

GEORGIA CHAMBER

STATEWIDE CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT

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GEORGIA CHAMBER

STATEWIDE CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT

Visionary leadership is critical for the future of our state. Georgia's elected officials must prioritize free enterprise and strengthening Georgia's top business rankings and economic opportunity by focusing on the following priorities:

- 1**
BUSINESS CLIMATE
- 2**
INFRASTRUCTURE
- 3**
PROSPERITY & DIVERSITY
- 4**
WORKFORCE
- 5**
TRADE & COMMERCE
- 6**
HEALTH CARE
- 7**
RURAL GEORGIA
- 8**
ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION

The following open-ended questions represent the eight overarching priorities for the Chamber in 2018. These priorities are equal in importance and are essential for all candidates to address. Your responses will not be graded or scored. Upon completion, each Statewide Candidate Assessment will be published for the general public to access at www.8for18.com. We ask that you address each question with as much specificity as possible.



Georgia's general business climate consistently ranks near the top in national surveys, but we rank 36th in the Distressed Communities Index and our legal environment ranking has dropped. We must prioritize being in the Top 20 of these rankings, while maintaining our top job creation ranking.

1. What is your plan to improve both the legal and business climate in Georgia?

Please address the following within your answer: statewide business courts, maintaining AAA Bond rating, and repealing outdated regulations and mandates.

Georgia should be both the Number 1 state for business, and the Number 1 state in which to live and prosper for all Georgians. My record of service demonstrates a marked capacity to navigate difference of opinion and yield results that accrue to the benefit of all. For example, under my leadership, Democrats regularly supported policies to structurally develop the state, to oppose divisive and counterproductive legislation and to engage across regional and ideological divides. For my public service, I received multiple good ratings from the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, including an "A" rating from the Chamber and the "Friend of Labor" award in the same year.

I have a demonstrated expertise in tax and fiscal policy, which will be at the core of how I approach administration of our state's assets and resources. Central to this mission, I will maintain our AAA bond rating by protecting the stability of our tax system. Georgia has a diverse, balanced revenue structure that ensures our commitments can be met over the long-term. I will not dismantle our income tax system, which would signal fiscal irresponsibility to creditors and send our rating downward. We can make adjustments throughout our revenue system, but eliminating almost half of our revenue system should be a non-starter for state leaders.

As House Democratic Leader and a former member of the Code Revision Committee, I understand that once enacted, laws often remain operational for generations regardless of whether they continue to benefit our state. As governor, my administration will examine tax policies, regulations and laws to ensure our compliance not only with the laws we have but also a keen review of the necessity of any regulatory obligations. I will also continue my efforts to improve the treatment of mainstream and internet business operations in Georgia. I co-sponsored the bipartisan Streamlined Sales Tax legislation, and subsequent related legislation; and I will advocate for similar streamlining across state government policies and programs as governor.

As co-sponsor of the Tax Court legislation, I agree that the efficiency of our legal system also helps our business climate; and business courts provide prompt, specialized venues to resolve business issues. I support a constitutional amendment to create a statewide business court system, and I would advocate for its swift adoption.

Our business climate is affected not only by tax rates, incentives, and regulations but equally on a trained workforce, healthy workers, strong infrastructure, rural connectivity, and a prospering customer base. We must focus on education, health care, transportation, broadband and disrupting inequality as essential business services. As governor, I will make major new investments in early care and learning, disconnect the link between poverty and education outcomes, and tackle our broad infrastructure needs across regions, and implement a robust economic mobility plan to ensure a fair and dynamic approach to serving our distressed communities.



**PRIORITIES FOR
GEORGIA**



INFRASTRUCTURE

Georgia is expected to see a 60% growth in ports traffic, 16% energy demand growth, and add 1.4 million more cars on our roads by 2030. It's imperative that Georgia continue to invest in statewide infrastructure networks that will safely and efficiently allow Georgia to continue to grow.

2. What is your plan to build and maintain a modern infrastructure system?

Please address the following within your answer: transit funding and governance, energy infrastructure, and statewide water management.

For economic prosperity across the state, we must maintain and invest in our infrastructure, including roads and bridges, but also transit, water and sewer systems, ports, broadband, and energy infrastructure. We must make traditional investments, but also look ahead to the demographic, industrial, and technological changes that will demand different and new investments for Georgia. During my public and private sector careers, I spearheaded efforts in the development, investment and consulting for complex infrastructure projects, including transportation, energy, facilities and water, and will bring that first-hand experience to the governor's mansion.

