

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Please address the following within your answer: statewide business courts, maintaining AAA Bond rating, and repealing outdated regulations and mandates.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 Georgia business owner and executive, I am attuned to the needs of Georgia businesses. And while Georgia remains a good place to work and do business, improvements must be made to ensure continued economic development. As your next Lt Governor, I believe that improving the legal and business climate in Georgia not only relies on establishing business courts, maintaining our high bond rating, and repealing outdated regulations. It also is dependent on investments we make in public goods and other public resources, support for Georgia's regional development plans, and investments in our workers.

The proposed statewide Georgia business courts, modeled after Fulton and Gwinnett county efforts, are a good idea. Establishing such bodies would both cultivate the expertise of specialized judges to rule on complicated business matters as well as speed the process of dispute resolution. However, careful attention must be paid to the the establishment of such courts in order to not create a two tiered system of justice in the eyes of the public.

Georgia's bond rating has been stellar, and retaining this rating should be a priority for the state. This means maintaining low debt loads on the state budget, ensuring fiscal responsibility, and growing Georgia's rainy day fund to to accommodate both national recessions and more local disasters such as hurricanes and floods.

The state legislature and the Lt. Governor, as the presiding officer of the Georgia State Senate, play an important role in the state's relationship with both private employers and the capital markets. The recent actions of Lt. Governor Casey Cagle (R) regarding tax breaks for the Georgia's largest private employer, Delta Airlines, and the Republican majority's legislation that paved the way for the de-annexation of Eagle's Landing from Stockbridge - despite potential negative impacts in the municipal bond market - demonstrate the Republican party does not have a monopoly on pro-business leadership.

Outdated regulations and mandates should be swept away. Mandatory sunset clauses as well as a pointed review of regulations on the books would go a long way towards keeping Georgia businesses from being burdened unnecessarily. That being said, investing in Georgia's workers has been profitable for my company and I believe delivering health care and parental leave to workers is not a burdensome mandate on business but an investment in good workers and good jobs. I did so in my own business while growing employment and securing the bottom line.



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Public goods and public resources in Georgia have gone underfunded for too long. Our schools are fully funded this year for the first time since 2002. Transit investments in Atlanta could unlock economic productivity stuck in traffic today. Rural hospitals are closing or in danger of closing across the state. Funding must be provided to these public resources in order to maximize the positive externalities these goods provide for society at large.

We also should be looking to every region of the state to promote what each region excels at. Regions across Georgia submitted development plans in fiscal year 2016-17. These plans must be built upon and supported on the state level. Whether promoting tourism in coastal Georgia, solar investments in the sun belt, or cybersecurity in Augusta, many of Georgia's regions have a lot to offer and the state should make strategic investments to promote each of these regions as hubs of innovation and productivity in their respective strengths.

Finally, as a state we must do better to attract and retain our talented employees and graduates. 50% of Georgia engineers leave the state after earning their degree. When these individuals leave they leave with every company they ever start, every job they ever create, and every tax dollar they will ever generate. In order to retain our homegrown talent we need to invest in the public resources that increase quality of life and make Georgia a destination for workers and their families.



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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.

As someone whose business has 2,000 drivers on the road, transportation infrastructure is something I think about daily. Traffic not only costs me personally, it costs all Georgians 3.2 billion dollars in lost economic output every year. State investments in highway improvements are a positive step to alleviate some traffic, but transit funding is necessary to move people around the state most efficiently. Commuter and light rail investments must be made at the state level to ensure that such a project reaches all communities and is adequately funded. State investments in this area will pay off in through economic growth by promoting density, mobility and activity in our most productive corridors.

With the right investments and incentives, Georgia could become the solar industry hub of the United States. With great engineering graduates, low costs, and ample sunlight, we have all the pieces necessary to design, manufacture, and install large amounts of solar to the grid. To do so we need to make key investments in modernizing our grid to handle variability in load and price as well as key regulatory change to give the Georgia Public Service Commission the tools and expertise necessary to manage the task.

Georgia's water rights have been upheld recently in the courts, meaning Georgia will have access to the water that it needs to grow. However, access is not the end of the story. Our water infrastructure isn't adequate. Last month in my own county of DeKalb, a water main broke which shut down the highway, closed schools, and forced a boil order. In addition, Georgia's water isn't safe enough. In 2017, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave our drinking water infrastructure a C+ and in 2015 a National Resource Defense Council study showed Georgia had the fifth most drinking water violations. And lastly, large parts of the southeast of our state are in drought. Going forward, spending money on Georgia's water infrastructure to remedy these problems should be seen not as a cost but as an investment.





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.

Georgia should be open to business for all. That means promoting all of Georgia's thriving communities. Recent efforts at "religious liberty" laws threaten our growing entertainment industry as well as our state's standing as home to many large corporations. I was glad to see the Georgia Chamber push against such policies as a backwards step that would discourage investment and affect the state's ability to attract the workforce of the future. I agree with this assessment, and I think that Georgia should pursue worker protections against discrimination. As an Evangelical Christian, I believe that tolerance and acceptance are Christian values and should be affirmed as Georgia values as well.

