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**MEDIA RELEASE: Georgia Legislators Visit Fort Benning**

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**FORT BENNING, Ga. –** Fort Benning recently hosted Georgia House and Senate Natural Resources and Environment committee members during a portion of the Environmental Policy Academy visit to west Georgia.

The tour, organized by the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, gave state leaders a chance to learn more about environmental issues impacting the area.

"I think education helps, especially with volatile issues," said Rep. Lynn Smith, Georgia House District 44 and Chair of the Georgia House Natural Resources and Environment Committee. "Our legislators, by law and by our constitution are citizen legislators, so we bring all life experiences to decision making but we need an educational piece."

The importance of education was echoed by Rep. Debbie Buckner, Georgia House District 137.

"Fort Benning is very important to the city of Columbus and our entire state's economy, and as a state elected official it is important for us to understand the work of the base so we can be supportive any way possible," said Buckner. "Visits such as this help us understand the mission, and the needs."

For Buckner, much of the visit was in her home area because District 137 includes parts of Fort Benning and the surrounding community.

"Having grown up in Columbus, my sister worked civil service on the base and my dad's work also involved him working on base so I was familiar," said Buckner. "As a private citizen a visit to Fort Benning always makes me so thankful for the dedication and sacrifice of our American Soldiers."

The Academy is a biennial event, focused on various areas of the state.

"Every region in Georgia has a unique environment that provides opportunities and challenges," said Sen. Tyler Harper, Chair of the Georgia Senate Natural Resources and Environment Committee. "We do our jobs better when we learn firsthand how our land and forest managers, private citizens and communities work together."

The group visited the National Infantry Museum for a tour, joined a basic training graduation, and learned about conservation efforts on issues ranging from protected species to controlled burns.

"I left Fort Benning realizing it was as much a Georgia natural resource sanctuary as it was a military base," said Smith. "I saw that it was part of your mission; to be keepers of the land that you have."

View photos here <https://fortbenning.smugmug.com/Maneuver-Center/Departments/Public-Affairs-Office/VIP-Group-Visits/2021-VIP-and-Group-Visits/2021-09-30-Georgia-State-Legislatures-visit/i-5zMxhLF>

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