For transit, we need a statewide approach ushered in by a statewide leader—the governor. Georgia has left transit to local communities, while other states have recognized the need for a statewide approach. I have proven commitment to and leadership on transit and will continue that leadership as governor. In 2015, I led the Democratic Caucus to work with Republican leaders to pass landmark investment in transportation. I secured the first state commitment to transit funding as part of those negotiations. As governor, my focus on transit will be two-fold. First, the state must play a strong role in funding Metro Atlanta transit solutions and ensure a true regional approach rather than the current county opt-in or out patchwork. Second, we must recognize that transit is a statewide issue. We have a growing senior population, paratransit needs, and connectivity challenges in every part of the state. We need thoughtful, forward-looking transit investment and governance processes in the metro area, but also across our regions in Middle, South and North Georgia.

Our economic prosperity also depends on ensuring that Georgians have access to diverse, reliable energy sources and skilled high wage jobs in the energy sector. I have released the Advanced Energy Jobs Plan that details my policy priorities for investments and partnerships to grow our clean energy sector. The plan aims to generate significant job growth (25,000 to 45,000 jobs) through advanced energy generation, innovative technologies, and energy efficient efforts. We will focus on training and retraining workers for good-paying jobs in sectors such as wind and solar, coordination among state and local leaders, and public-private partnerships for greater impact.

Finally, water issues challenge our metro areas and our farmlands, and the on-going water wars with our neighbors consistently threaten our ability to do long-term planning. Viable solutions involve water infrastructure, such as reservoirs and local water/sewer systems, but also conservation and efficiency efforts, and increased agritech innovation led by Georgia's brightest minds. As governor, I will provide the leadership necessary to understand and solve the permitting challenges of our farmers and the drinking water challenges of our communities.



PRIORITIES FOR
GEORGIA



For Georgia to continue to experience sustainable growth, a balance must be achieved between human needs, population, resources, and talent development. We must be intentional about reducing our poverty ranking if we are truly committed to improving the quality of life for all Georgians.

3. What is your plan to bolster economic mobility and support the growth of diverse and thriving communities?

Please address the following within your answer: discrimination issues (perception and statute), promoting tourism, and conservation and outdoor economy.

Georgians deserve a leader with an economic vision of a fair, inclusive economy that works for all Georgians. As governor, I will prioritize economic mobility to ensure every hard-working family has the chance to succeed and prosper. I released the Georgia Economic Mobility Plan, which includes my priorities for families and communities that are struggling to move from survival to success. Included in that platform are a Georgia Earned Income Tax Credit, the Georgia FinLit Initiative to strengthen financial wellness, credit scores and savings, anti-discrimination and harassment solutions, the Cradle to Career Savings Program for children in working poor families to provide young people with access to starter funds at 18, and employment opportunities for Georgians with disabilities, among other initiatives.

A core part of my pitch to Georgians during this election is this: we need to use our diversity as our strength, not as a weapon. I fought discriminatory laws as House Democratic Leader, and I pledge as governor to veto any bills that espouse bigoted ideas or justify discrimination. For our state to grow and thrive, we need leadership that welcomes and includes all Georgians and recognizes the strength gained from diverse experiences, perspectives, and ambitions. In Georgia, the governor is the person who will stop anti-LGBTQ and anti-immigrant legislation from becoming law as the legislature continues to pass these unwelcoming, self-defeating bills. It is imperative we elect a candidate strongly committed to vetoing discriminatory bills and exemplifying the new face of Georgia.

A vital part of our economy that depends on a welcoming, inclusive environment is our tourism industry. As governor, my leadership will focus on bolstering the tourism industry through marketing, investment options for local economic development and tourism projects, and support for cultural tourism and the arts community. As House Democratic Leader, I co-sponsored legislation to strengthen the Georgia Council of the Arts, to protect the outdoor economy by alerting local governments when a state park or recreation area is in danger of closing, and to provide local governments with additional investment options for economic development and tourism projects. An important part of our state's tourism is our natural resources. I am committed to protecting our natural resources and leveraging those assets for economic growth through tourism.



**PRIORITIES FOR
GEORGIA**



Georgia needs to continue its efforts to cultivate a skilled workforce because “talent” is the defining factor driving where businesses choose to locate or expand. Elected officials must support the state’s efforts to develop a world class talent and leadership pipeline.

4. What is your plan to develop Georgia as a talent epicenter and grow a diverse and highly skilled workforce?

Please address the following within your answer: career and technical education, revising the current system of K-12 funding, and early childhood education.

