

GEORGIA CHAMBER

STATEWIDE CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT

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Please address the following within your answer: statewide business courts, maintaining AAA Bond rating, and repealing outdated regulations and mandates.

As a successful small business owner and entrepreneur, I enjoy every opportunity to discuss my platform on how we can make Georgia an economic powerhouse in the 21st century. As one of the few people running that has actually had to sign the front of a paycheck, I understand the burdens and pressures faced by our business owners and what needs to be done to foster job creators and economic growth. First and foremost, we must improve our legal climate in the State of Georgia, as our current national ranking is horrendous. We need to make it clear that Georgia is not open for trial lawyers from across the country to move here and profit on the backs of small businesses, rural businesses or any business. By establishing a statewide business court, adopting common sense national standards for modernizing e-discovery, and providing greater liability protection for rural healthcare providers, we can take these steps to making Georgia a better place to do business.

Second, we must protect our AAA bond rating. However, there is a balance between fairness to the taxpayer and prudent financial planning; our rainy-day fund doesn't need to be collecting surplus tax revenues in perpetuity. There is a limit, we have reached it and we need to give the taxpayers and employers their money back to invest in job creation. By slashing the income tax by one-third in my first four years and giving two billion dollars back to Georgians, modernizing our tax code and continue creating successful tax incentives like the rural hospital tax credit and the film tax credit, we can continue to make Georgia the number one place to do business.

Finally, we must get back to our conservative roots and stop pushing for mandates over free market solutions. We must end the growth of legislation promoting more regulations, red-tape and bureaucratic empowerment. My first priority will be to push for the implementation of the "2 for 1" initiative; whereby we will eliminate two regulations for every new regulation proposed by any legislation. We also must become vigilant on enacting sunsets on both new regulations and mandates, and we will end the recent trend of agencies developing their own regulations without the General Assembly having directed them.



**PRIORITIES FOR
GEORGIA**



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.

Our plans for infrastructure needs to be focused on two key concepts, innovation and mobility, and we need to aim for Georgia to be #1 for all air, ground, ports and energy infrastructure. We have been designing our current infrastructure as if we were building in the 1980's. It's time we embrace the 21st century and welcome ride sharing, autonomous vehicles, public-private partnerships, and hinge our future investments on efficiency and modernization.

Georgia's long term growth isn't best served through increased road capacity alone, investing in the same technologies, and certainly not more taxes. Similarly, our energy grid must be protected from modern threats, including cyber security and terrorism, which is why we need to continue the partnerships and investments in Augusta's cybersecurity center. While the construction of Plant Vogtle was disastrously implemented, it is going to play a key role in serving the energy needs of Georgia's future. Georgia Power's role needs to be rehabilitated, not isolated; we need supervision, oversight and accountability for every single taxpayer and ratepayer while fully supporting the finishing of the project. As a resident of Forsyth County I live next to Lake Lanier, the largest source of water in the region. I am will continue to be vigilant and look for conservation efforts and private market solutions to enhance statewide access to quality water.

In my 5 short years in the Georgia General Assembly, the state budget increased from \$16 billion to \$26 billion. Sadly, that \$10 billion increase was scarcely applied to funding infrastructure investments, and billions more were levied through an assortment of new taxes. We need to reallocate resources, prioritize investments and bring innovation to government to rapidly advance Georgia's infrastructure.



**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.

My faith calls on me to care as much about my neighbor's viability, future and faith as my own. Compassion for our fellow Georgians is a focus of mine personally and professionally, and will be a part of my agenda as Lieutenant Governor. Emphasizing the four C's model - churches, charities, corporations and citizens - will help our fellow Georgians climb out of poverty and into prosperity. This plan does not emphasize another government program, but does focus on the community.

In fact, as we've seen from the federal government, we have too many programs targeting economic mobility. These programs don't work together, they don't address each person as a whole and they don't succeed in moving people out of poverty. We are seeing jobs being created and a growing economy, the private sector is doing its part to provide the opportunities for everyone. The solution is simple - people need someone to believe in them and the realistic opportunity to get a job and progress into a real future.

For our state government, there are opportunities to target and require entities we are already working with (such as companies that manage the care of our Medicaid population), to develop job training programs and life development opportunities for the populations they serve. We need to push for the combinations of multiple programs and revenue streams into one. Not just to reduce waste and bureaucracy, but to make sure we can address the real problems people face in poverty. Finally, to emphasize that government needs to let others take the lead, we can break down barriers, lower costs, and incentive our business community to invest in rural, underutilized populations as a resource for technology and innovation jobs here in Georgia and not overseas.



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.

As a small business owner, I had the privilege of not only employing folks, but also seeing the impact their jobs had on their families. I saw them buy their first homes and save for their child’s future education, it was one of the most fulfilling experiences in my life. I draw on these experiences when approaching each hurdle Georgia faces.

