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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SENATOR LEE HAWKINS RECEIVES  
2009 LEGISLATIVE SERVICE AWARD FROM ACCG**

**ATLANTA, Ga. (June 25, 2009)** – State Senator Lee Hawkins (R-49), who represents Hall County and part of Jackson County, has received a 2009 Legislative Service Award from the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) for his sound judgment and leadership on complex issues that impact local government. Senator Hawkins accepted the award on Thursday, June 25, 2009 during the Hall County Commission meeting.

“While only in his second term, Senator Hawkins has been named Chairman of the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee (SLGO),” said ACCG Executive Director Jerry Griffin. “In this capacity, he has proven his willingness to listen to the concerns of local officials and to understand the impact his decisions will have on local government operations.”

During the 2009 legislative session, Senator Hawkins also sponsored SB 23, which would allow local governments to introduce as court evidence whether someone suing them was wearing a seatbelt when involved in an accident on a local roadway. The bill would allow juries to hear this evidence before deciding whether any reduction in damages was warranted due to the individual’s failure to wear a seatbelt. As part of the discussion of this legislation, Hawkins respectfully heard arguments that wearing seatbelts is a matter of individual choice.

“Through the introduction of this bill, Senator Hawkins demonstrated his understanding that individuals who choose not to wear seatbelts should accept personal responsibility for their decision and not place the financial burden of their injuries, through lawsuits, on local taxpayers,” said ACCG Associate Legislative Director Todd Edwards. “Moreover, as a doctor, he knows that seatbelts save lives.”

ACCG presents Legislative Service Awards to recognize lawmakers who have demonstrated distinguished leadership and interest in working with county governments for the benefit of Georgia’s citizens. Presented annually, the award has gained recognition among elected and appointed officials as a prestigious way to acknowledge Georgia lawmakers for exemplary leadership.

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**About ACCG:** It is the mission of the Association County Commissioners of Georgia to enhance the role, stature and responsiveness of county government in Georgia. Since counties are the level of government closest to the people and serve all the people of the state, ACCG will promote the ability of Georgia counties to provide public services responsibly, efficiently, and cost effectively through cooperative legislative action, education of public officials, provision of quality member services and technical assistance, and increasing public awareness of critical local government issues. For more information, go to [www.accg.org](http://www.accg.org).