Every child deserves an excellent, comprehensive education, regardless of her beginnings. As we did with the transportation bill, Georgia can identify the necessary resources to fully fund and staff our most fundamental obligation as a state: the education of our children. Quality schools depend on attracting and retaining quality educators—ones who are paid competitively with other professions. We must also ensure that regardless of zip code, every child has access to a vigorous curriculum that includes STEAM coursework, entrepreneurship and advanced learning opportunities. However, research clearly shows that even the most proficient educator cannot solve for the broader complications of poverty in our schools. Therefore, in addition to ending austerity cuts and fully funding our QBE model, we must adopt a more comprehensive education funding formula that directly addresses the correlation between poverty and educational outcomes ; supports educators as they seek to best serve our students; and invests in access to the technology that is an essential part of learning in the 21st century but remains out of reach for too many of our kids. Some districts are able to supplement funding from external sources, but too many communities do not have access to these resources. We must keep our state commitment to funding public schools so that zip codes do not determine educational outcomes.

To ensure achievement and preparedness, our obligation will be to expand and deepen the wraparound services that facilitate learning for children, including access to public benefits, mental health supports, ESL assistance for children and parents, health services and engaging the whole life of the child. In addition to wraparound services, I will continue Georgia’s focus on third grade reading because we know it to be the marker for future success and serves as an indicator for the need to provide additional aid to students. I will lead Georgia to invest in evidence-based policies and programs that increase high school graduation rates, and leverage the Priority Schools model to deliver these services.

However, we must also empower our children before they reach kindergarten. I am the only candidate to have released a comprehensive early childhood education platform that proposes a significant new investment in early care and learning, targeting children aged 0-5. For example, our Bold Start Scholarship would provide funds for families to afford high-quality early care and learning beginning at birth, which would be available also to educators who also face the high costs of early childcare. The plan targets additional initiatives that focus on STEAM afterschool programs and increased early academic options for rural Georgians, shift workers, and children with disabilities. Education goes beyond the walls of the classroom, and so must our policies and funding priorities.



Finally, I will prioritize our state investment in higher education and expanding HOPE to grow an educated workforce that fuels economic growth and propels families to success. Included in my Economic Mobility Plan are commitments to adult literacy and employability skills training—two areas of vital importance to our business community in bridging the skills gap. In addition, We must expand HOPE and REACH programs to make technical college tuition free, reach more associate’s degree and adult learners, and provide robust need-based aid to expand opportunities for all Georgians. We must continue to support strong public-private partnerships among research institutions and support the Georgia Research Alliance to leverage the amazing talent of our faculty and researchers. Additionally, we must attract high skilled workers through investments in quality of life amenities and a leadership that promotes diversity and inclusion.



PRIORITIES FOR
GEORGIA



Georgia is blessed with a vibrant economy thanks to: \$40 billion in exports annually; more than 9,400 manufacturing facilities; a \$20 billion annual impact from military and defense; more than 400 Fortune 500 companies; 426,000 tourism jobs; ranking in the Top 3 producers for 12 commodities; and 70% of U.S. payments go through Georgia. We must maintain this stellar competitive edge.

5. What is your plan to enhance Georgia's international standing as a hub for global commerce and agriculture?

Please address the following within your answer: promoting Georgia exports, film and entertainment tax incentives, and military affairs and coordination.

Georgia is an international leader in agriculture, fintech, and transportation and logistics, and under my leadership, we will aim to expand our international competitiveness and leadership in other industries as well. I have been deeply engaged in international discussions for several years, including membership in the Council on Foreign Relations, participation in outreach programs to Korea, Taiwan, Britain, Italy, Israel and consistent engagement with the consular corps based in Georgia. Key to serving as a hub for global commerce is an understanding of the complexities of our international engagements, and maintaining a state reputation for openness and investment, which can be contradicted by anti-immigrant policies that have percolated in the last decade.

Proactively, we must continue to invest in our ports and develop additional inland ports. Our progress in exports and logistics demands continued leadership in ensuring our ports are the premier gateway. Georgia's capacity for innovation in fintech and other industries should act as a roadmap to foster new industries to grow good-paying jobs, draw investments into the state, and expand Georgia's position on the international stage. Our support of the film and entertainment industry is a good example. The phenomenal success of the film industry in Georgia illustrates how industry and state government partnerships can drive economic growth. I have strongly supported the booming film industry, first as a member of the Ways and Means committee, then as the House Democratic Leader and I commit to maintaining state support as governor - and expanding our involvement to more of Georgia as film industry suppliers. I co-sponsored pieces of legislation to provide additional film tax credits for companies employing veterans, strengthen the Georgia Council for the Arts, and study minority participation in the film and television production industry.

