

# Rep. Allison looking forward to full-time family life

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

State Rep. Stephen Allison announced last week that he would not be seeking re-election to the Georgia House of Representatives during the 2016 election cycle – and it was not an easy decision to make.

“I don’t know if people understand what an honor it is for their peers, their neighbors, their friends to actually select their name when it’s on a ballot,” said Rep. Allison. “It’s a big deal, and for the past eight years, I’ve been able to go to Atlanta and represent my neighbors, my community, the place that I call home, at the State Capitol, and it’s been the biggest honor in my life.

“So the decision wasn’t taken lightly. My wife and I conversed with many of our close friends and our family, and we prayed at length about this decision. But when I was elected, my oldest son was 7 years old and my youngest was 6 years old. Now, I have a freshman in high school, and one that will be a freshman in August.

“And I only get one chance to raise my kids, and I think the most important thing that I can do right now is come home and be a full-time dad for the last four years that I have the kids at home, and that was, in essence, the main

decision.”

Rep. Allison, who runs his own private legal practice out of Blairsville, describes his job at the Georgia State Capitol as a “full-time part-time job,” including three months for Legislative Session, and countless hours and weekends throughout the year speaking to civic groups and meeting with constituents to address their concerns.

“I’ve missed my son’s ballgames, I’ve missed swim meets,” said Rep. Allison. “Many of my clients have had tremendous patience, because I’m gone for such long lengths of time. I think that when we added it all up, it was just the right time and the right decision for us.”

Now in his eighth year as a public servant, Rep. Allison said that, at first, the job was somewhat overwhelming.

“I think your freshman year is kind of like putting your mouth around a fire hydrant – there’s so much information about so many things that I didn’t believe the state legislature touched,” said Rep. Allison, adding that initially, he thought the job would be simpler. “The legislature touches everything from education to criminal justice, from health care to environmental concerns.”

But you learn fast, said Rep. Allison, and the scope of the job, though widely varied, begins to come into view,



**Stephen Allison**

especially with the assistance of experts in the community who help you to understand nuanced legal positions within complex bills.

Of course, representing his constituents in Atlanta has been a great honor, but for Rep. Allison, what he has enjoyed most has been helping people with their everyday problems.

“The absolute best part of the job is when you are able to help a constituent who has gotten the runaround from the Department of Revenue, or, several of our seniors had run into troubles with driver’s license issues – or whether it was helping somebody with the bureaucratic nonsense that sometimes goes on in government,” said Rep. Allison. “That was by far the best part of the job, because there’s nothing better than

helping your neighbor, and that is one thing that we were able to do in that job.”

After wrapping up the 2016 Legislative Session, during which time Rep. Allison will be looking to get the updated Blairsville City Charter approved, he will return to being a full-time lawyer the year round.

“When I was elected, I told my constituents one thing, and that was, I wanted to be the same person that came back when I retired that I was when I left,” said Rep. Allison. “I’m just a down-home country lawyer. I treat everybody the same, and I believe that it is important that, as public servants, we always keep in mind that we represent other people.”

Over the course of the past eight years, Rep. Allison is most proud of his work to secure major state funding to improve and renovate what were already some of the best libraries in the state – the Union County Public Library, the Mountain Regional Library and the Towns County Public Library.

In particular, Rep. Allison remembers the hard work contributed by Donna Howell, Susie Brendle and Debbie Phillips of the libraries, as well as the Friends of the Libraries in Towns and Union counties.

Along with backing from Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, and working alongside State Sens. Steve Gooch, John Wilkinson and Chip Pearson, those libraries have become an important and fitting legacy for Rep. Allison.

“We worked as a team on one project, regardless of party, for the benefit of the community, and that’s what I think resonates, is that regardless of your political party, you can come together and solve a problem for the community,” said Rep. Allison. “It’s just a great feeling. I still smile every time I go in there.”

Anyone looking for legal counsel, Rep. Allison’s schedule will soon be wide open – he handles wills and trusts, corporate works and general litigation.

“It has truly been the greatest honor of my life to represent this district for the past eight years, and these people will always have my utmost thanks,” said Rep. Allison of his constituents. “The mountains are just a very special place, and Regina and I are proud we get to call them home.”

## Ingles...from Page 1

requesting a specific amount of prescription medication, and at that point in time, they provided that to him,” said Special Agent Hamby. “He left the store, and a description of the possible vehicle he was in was put out to dispatch.

“A Union County Sheriff’s Office (deputy) spotted the vehicle in the Walmart parking lot. After they spotted the vehicle, they made contact with a white male matching the description of the victims at the pharmacy at Ingles. He actually was in possession, at the time that they found him at Walmart, of the prescription medicine that was taken. He was then put into custody at that point in time.”

According to Special

Agent Hamby, Doan and Cole were together at Walmart, though she was inside the store at the time Cole was taken into custody, and she was not with Cole during the actual robbery at the Ingles Pharmacy.

The Blairsville Police Department has brought additional charges against Cole: three counts of possession of a controlled substance, one count of removed or falsified ID of a license plate, one count of crossing a guard line with weapon, drugs or intoxicants, and driving with a suspended/revoked license.

The three controlled substances Cole has been charged with are the liquid hydrocodone he allegedly obtained through the course of his robbery of the Ingles

Pharmacy, clonazepam pills and alprazolam pills, according to Blairsville Police.

There were several license plates in Cole’s vehicle, and he was discovered with drugs on his person after entering the Union County Jail, according to Blairsville Police.

Other jurisdictions are also likely to bring charges against the couple for “doing something similar to this robbery at this pharmacy” at other pharmacies, particularly around the Atlanta area and possibly out of state, according to Special Agent Hamby.

This latest robbery is the second in a pair of unrelated robberies in three days in Blairsville. Suspects in the Sunday, Jan. 31, robbery of No. 1 Chinese Restaurant are still being sought by authorities.

## Voting...from Page 1

percent to vote in early voting, and based on numbers before, we expect the rest of the voting population to vote at the polls,” said Stevens, noting that there are more choices this election year to drive people to the

polls.

For Stevens, voting is a vital part of a working democracy.

“That’s probably what my board is most known for, is making sure that everybody

gets their vote – one citizen, one vote,” said Stevens. “And we are there to ensure that every vote is counted.”

The actual Election Day for the Presidential Preference Primary will be Tuesday, March 1, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

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