We need to make each dollar spent on education more efficient. I am a firm believer that parents having more options for their children’s education will be a driver of success in Georgia’s future. We have yet to apply the principles of the free market to our education system and accept the fact that every parent is a taxpayer and they should decide their children’s future, not the government. I anticipate a brighter future for our children once we put a focus on the family, not the bureaucracy.

Our career academies in Georgia are a great source of pride and success, but we must take the next step to create more academies and give students options earlier in their education, incentivize more high school students to seek out education at technical colleges, and provide incentives for private education programs to grow and accept more students when they are at capacity. We also need to have an honest discussion about what students and their families face when entering the university system and the cost associated with an education. Every family deserves predictability, every family deserves a fair cost and HOPE scholarship recipients should expect to receive the support they were promised, so we keep our best and brightest in state.

Most importantly, people need someone to believe in them and early intervention is the key to developing our workforce. In our communities, single parents or parents working double and triple shifts are concerned with providing for their children. Many times, parents can’t dedicate the time they wish to support their children’s education. That’s why the community must step up and help our children succeed. As Lt. Governor, we will create an incentive program to make sure high school students in Georgia have a mentor from their community providing them with guidance in their education and life.



**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.

As the next Lt. Governor, I will take a larger role being the business ambassador for our state. My time in the private sector offered me opportunities to sit down with CEOs and sell them on why they should do business with my company. I look forward to sitting down with international leaders, pitching and convincing them as to why Georgia should be their only destination.

The film and entertainment tax incentives are the highest example of incentivizing business to invest in our communities, create jobs and provide a return to the taxpayers. We must be careful in implementing tax incentives and we must prioritize those that are advantageous for existing Georgia businesses that have invested in our citizens, but I am fully behind helping our businesses, large and small, have the most advantageous tax environment to bring more jobs and investment to Georgia. Creating a welcoming environment is important for our communities with military bases as well. Empowering local governments and communities to pursue economic development initiatives that are focused on keeping our military bases, and attract more to our great state will be a priority for me as Lt. Governor.

The largest industry here in Georgia is the agricultural industry, employing thousands of workers and creating tens of billions of dollars in economic productivity. In order to preserve and grow this sector we need to promote educational opportunities for students interested in a career in agriculture. We must also continue to embrace technology and allow Georgia farmers to be efficient and productive to compete in the global marketplace. Finally, our farmers are exporting their goods all over the world, and I will work with all parties to make sure they have every opportunity to grow their business and create jobs in 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.

I am proud to have lead the fight to help keep and enhance healthcare in rural Georgia during my time in the General Assembly. I authored the creation of the rural hospital tax credit program and it is bringing millions of dollars of donations to rural hospitals here in Georgia; hospitals that are most vulnerable to the many fluctuations this industry has and continues to experience. Perhaps most importantly, this program provides cash infusions with absolutely no strings attached, allowing the hospital to allocate the funds to meet their needs. We must take the next steps and incentivize providers to provide care in underserved areas, provide them extra liability protections and free them of regulatory burdens that get in the way of medical practitioners treating patients.

The most pressing healthcare need we must address is the opioid epidemic and it has affected every community in Georgia. We have spent enough time talking about this epidemic. It is time we step up to the plate and take action. Increasing access to all forms of treatment and partnering with providers is the first initiative we must take. There are recommendations, created by the state auditor, sitting on the table that our state government hasn't pursued, we must act now.



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.

I will push what I call the BIG “Built In Georgia” Project. As the next Lt. Governor, we will deliver investments from around the country and internationally, bringing them back to rural Georgia. We will specifically target companies to open facilities in rural communities where people are eager to work and communities are keen to bring jobs. We also have an opportunity to make our state the manufacturing and technology hub of the country, and I believe my background in the private sector allows me to promote Georgia and achieve this goal.

Incentivizing local governments and empowering communities to adapt to the 21st century will be my top priorities. Again, we can break down barriers, lower costs, and incentive our business community to invest in rural, underutilized areas as a resource for technology and innovation jobs here in Georgia, instead of overseas.

From healthcare to job creation, nearly every hope we have for rural Georgia to prosper will be dependent on broadband access being readily available. Unlike others, I don’t believe more government and new taxes is going to connect rural Georgia to the rest of the world. We must have government partner with the private sector for broadband needs to be the norm and not the exception for all Georgians.



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.

I am an entrepreneur, an angel investor, and I've been a part of a venture capital backed business. I not only created my own small business with my wife, I've also helped other startups come to fruition. I have lived through the sacrifices and hurdles of starting a small business. I've learned that government policies that foster greater action in the private sector work while regulation never does. It's very simple; we can be the #1 state for jobs in every category if we let the private sector develop new technologies without government interference.

Governments should partner with entrepreneurs to enable test sites for autonomous vehicles without burdensome regulations. They should extend and increase the angel investor tax credit and incentivize local governments to allow incubators to flourish across the state. This will let small business thrive and support these new emerging technological industries.



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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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