I support coordination of our technical colleges, state colleges, and universities to meet the workforce needs of the film and entertainment industry. As governor, I will undertake a study of additional industries that we can target and support in a similar fashion to the film industry to have more success stories such as this.

Finally, we must continue to expand our leadership in cybersecurity, expand opportunities for military service members and their families, and protect our military bases from closure. During my tenure as House Democratic Leader, I led the Democratic Caucus' "A Promise Kept" initiative in support of military families across the state. We recognized the importance of our military bases as economic engines of communities and saw that Georgia was not meeting its obligations to support service members, employees, and their families.



**PRIORITIES FOR
GEORGIA**

Several pieces of bipartisan legislation expanded access to Medicaid for military families, allowed military spouses and veterans to receive temporary occupational licenses, protected the employment of national guardsmen, and allowed military spouses who are teachers to apply for temporary licenses. As governor, I will continue my leadership in expanding opportunities for military families and coordinate opportunities for our military bases and local chambers through a professionally staffed Military Council, which can anticipate opportunities, and prepare for the next round of BRAC. My administration will invest in support services for service members in our post-secondary institutions, explore additional occupational barriers that need to be removed, and support veteran hiring initiatives.



PRIORITIES FOR
GEORGIA



By 2026, 2/3 of Georgia counties could have over 25% of all adults without health insurance coverage. Since 2010, rural Georgia has lost 8 hospitals. Georgia must act to ensure quality access.

6. What is your plan to ensure all Georgia communities have access to quality health care?

Please address the following within your answer: Federal waivers to expand or reform Medicaid, graduate medical education, and opioid addiction.

Georgia's health care system is largely governmentally based, and as such, heavily relies on federal funding to maintain its capacity. Therefore, Georgia must pursue expansion of Medicaid as both a stabilization and growth model for delivery of healthcare and for economic growth. I have consistently advocated not only to expand Medicaid, but I also recognized that those eligible for ACA need help navigating the new system. I mobilized the House Democratic Caucus and the nonprofit New Georgia Project to reach out across districts, particularly rural areas, to host town halls, answer questions, and help Georgians enroll.

The inaction of state leaders in recent years caused the closing of rural hospitals and denied coverage for hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Georgians—harming our health infrastructure to its core. Medicaid expansion helps local economics, reduces uncompensated care that drives up costs throughout the health system, benefits employers with healthier workers, and saves rural hospitals from closure. We can explore waivers to reform Medicaid, but our first priority must be to stop the loss of rural economic opportunities by expanding Medicaid and drawing billions of dollars into our local economies. This will also allow us to reduce maternal mortality rates, increase reimbursement rates to attract medical professionals to underserved areas and improve workforce health.

Expansion will connect individuals with mental health and substance abuse treatment. A report from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services estimated that 159,000 uninsured Georgians who are in the coverage gap suffer from mental illness or substance abuse challenges. Meeting their needs through Medicaid would mean our state funds for behavioral health could focus on prevention and early intervention, while our public safety community could focus on keeping our communities safe rather than locking up nonviolent drug offenders. For Georgians battling opioid addiction and other long-term drug crises, greater access to medication-assisted treatment, awareness campaigns throughout the medical community, and increased oversight of “pill-mills” are critical.

In addition to Medicaid expansion, I will prioritize telemedicine to support our rural health infrastructure, maternal health initiatives to lower our unconscionable maternal mortality rate, public health initiatives to reduce gun violence, and recruitment efforts among rural areas and communities of color, among other health initiatives.



**PRIORITIES FOR
GEORGIA**



Like the rest of rural America, Georgia has 74 rural communities projected to lose population in the coming decade. By 2030, over 24% of rural Georgia will be senior citizens. Georgia must prioritize and act to reverse this economic decline.

7. What is your plan to create and implement a plan for a rural renaissance in Georgia?

Please address the following within your answer: rural broadband, incentive programs for rural areas, and regionalism and shared government services.

