

STACEY ABRAMS

GOVERNOR

Strengthen Public Safety, Address Violent Crime, and Reform Criminal Justice in Georgia

OVERVIEW

In Georgia, families of every background are concerned about the rise in violent crime and how it impacts their communities. Too many Georgians are afraid to drop their kids off at school, attend a religious service or go to the grocery store. We must secure our state, but public safety is only part of the equation. Georgia's legacy of mass incarceration means we must also address our failing prisons and support the successful return of citizens who have completed their sentences. Otherwise, we are trying to punish our way to safety - which has never worked. Instead, Georgia must tackle public safety, address violence and advance criminal justice reform to build One Georgia where all of our residents have the opportunity to thrive.

THE CHALLENGE

The next governor must support the ability of Georgians to live, work, go to school and play without fear.

The rise in violence in Georgia is inextricably linked to economic insecurity and guns. Georgia's poverty rate is [14 percent overall](#) and 20 percent among children, who are now committing more crimes or are the most vulnerable victims. Numerous studies show direct connections between violence, economic instability and under-resourced public schools.

Yet, the violence our neighborhoods face is directly tied to guns and their availability and poor oversight in Georgia. Guns are the [leading cause of death](#) among Georgia's kids and teens. [Georgia ranks 9th in the nation for gun violence](#) and at least [80 percent of homicides](#) in Georgia are committed with guns.

The current governor has consistently deflected responsibility for the [rise of violent crime](#) that started on his watch, and he has failed to respond to the major increase in

gun violence that [began in 2020](#). Instead, he has advocated for and signed into law a new criminal carry bill that makes it easier for virtually anyone to carry concealed weapons in public. Before the passage of criminal carry legislation in Georgia, more than [11,000 people](#) were denied or revoked permits over a three year period because they likely failed to pass a background check.

Brian Kemp has failed to effectively lead on the crucial issues of public safety and criminal justice, instead blaming other leaders or promoting piecemeal answers that do not solve the problem. His predecessor, Governor Nathan Deal, a Republican, understood the connection between public safety and criminal justice. Gov. Deal led a [multi-year bipartisan reform effort](#), which saved hundreds of millions of dollars while advancing public safety. Instead of building on Gov. Deal's work, Gov. Kemp disbanded that successful, cost-saving effort. Stacey Abrams will reconstitute the Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Task Force and expand on Governor Deal's legacy by convening stakeholders—including law enforcement, prosecutors, criminal defense attorneys, judges, advocates, and formerly incarcerated Georgians—to collaborate on evidence-based solutions to our public safety challenges.

IMPACT ON GEORGIANS

Under Brian Kemp, Georgia has become more violent now than it has in a decade. Violent crime increased by 23 percent from 2019 to 2020, while [homicides increased by 55 percent](#), and both remained high in 2021. This issue is pervasive in [much of the state](#), not just the metro Atlanta region or metropolitan areas in general — with violent crime rates being the highest in Albany, Macon-Bibb, and Athens-Clarke, with the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta area ranking 9th in the state.

STACEY'S PLAN

Stacey Abrams is the only candidate for governor with a comprehensive plan to address violent crime and reform our criminal justice system in Georgia. Specifically, as Governor, Stacey will:

Combat the fundamental causes of violence and decriminalize poverty:

- Expand Medicaid to broaden access to mental health and substance abuse treatment and reduce the role of law enforcement in crisis intervention
- Support wraparound services for high-risk communities to decrease incident rates, including targeting challenged schools/neighborhoods that produce a disproportionate number of youth offenders

- Require civil rather than criminal penalties for certain traffic and low-level drug offenses to reduce recidivism and escalation of criminal behavior
- Target programs to increase educational and community opportunities for at-risk young people beginning in 3rd grade through joint projects with schools and nonprofits
- Secure mental health and behavioral therapy for highest-risk youth and offer family interventions
- Expand employment training and opportunities, including apprenticeships, for high-risk youth

Reduce gun violence:

- Coordinate with and secure financial incentives for local governments, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations to design and implement violence intervention programs
- Reduce guns on the streets by repealing bills that needlessly endanger Georgians — including criminal carry, campus carry, and the 2014 “Guns Everywhere” law
- Close the background check loophole for private transfers and gun show sales
- Close the domestic violence perpetrators loophole
- Adopt red flag legislation to prevent those who pose a danger to themselves or others to purchase a weapon or to be reported for protective actions

Reduce recidivism and support reentry:

- Establish a new Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Task Force that builds on Governor Nathan Deal’s legacy by reconvening stakeholders — including law enforcement, prosecutors, criminal defense attorneys, judges, advocates, and formerly incarcerated Georgians — to collaborate on evidence-based solutions to our public safety challenges
- Restore and expand proven interventions like eliminating private probation, expanding diversion programs and funding accountability courts such as veterans’ courts and drug courts
- Realign investments in treatment, education, and job training that will enable people to live crime-free lives after release
- Strengthen self-help programs for people released from prison,
- Expand access to mental health and substance abuse treatment through Medicaid expansion
- Incentivize employers to hire people reentering their community
- Enact Clean Slate legislation that offers automatic clearing of criminal records once someone remains crime-free for a set period of time