



THE Connection

Official Newsletter of the Georgia Association of Professional Private Investigators, Inc.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

The Next
GAPPI Atlanta
Chapter Meeting
February 14, 2012
at Ryan's Restaurant
705 Jimmy Carter Blvd.
Norcross
(770) 840-9096

Networking and lunch
from
11:30 a.m.—12:00 noon
Meeting from
12:00 noon—1p.m.

The cost is \$15.00 for
GAPPI members

\$20 for non-members
(includes lunch and
beverage)

\$10 for meeting only -
no lunch

Students and potential
members are always
welcome.

“We look forward to
seeing you all there!”

President's Pen

Dear Members:

I want to start by telling each of you how excited I am to serve as the President of this great organization for the next two years. I also want to thank my fellow board members for the dedication and service to our Association. I also want to thank each and every one of you for your choice to be part of GAPPI. There are a number of great associations and organizations out there, but there has never been a more important time to support and actively participate in GAPPI. We need you, and we appreciate you very much. We also need you to spread the word to others in the private detective and private security fields that we need them also. Let's work together this year to build our membership as more members means more credibility, a stronger voice, and increased funds to move forward with bringing about some important changes to our industry, and protecting us from changes that would be devastating.

One item I do want to call your attention to is that GAPPI will now allow Board Certified Training Instructors, who are members of the Association, to post upcoming training events on the GAPPI website. If you are a certified trainer and would like to post any items, please submit your request via the “contact us” link on the GAPPI website.

In this first President's Pen I want to address some of the legislative issues that are currently taking place, and to strongly encourage each of you to be aware of how vitally important the lobbying efforts taking place on behalf of our industry are proving to be. Laws are passed in state legislatures that we may or may not be aware of until it is too late, or until we find ourselves in trouble for something we didn't even know about.

The best way to avoid this trap is by membership in your state organizations, who, if they are doing their job, are keeping up with upcoming changes in laws and regulations that will affect their members. There are also some good national organizations that are specifically geared toward lobbying on our behalf at both the national and state levels. On behalf of the membership, the Board of Directors of the Georgia Association of Professional Private Investigators has voted to expend funds to hire the lobbying firm of Thrash-Haliburton. Our directive to them is to be proactive on all fronts. They are watching for potentially harmful legislation, as well as assisting us with efforts to pass legislation that will be beneficial to our industry. Currently that includes lobbying efforts on HB 357, as outlined below. In the past we have gotten legislation passed to gain an exemption from the “window tint” law, and we have defeated the Bill that would have seriously limited our use of GPS tracking devices.

Listed below is the legislation carrying over from last year that directly relates to our

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Board Members:

Willis Craig

W. Larry Davis

John Roberson,

Immediate Past President

Roy Wilkinson

industry. The number of stars indicate the level of importance.

*HB 663: A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 2 of Chapter 3 of Title 35 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the Georgia Crime Information Center, so as to change provisions relating to inspection, purging, modifying, or supplementing of criminal records; to provide for a definition; to provide for procedure; to provide for individuals who have not been convicted to have their arrest records restricted; to amend Code Section 5-6-34 and Code Section 15-11-83 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to judgments and rulings deemed directly appealable and when a child may be fingerprinted or photographed and confidentiality of information, respectively, so as to provide for and correct a cross-reference; and for other purposes.

Sponsored by Rep Jay Neil 1st

The bill is currently in the House Judiciary (non-civil) Committee

SB 229: Searches with warrants; issuance of search warrant by judicial officers

Sponsored by: Fort, Vincent 39th

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 2 of Chapter 5 of Title 17 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to searches with warrants, so as to change provisions relating to issuance of search warrants by judicial officers; to provide that no-knock warrants shall not be issued in this state except under limited circumstances; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; This bill is currently in the Senate Judiciary Committee

***HB 357: Motor vehicle registration records; persons to receive certificate of title; add authorized persons

Sponsored by Rep. Kip Smith

HB 357 calls for allowing licensed private investigators in Georgia to have access to the GRATIS (motor vehicle) information held at the Georgia Department of Revenue. After a long and protracted fight with many legislators, leadership, the House Motor Vehicles



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Committee, Sheriffs, and other entities, it has been agreed by parties and legislators involved in the process that study and examination will occur throughout 2012 to try and make this happen.

This bill relates to motor vehicles and traffic, so as to add certain persons to those authorized to receive motor vehicle registration records; to add certain persons to the list of persons authorized to receive motor vehicle certificate of title records; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes. The bill is currently in the House Motor Vehicles Committee.

HB 8: Due Process Restoration Act
Sponsored by Rep. Bobby Franklin

A bill relating to wiretapping, eavesdropping, surveillance, and related offenses, and prohibiting certain forms of surveillance without search warrants. This bill is currently in the House Judiciary (non-civil) Committee

SB 15: Private Detective/Security Businesses
Sponsored by Sen. Bill Hamrick

A bill relating to operators of private detective businesses and private security businesses, so as to clarify that persons certified by the Georgia Peace Officer Standard and Training Council are excluded from the provisions and regulations of this chapter. This bill is currently in the the Senate Judiciary Committee. This bill was rendered mute with the passage of HB-53 last year. HB-53 was an identical piece of legislation that was signed into law by the Governor in 2011.