My vision for Georgia includes an economy that works in every county, for every Georgian. While I was growing up in Gulfport, Mississippi, our family struggled as part of working class or working poor, despite full-time employment. Rural Georgians face the same struggles today—jobs, health care, and education. Rural business owners face twin challenges: how to find an educated workforce locally and how to access capital close to home. Business owners across the state face debilitating health care costs, which also reduce the productivity of the workforce. My plans in economic development, health, and education address these challenges facing rural Georgia.

For rural business development, we need a statewide vision coupled with a regional approach that recognizes and respects the unique character of each community. Our challenge is not the lack of regional economic development plans, but a failure to fully and consistently invest in the public-private partnerships that target the challenges and opportunities of rural communities. My administration will incentivize multi-jurisdictional solutions, just as we did in transportation funding. As co-founder of NOWaccount, I understand how Georgia can effectively deploy capital to underserved businesses who need small cap investment to sustain or expand. We will deploy capital programs for small businesses and micro businesses, assist them in better navigating existing incentives and contract opportunities, and promote the cultural amenities that are abundant in our rural communities. I commend the Georgia Chamber for opening a Tifton office in 2017 and recognize that the state must also have feet-on-the-ground in hub cities across the state to encourage economic development.

We must invest in broadband for affordable, high speed internet access that connects rural Georgia with marketplaces and expand opportunities for students. I support the Georgia DOT exploration of broadband expansions on right-of-ways, and as governor, will make such expansions a priority.

I will support our agricultural sector through research and training, technological development and innovations, and state initiatives such as the Department of Agriculture's 20/20 program to see that 20% of school meals are Georgia-grown. Additionally, my administration will focus on industries that we know will be job generators for rural Georgia. My Advanced Energy Jobs Plan sees a future for energy infrastructure in all 159 counties, generating 25,000 to 45,000 good jobs. As governor, I will expand Medicaid, which will save rural hospitals, produce 50,000 jobs, and promote economic development.



**PRIORITIES FOR
GEORGIA**

In addition to economic and community development initiatives, I will invest in people through education and training. I will fully fund K-12 education and work towards a funding formula that breaks the connection between poverty and education outcomes. I will expand HOPE and REACH programs, invest in literacy, and support 4-H and career and technical education to build a Georgia where every child believes their future is limitless. My Bold Action for a Brighter Future clearly states my plan to increase early care and learning opportunities in the child care deserts of rural Georgia so each child can have a bold start and each parent have greater employment opportunities. Finally, my administration will explore best practices in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, including summer fellowship programs and service cancelable loans.



PRIORITIES FOR
GEORGIA



Georgia small businesses employ over 1.5 million or 44% of the total workforce. A successful economy needs more minority business success, more female entrepreneurs, more rural and student start-ups, a stronger overall scale-up rate, and a Top 10 goal for early stage investments.

8. What is your plan to support Georgia's economy for startup innovation and small business success?

Please address the following within your answer: preparing Georgia for industries of the future, small business access to capital, and autonomous vehicles.

As an entrepreneur, I understand Georgia must create opportunities for small businesses to thrive in all 159 counties. Growing small businesses are central to a thriving economy in every county. I understand what helps a company succeed. Early in my career, I learned first-hand how access to capital can spur a small business and how the lack of funding can kill an entrepreneur's dream. I took those lessons and co-founded a fintech start-up that has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in funding to small businesses, helping them grow or retain thousands of jobs in Georgia.

To build a thriving and diverse economy, my administration will expand access to capital, support training programs at every level of business, encourage expansion into non-traditional industries and promote policies to expand entrepreneurial opportunities. Regardless of zip code, Georgia's economic mission will be to help grow small businesses in rural, urban and suburban communities.

Georgia must support a diverse array of small businesses. From providing capital for individuals who want to start a small child care center in a county that lacks affordable options, to helping a barber open a second location or giving a young person in South Georgia the chance to start a technology company without having to leave her hometown, we can and must do more to help entrepreneurs grow and thrive in place. Additionally, we must recognize the contribution of artists and professionals in creative industries and ensure our programs and incentives foster the growth of their valuable small businesses.

Finally, as a national leader in transportation and logistics, Georgia must support innovations in this fast-changing sector and prepare for the transportation revolution coming our way. We must plan for electric and autonomous vehicles, invest in STEM students and researchers who will produce innovative technology, retrofit infrastructure and build smarter infrastructure, and revisit laws to ensure they fit emerging issues and technologies.



**PRIORITIES FOR
GEORGIA**



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Thank you for your participation in the Georgia Chamber's
Statewide Candidate Assessment.

For questions regarding this assessment, please contact
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PRIORITIES FOR
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