



MEDIA RELEASE

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For More Information
Holly Lang (404) 525-1085

Georgia Watch names Rep. Mike Keown a Friend of the Consumer

ATLANTA – Georgia Watch today presented Representative Mike Keown (D-Coolidge) with its first annual “Friend of the Consumer” award in recognition of his work to expand the membership of the licensing board for physicians and his 100 percent Georgia Watch voting record in 2008. Rep. Keown is a second term Republican representing parts of Grady and Thomas Counties.

Rep. Keown introduced HB 492 in 2007, which would add two members to the Composite State Board of Medical Examiners, one doctor and one non-doctor. The panel currently has 13 members, only one of which is a non-doctor. All but one of Georgia’s neighboring states has at least three non-doctors serving on their licensing boards. HB 492 would give the public two representatives on Georgia’s board and would also change the name to the Georgia Composite Medical Board. The bill passed the House but was used as a vehicle in the Senate for an unrelated policy struggle and did not make it to the floor in time for a final vote.

“Giving consumers a bigger voice on the Medical Board will help ensure that a patient perspective is being considered at meetings,” said Georgia Watch Executive Director Allison Wall. **“We hope that similar legislation will be considered in 2009 without being encumbered by unrelated proposals.”**

This year, Keown also worked to improve House Bill 130 – the credit freeze bill – by making that crucial consumer protection affordable for all Georgians. Credit freeze is the only effective tool to stop new account fraud, the most damaging form of identity theft, by prohibiting identity thieves from fraudulently opening new accounts or lines of credit. Rep. Keown voted in favor of a crucial amendment that keeps fees low at \$3 for consumers who want to be in control of their credit reports.

“I am excited beyond words that we in Georgia now have the best credit freeze law in the United States,” added Georgia Watch board member and consumer advisor Clark Howard. **“Now Georgians have the best way possible to shut down identity thieves cold.”**

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Founded in 2002, Georgia Watch is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 501-(c)(3) watchdog group focusing on consumer education and research in the areas of health, insurance and personal finance. Visit www.GeorgiaWatch.org for more information.