****HB 526: Marshal responsibilities; only certified may serve process in court; provided they are certified by the Marshal of that County.**

Sponsored by Rep. Carolyn Hugley

This bill relates to commencement of action and service, so as to provide that only a marshal, deputy marshal, or a person certified by marshal to serve process may serve process in a court under the responsibility of a marshal. This bill is currently in the House Judiciary Committee.

SB 102: Firearms; carrying/possession; definitions; penalties; issuance/qualifications for firearms licenses; provisions

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Sponsored by Sen. Jeff Mullis

This bill relates to crimes and offenses, so as to provide and revise certain definitions; to revise certain provisions relative to the carrying and possession of firearms; to provide for penalties; to revise certain terminology; and to revise the manner of issuance of and qualifications for firearms licenses. This bill passed the Senate on 3/16/11 and is in the House Judiciary (non-civil) Committee.

****HB 284: Commencement of action and service; certified process servers; change provisions**
Sponsored by Rep. Jay Powell

This bill relates to commencement of action and service, so as to change provisions relating to the procedure involved with certified process servers; to provide for procedure; to change provisions relating to process; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes. This bill was recommitted and is currently in the House Rules Committee.

***HB 402: Georgia Crime Information Center; criminal records; change provisions**
Sponsored by Rep. Mark Hatfield

This bill relates to the Georgia Crime Information Center, so as to change provisions relating to disclosure and dissemination of criminal records to private persons and businesses. This bill is currently in the House Judiciary (non-civil) Committee.

***HB 478: Georgia Crime Information Center; certain criminal records restricted from public disclosure**
Sponsored by Rep. Roberta Abdul-Salaam

This bill relates to the Georgia Crime Information Center, so as to provide that the criminal record of a person convicted of a misdemeanor or a nonviolent felony who has been released from custody for a period of two years without a further conviction shall be restricted from disclosure from the public

Listed below is legislation introduced this year that directly relates to our industry. The number of stars indicate the level of importance.

*****HB-674** This bill would make it totally illegal to place a GPS tracking device on any object or person within the state of Georgia and to track the movements using such a device.

****HB-735** This bill would require new applicants for gun carrying permits from the Probate Court to have four (4) hours of training, and also those who currently have valid permits to also have the training when they go to re-new such permit. This training could be obtained from any firearms instructor licensed by the Georgia Board of Private Detectives and Security Guards.

Although no bill has yet been introduced it is the intention of the Secretary of State to revamp the application process for all licensing boards. Please go to the Secretary of State's website <http://www.sos.ga.gov/plb/> and observe the video and read the transcript displayed there.

A special thanks to John Roberson for his invaluable wisdom on legislative issues that pertain to our industry and for providing many of the Bill updates that are included in this Newsletter.

Sincerely,

Pam Griggs
President

Grow Your Investigations Business in 2012

As 2011 has now passed, it's time to take advantage of opportunities to grow your private investigation business in 2012. You may have already targeted improvement areas or even set some business resolutions, but it's important to make sure you're not missing other opportunities to expand your business.

Here are 13 ways to grow your investigations business in 2012:

1. Focus on local search marketing

This aspect of your Internet presence is crucial for growing your business in 2012. Local search marketing is becoming a very large part of a successful online strategy. As a business offering location-specific services, it's important to adapt to the way people search. Make sure that you claim your local listing, submit your company to multiple directories and networks, and utilize available tools to help your business show up in local search results.

2.

2. Get directory and trusted network listings

Submitting to multiple directory and network listings will support your local search marketing. Think of each listing as a recommendation for your services. If ten of your friends recommended the same mechanic, you would probably try his or her services first. Directory listings tie into local search the same way. If your friends didn't know a mechanic in your area, just as people search for Los Angeles Private Investigator you would search for your city and mechanic. Though it's an Internet search, people approach the situation with the same mentality. If the same company is listed three separate times, that's usually the first person they call. Multiple directory listings will get you leads, but make sure you're included in trusted networks to help turn those leads into clients.

3. Join state and national associations

Joining a national or state association will never hinder your business growth. The main role of associations is to preserve the industry and make sure all private investigators have the best opportunities to generate income. Association meetings are a great place connect with out-of-state professionals and get business tips from experienced, successful investigators. Consider joining out-of-state associations to expand your network.

4. Network with other investigators

Networking with private investigators across the country can help you generate a referral network. With nation-wide contacts, you can work with investigators that are out of your area and hopefully assist with investigations in other states. If you prove to be a reliable and diligent contact, your network can become a great source of income for your business.

5. Utilize free resources

A resource can be anything from an industry group to an article you've found helpful or even a smart-phone app or computer program. Use whatever you can to get connected with your clients and job opportunities, and always have an eye out for programs and services you might find helpful. Sharing your resources with your colleagues will also help you get established as a leading industry professional.

Social media is an excellent source for free marketing and networking, so make sure you set up a Facebook page and Twitter account for your business. Utilize social media to join industry groups, network with other professionals, and share related information and news.

