all levels with our CCRPI scores and academic progress measures. Our schools have consistently performed above RESA and state averages.

“My thanks to everyone in our school system and the community for their hard work

and dedication to excellence in education.”

The CCRPI is a “comprehensive school improvement, accountability and communication platform for all educational stakeholders that will promote college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students,” according to the Georgia Department of Education.

## Deadline extended for Georgia HEART Tax Credit opportunity

Help your local hospital and receive a 90% State Tax Credit.

Due to the popularity of the Georgia HEART Tax Credit, it has been extended until Wednesday, November 15th. Local taxpayers still have time to apply to make a charitable contribution to Union General Hospital in Blairsville, GA or Chatuge Regional Hospital in Hiawassee, GA and receive a 2017 Georgia income tax credit of up to 90% of their contribution. The Georgia General Assembly made this opportunity available through its implementation, and recent

enhancement, of the Georgia Rural Hospital Expense Tax Credit program. Taxpayers who itemize may also receive a federal charitable income tax deduction.

If you pay Georgia income taxes, you may be eligible to receive a 2017 tax credit for contributing to Union General Hospital or Chatuge Regional Hospital as follows:

- Individual Filer – 90% of the amount contributed or \$5,000 per tax year, whichever is less

- Married Filing Jointly – 90% of the amount contributed or \$10,000, whichever is less

- C-Corporation or Trust – 90% of the amount contributed or 75% of your Georgia income tax liability, whichever is less

Potential donors can sign up to get pre-approved for the tax credit by completing and submitting the 2017 HEART Tax Credit Form found at [www.georgiaheart.org](http://www.georgiaheart.org). Don’t forget to choose Union General Hospital or Chatuge Regional Hospital as your Designated Rural Hospital Organization. Deadline to submit an application for the 2017 tax year is November 15, 2017.

Georgia HEART will take care of the rest, submitting your tax credit pre-approval request to the Department of Revenue, notifying you of approval and payment deadline, and – once you contribute – providing you with your taxpayer reporting instructions.

Union General Hospital and Chatuge Regional Hospital are two of 40 rural hospitals participating in the Georgia HEART Hospital Program, which provides marketing and administrative services to qualified hospitals.

Each year, during 2017, 2018, and 2019, taxpayers will have access to a \$60 million pool of credits, with donors to each rural hospital having access to up to \$4 million of credits each year until the annual \$60 million cap is reached.

Anyone who has questions regarding the Georgia Rural Hospital Expense Tax Credit program may contact Leslie Daniel at 706-745-2050

## NGTC Board meeting

North Georgia Technical College’s Board of Directors will meet at 12 noon on Wednesday, November 15, in the Clarkesville Campus Dining Hall Annex. For more information, contact 706-754-7702.

## Active and Retired Federal Employees upcoming meeting

The National Association of Active and Retired Federal Employees will meet Tuesday, November 14 at 11:30 AM at the Circle J Steakhouse in Blue Ridge. The purpose of the meeting is to talk about reorganization, changes to benefits and health insurance. For more information, you may contact President Jim Veal at 706-455-6920.

### FFA Annual Fruit Sale

The FFA Chapter is holding it's annual fruit sale! If you would like to purchase any fruit, please email Chris Crump or call the Front Office of the High School and they will put you in contact with someone to help you order your fruit. Thank you for your support in advance!

Chris Crump's Email: [ccrump@ucschools.org](mailto:ccrump@ucschools.org)  
Union County High School (706) 745-2216

**Fruit orders are due by November 9<sup>th</sup>.**  
**Fruit Pickup will be December 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> from 3:00-6:00 PM at the Agriscience Center .**

22 Lovell Drive Blairsville, GA 30512

## UNION COUNTY COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Children’s Story Time	<b>Every Monday:</b>	Union County Library	11 am
Kiwanis Club		Steve’s Steakhouse	Noon
Civil Air Patrol		Blairsville Airport	6 pm
Boy Scouts #101		United Methodist Ch	7 pm
	<b>Every Tuesday:</b>		
Tri State Bus. Women		Cabin Coffee	8 am
Get Fit		First UMC	5:15 pm
Smoky Mtn. Melodies		United Methodist Ch	6:30 pm
Hi Country Harmonizers		Branan Lodge	6:30 pm
	<b>Every Wednesday:</b>		
BINGO		Civic Center	7 pm
	<b>Every Thursday:</b>		
Masonic Luncheon		Cooks Restaurant	11:30 am
Rotary Club		NGTC	Noon
Get Fit		First UMC	5:15 pm
	<b>Third Monday of each month:</b>		
Shape Note Music		Old Courthouse	6:30 pm
High Country Artisan		U.C.Bank Com Room	6:30 pm
Allegheny Lodge #114		Masonic Lodge	6:30 pm
Exp Aviation Assoc #1211		Blairsville Airport	7 pm
	<b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b>		
UC Homemakers		Dooley Chapter	Noon
Healthy Hearts Support		UGH 2nd Floor Class	2 pm
Am. Legion Post 121		Veteran’s Center	6:30 pm
American Legion, Aux		Veteran’s Center	6:30 pm
Chatuge Gun Club		Senior Center, Hia.	7 pm
Compassionate Friends		UCB Community Room	7 pm
	<b>Third Wednesday of each month:</b>		
Quilts of Valor		Coosa Methodist Ch	9:30 am
GA Mtn. Writers Club		Grinds & Glazes (G&G)	10 am
Blairsville Garden Club		Location not listed	1 pm
Friends of the Library		Library Com Room	2 pm
Beta Sigma Phi, Iota Iota		So. Bank & Trust	7 pm
	<b>Third Thursday of each month:</b>		
MMQG		Mtn. Presbyterian Ch	10 am-3 pm
Kinship Care		Civic Center	Noon
Commissioner’s Meet.		County Courthouse	6 pm
Good N’bors Auto		Rib Country, Murphy	6:30 pm
UT Home Builders		Moschetto’s	6:30 pm
Cub Scouts Trp. #101		United Methodist Ch.	6:30 pm
Tip-off Club		UC High School	7 pm
UC Saddle Club		Arena Clubhouse	7 pm
Jaycees		Fort Sorghum	7:30 pm
	<b>Third Friday of each month:</b>		
No activities listed			
	<b>Third Saturday of each month:</b>		
UC Republican Party		Civic Center	10 am
Goldwing Road Riders		Daniels Steak House	11 am