

Senate Resolution 30EX

By: Senators Hill of the 4th, Carter of the 1st and Williams of the 19th

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the General Services Administration of the United States to reconsider the proposed
2 decision to close the federal building housing the United States District Court in Statesboro,
3 Georgia; and for other purposes.

4 WHEREAS, the federal court facility in Statesboro, Georgia, provides a valuable service to
5 those citizens living in the counties encompassed in its division, i.e., the citizens of Bulloch,
6 Candler, Emanuel, Evans, Jenkins, Screven, Tattnall, and Toombs counties; and

7 WHEREAS, Southeast Georgia is home to many state prisons, including the Georgia State
8 Prison at Reidsville, Wheeler Correctional Institute, Smith State Prison, Rogers State Prison,
9 and Emanuel Women's Prison, with a new prison currently under construction in Jenkins
10 County, Georgia; and

11 WHEREAS, the Georgia State Prison at Reidsville holds over 1,250 of the state's most
12 violent and hardened prisoners; and

13 WHEREAS, when the Statesboro court facility was constructed, extra security details were
14 incorporated into its design to ensure that violent prisoners could be safely transported,
15 secured, and detained for all criminal proceedings including funds and input from the federal
16 marshal's service to ensure a safe environment; and

17 WHEREAS, the Statesboro court facility is the only courthouse in the Southern District of
18 Georgia specially designed to accommodate the need for violent offenders to be physically
19 present in federal court; and

20 WHEREAS, if the Statesboro court facility is closed, prisoners in the various prisons,
21 including those in the Reidsville prison, will have to be transported longer distances to
22 courthouses which do not have the special prisoner security features incorporated into the

23 Statesboro courthouse, potentially posing a security risk for courthouse employees and others
24 who must deal with violent prisoners in court; and

25 WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court has recognized the right of citizens to serve
26 as jurors in the seminal case of *Batson v. Kentucky*, 476 U.S. 79 (1986), and this right would
27 be abridged and compromised if it is too onerous to travel to serve as jurors, given the fact
28 that the Southern District of Georgia is a large geographic area; and

29 WHEREAS, the persons using the Statesboro court facility numbered 16,918 in 2008; 23,126
30 in 2009; and 19,991 in 2010; and

31 WHEREAS, the usage of the Statesboro court facility is the highest of the courts in the
32 Southern District that do not have a manned clerk's office as part of the facility; and

33 WHEREAS, the number of individuals using the Statesboro court facility is almost as
34 numerous as those using the facilities in Augusta, Savannah, and Brunswick, Georgia, where
35 manned clerk's offices are located; and

36 WHEREAS, the Statesboro court facility is in constant use for both district court proceedings
37 and bankruptcy court proceedings; and

38 WHEREAS, if the Statesboro court facility is closed, citizens in Bulloch, Candler, Emanuel,
39 Evans, Jenkins, Screven, Tattnall, and Toombs counties will have to travel great distances
40 to attend court in Savannah, Augusta, or Brunswick, Georgia; and

41 WHEREAS, the additional travel time and expense will pose a hardship for all concerned —
42 jurors, representatives of creditors in bankruptcy actions such as banks and other lenders,
43 debtors in bankruptcy actions, attorneys, parties, and witnesses in court proceedings, many
44 of whom reside outside of the counties within the Statesboro division; and

45 WHEREAS, the volume of usage of the Statesboro court facility indicates that it is an
46 important facility for the administration of justice in the Southern District of Georgia.

47 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that this body is on record in
48 opposing the proposed decision by the General Services Administration to close the
49 Statesboro court facility.

50 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
51 to transmit appropriate copies of this resolution to the appropriate officials at the General
52 Services Administration, all of the members of the Georgia congressional delegation, the
53 Honorable Joel Dubina, Chief Judge of the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals, Jim
54 Gerstenlauer, Circuit Executive, United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit,
55 Robert A. Peck, Commissioner for Public Buildings Service, James C. Duff, Director of the
56 Administrative Office of the United States Courts, and James S. Weller, P.E., Regional
57 Commissioner for the General Services Administration.