6. Build a website or revamp your existing site

Without a website, or even with a dated website, you might be stunting your growth potential. Even with referrals, trusted network listings, and a spot in local search results your potential clients will likely check your website before contacting you. Music, animation, and broken links may lead them to continue searching, so clean up your existing site and decide if it's time for a new one. Remember, your website can affect some of your search result rankings, so if it's time for a complete renovation make sure you explore your options. There are many alternatives to building a search engine optimized professional-looking investigator website on your own.

7. Expand your services

One sure-fire way to experience business growth is to expand your services. Offer process service, pre-employment screening, or find partners for specialized fields like polygraph or arson investigations. There are always opportunities to provide additional services. Make sure you find creative ways to let your clients know you've expanded, and give them the opportunity to utilize your new services.

8. Target major clients with creative marketing

A crucial step in growing your business is to get your name out there. Take it one step further by targeting major clients with the potential for consistent work. Brainstorm creative ways to target these clients, like hosting educational seminars at law firms and insurance firms, and find ways to network or get on the vendor list. Just make sure you distribute your business information!

9. Do the unexpected for your clients

Before you expand, check in with your repeat clients. Be sure to thank them for their business, and contact them to find out if there's anything you can do to improve service. Ask specific questions, like what more you can do to help and what problems you can help them solve. It's also a good idea to have your calls forwarded to your cell phone when you're out of the office. Repeat clients might leave a message, but most new clients will work with the first person who answers the phone.

10. Do your job to the best of your ability

One of the key tools for doing your job well is communication, especially when there is an issue. Clear communication is the best way to build trust and lets your clients know they can count on you. Make sure you are handling complaints, staying organized, maintaining professional reports, and keeping your turn-around times reasonable. If you continually exceed expectations you are more likely to get repeat business and referrals.

11. Reinforce your brand

Display your company contact information, including your logo, prominently on all correspondence - envelopes, letterhead, faxes, reports, and the signature file of your email.

This is a simple and inexpensive way to repeatedly expose your business to clients and colleagues. Include your company name, toll free number, fax, web address, email, etc. Reinforce your services, and include a tagline specific to the services you offer - "Private Investigations throughout Texas" or "For all your Investigative and Process Serving Needs".

12. Invest in effective business tools

Growing your business is not exclusive to expanding your services and getting more clients. Look for opportunities for improvement within your business. Invest in tools, technology and marketing that will help streamline operations, enhance business-client relationships, and help get you in front of your clients. Re-

member, it takes money to make money, so make sure you invest in effective marketing that will generate a return.

13. Set Reasonable Business Goals

All successful companies have annual, monthly and sometimes even weekly and daily goals. Write down your goals and share them with your staff and anyone who will hold you accountable. Studies have shown that by writing your goals down and sharing them with other people you are more likely to achieve them. It's also important that your goals are clear, measurable and realistic as well as ambitious.

Growing your investigations business takes time, but with persistence and the right tools you should find yourself with more business by the end of 2012. If you adapt to changes in marketing and advertising and constantly look for opportunities for improvement, you will likely experience significant business growth and become a leader in your industry.

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Legislative Update 1/12/12

The 2012 Georgia General Assembly jumped off to a quick start Monday, January 9, with the Senate immediately taking up two major pieces of legislation focusing on education reform. The House and Senate then held full Committee meetings immediately taking up major pieces of legislation still available from passage from the 2011 legislative session. As has been mentioned in the past, the Georgia Legislature operates on a biennial process, which means legislation introduced in the first of the two years during the biennial period is alive for passage during the second of the two years. Legislation “active” for passage from 2011 was discussed and passed out of Committees starting Monday. This also means legislation that was ready to be taken up on the floors of the House and Senate at the end of the 2011 legislative session but was not taken up then is now available for floor passage during the 2012 legislative session, which is what occurred with the Senate immediately taking up the education reform legislation on the first morning of the legislature.

Georgia again is facing a budget short-fall; however it is not as severe as in years past. Speaker Ralston and Governor Deal have recently mentioned in years past the Governor and Legislature have been forced to make drastic cuts, but the actions of the 2012 General Assembly will hopefully be more about “trimming” some areas. The Governor has actually increased overall spending with \$700 million in new building projects across the State along with increased funding in Education and Corrections. The modest increase comes as Georgia is still rebounding from the Great Recession. Deal's budget marks the start of what will be a lengthy and politically charged process in the House and Senate, before the budget is approved this spring. The proposal provides a blueprint for this year's priorities.

Indications are the main focus of the 2012 Georgia General Assembly will be addressing the Budget, Corrections and prison reform, making the Georgia tax system friendlier for businesses, reducing unneeded Government regulation, Education reform, and more. Over 2,822 pieces of legislation have been introduced since the beginning of the 2011 Legislative Session. Some have passed and been signed into law, while most are still alive and working their way through the legislative process. Around 3,000 more bills should be introduced during the 2012 legislative session, which means your government affairs team will be watching, keeping track of, and working on over 6,000 pieces of legislation for our industry. As always, we are at the Capitol all day and every day for you and your interests!

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