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# ATLANTA BUSINESS CHRONICLE



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### 2007 LEGISLATURE

## Red-state laboratory

Georgia becoming a policy hotbed for big GOP ideas



By Ryan Mahoney  
staff writer

With state Republican leaders flexing their muscles after decades in the minority, Georgia is reinventing itself as a sort of red-state laboratory — a place where the party can try out big ideas that haven't gone through in other states or at the federal level.

Since the GOP took over the Georgia General Assembly two years ago, the legislature has passed comprehensive tort reform, curtailed government's power of eminent domain, and enacted controls on illegal immigration, widely regarded as the most comprehensive in the nation while Congress barely moved on the issue.

This year, lawmakers are giving serious consideration to proposals from two high-profile Georgians that are unlikely to law well in Congress under its new Democratic leadership.

U.S. Rep. John Linder's Fairfax is part of a wide-ranging discussion on tax reform in the state Senate and House of Representatives that begins with a \$1 billion corporate income tax break in 2009 and has drawn attention from the likes of former Reagan economic adviser Arthur Laffer.

And many of former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich's side-town health care reform:

**MORE FROM THE CAPITOL**  
 "Insuring Georgia's Families" support structure  
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► See LABORATORY, 25A

## Legislator proposes sweeping health bill

By Douglas Sans  
staff writer

A sweeping new health-care reform law that tries to shrink the ranks of the state's 1.7 million uninsured has been filed in the General Assembly — a potentially controversial bill that's expected to jump-start debate over how to fix Georgia's ailing health-care system.

The "Insuring Georgia's Families Act," or Senate Bill 29, aims to shift Georgia health care to a more incentive-driven system, with tax exemptions on the purchase of some health-care plans and more options for high-deductible, low-premium coverage.

► See LEGISLATOR, 27A

### DELTA/US AIR

## Airport vs. airport

By Rachel Tobin Ramos  
staff writer

The proposed merger between Delta Air Lines Inc. and US Airways Group Inc. may not so much spell doom for Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport as be an instant boom for Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

Although some boosters fear it could be another blow to Atlanta's cachet in the world of commerce and travel, experts say it may not cut so deeply into the city's international routes. They cite the airport's strong track record and Atlanta's longgrown appetite for air travel.

► See AIRPORT, 20A



Phoenix: US Airways serves 16 international cities; Delta serves 72 out of Hartsfield.

**Different in Dubai:** The skyscrapers are part of an \$18 billion development.



## TVS designing landmark project

By Andrew Nelson  
staff writer

Halfway around the world from Atlanta, one of the city's largest architectural firms is designing a futuristic skyscraper development that will be part of a new, \$18 billion Middle Eastern landmark.

Architects with Thompson, Ventulett, Stainback & Associates Inc. (TVS) are designing four towers, ranging from 54 to 97 floors, in a project in the Persian Gulf city of Dubai

called Dubai Towers Dubai, which is itself part of a much larger development known as The Lagoons.

The buildings will look like shimmering candle flames. Behr Champana, vice president for TVS international projects, called the construction "unheard of in our hemisphere."

Some 40 to 50 people in Atlanta are working on the project, along with TVS associates in Chicago and Dubai, which is a neighbor of Saudi Arabia's and just across the gulf from Iran.

► See TVS, 25A

## TVS designing landmark project

Continued from 1A

Dubai is part of the oil-rich United Arab Emirates. The country, which is about the size of Maine, is the fifth largest of exporter in the world.

Dubai is an oasis of modernity in the Middle East, what National Geographic recently called "the world capital of living large" where enormous construction projects are rising as the city emerges as a world business capital. Some 17 percent of the world's construction cranes are situated in this one city, according to a July 2006 report by PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The project in Dubai has helped swell TVS' ranks. In the last 18 months, its Atlanta office has expanded by some 30 percent to about 280 employees.

The firm is taking advantage of the global economy, where clients wait the best, no matter where the company is headquartered, he said.

TVS' client is Sama Dubai, an arm of real estate and investment firm Dubai Holding. In 2004, TVS landed the commission to design the vision for the larger project surrounding Dubai Towers-Dubai, The Lagoons, a 70-million-square-foot plan of residential units, office buildings, and a marina. Also on the drawing board is a planetarium, museum, and other cultural show pieces.

Ground-breaking for the larger project occurred last year. It will spread across seven man-made islands, each island dedicated to a specific theme. "It is just about a city we are building," Champans said.

Reach Nathan at nathan@bpcjournal.com.



**Ribbons of light:**

The four towers, ranging from 54 to 97 floors, are clustered to form choreographed sculptures, representing the movement of candlelight.



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Dubai, the second largest city in the UAE, is a hot spot where architectural gems share the limelight with novelties. There is the Burj al-Arab hotel. With its curving design, the hotel resembles the sail of a traditional Arab sea-going boat. And then there are the oddities, such as the world's largest indoor ski slope built in a shopping mall in the desert country.

Dubai Towers-Dubai will include retail, restaurants, entertainment, offices, residences and a hotel. Ground has not yet been broken, but the complex is slated for completion in 2010.

The four towers are designed to be 6 million square feet. They will be part of the two dozen buildings built on the island.

TVS is the second-largest architectural firm based in Atlanta, after Heery International Inc. Since its founding more than 35 years ago, the firm has worked on projects across the globe, from Lebanon and Chile to Atlanta's Georgia Aquarium.

The firm has built a reputation on building convention centers. It recently designed the China International Exhibition Center in Beijing.

The project in Dubai has helped swell its ranks. In the last 18 months, TVS Atlanta office has expanded by some 30 percent to about 280 employees, Champans said. The Chicago office has increased to about 50 employees at the same time, a jump of 40 percent, he said. Meanwhile, there is a core team of a dozen architects and designers in Dubai from around the world, he said.

And TVS isn't the only Atlanta firm to see potential on the banks of the Persian Gulf. Law firm King & Spalding LLP announced in December it would open a 10-lawyer office there.

TVS does lots of work in the Middle East and other Arab countries. The politics of a U.S. firm working here never comes up, said Champans, who was speaking from Dubai. He said it is the a boozing town drawing experts from every continent.

And clients at home do not raise questions, either, Champans said. "We follow economies, not project types," he said.