Tourism is an important industry to Georgia, and as such should be encouraged to grow. Georgia should continue to embrace Atlanta as a cultural hub of the south and a world class home of entertainment. Additionally, Georgia should fight for an exemption to offshore oil drilling to protect our coastal tourism industry just like our neighbors to the south. The state has a role to play in protecting and promoting the great tourism options in Georgia.

Conservation of our natural resources is important to me and important to the economic development of Georgia. From hunting and fishing, to our state parks and waterways, protecting our natural resources is both a good investment and our moral duty. We must impart to our children a healthy and vibrant natural environment capable of sustaining itself and our outdoor activities.



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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.

Career and technical education is near and dear to my heart. My father started his career in such a program that paid for his college education. By partnering with unions and businesses, Georgia can provide technical education free to both the student and the taxpayer. Georgia has made progress in this area through the CCA, which has worked to bring businesses closer to their perspective workforce. We should expand this program and pass legislation to streamline the process. In my own business, we would benefit from giving technical schools the ability to certify commercial drivers, and I believe they have the expertise to do so.

Public schools are our most essential institution. This issue is personal for me, because I am a public school graduate and I send my kids to public school. I believe every Georgia child should have a quality education regardless of their zip code. That means innovation in our classrooms, rewarding good teachers, firing bad ones, and partnering with businesses to increase vocational and technical training in high schools and community colleges so our students are ready for the workforce. Governor Deal and the Georgia legislature fully funded our schools this year for the first time since 2002. While I applaud this move, the previous state of underfunding is simply unacceptable. I believe that innovation in public schooling can provide benefits, but first schools should be fully funded and teachers should earn a salary commensurate with the value they provide our state.

Early childhood education has been shown to greatly impact a child future earnings. High quality preschools pay off in the long run with a better workforce and a better economy. The US Chamber of Commerce has called on US businesses to advocate for increased early childhood education, and Georgia has affirmed its goal of offering Pre-K to all 4 year olds. We must build on these efforts, increasing our enrollment rate in Pre-K and offering complimentary services such as after school activities and early care.



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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.

Today's national Republican party has become the party of trade wars and immigration restriction, both of which hurt Georgia agriculture. The recent tariffs established by the President are leading to retaliatory tariffs on agricultural exports, including tariffs on nuts and peaches. We should be looking to influence Washington away from blundering into trade fights, so that Georgia exports are able to reach other markets. In addition, Immigration is important to many Georgia businesses. From agricultural workers to H1B visas holders working in our fortune 500 companies, we should stand against closing off our nation and state to immigrants who only seek a better life. My husband was such an immigrant, coming here as an engineer to realize the American dream. Reform of the immigration system should be a top priority for our national lawmakers and our state officials should be calling for change. Too often, Republican administrations in Georgia have failed to sway their colleagues in Washington on this issue. We need to be more vocal in defense of Georgia's businesses who rely on immigration and trade.

Georgia's growing film and entertainment industry has been a positive for the state, spurring 2.7 billion dollars in economic activity in fiscal year 2016-17. However, its development has been lopsided, providing more benefit to the Atlanta region, leaving other parts of the state out. Georgia needs more broad based growth. In order to accomplish this I propose the state invest more into our regional development plans. Government investment, tax incentives, and publicity could cement Augusta a hub of cybersecurity, promote coastal Georgia as a tourism destination, and make the whole state the hub of solar technology.

As a state, Georgia must continue to support our men and women in uniform. This means continuing our commitments to employ and support our veterans, lobbying to keep and expand our military bases, and fostering Augusta as a cybersecurity hub of the nation. Georgia leads in national defense by supporting the troops, veterans, and civilian support staff that reside here.



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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.

The lack of Medicaid expansion has been a big mistake for Georgia. Refusing a program that is over 90% federally funded makes no fiscal sense, and has resulted in the most vulnerable Georgia residents being denied healthcare, the threatened closure of rural hospitals, and the state foregoing more than 3 billion in federal funds per year. I was glad to see the Georgia Chamber come out in support of Medicaid expansion as it is the right thing to do both morally and fiscally. As Lt. Governor I would do everything I can to expand Medicaid within the state.

Opioid addiction is an important issue of our time. Battling it will take resources and ingenuity. Policies and public awareness campaigns should demonstrate to doctors and patients the dangers of opioids in order to reduce the number of newly addicted individuals. For those already addicted, treatment should emphasize community and family involvement. We should all work to reduce the negative stigma associated with addiction in all its forms. Too often addicts are shunned instead of treated and that must change.



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.

Firstly, there is no rural renaissance without rural access to healthcare and education. Having high quality public resources available across the state is foundationally important. Businesses do not bring jobs to regions without these public investments. Therefore, in addition to investing in rural broadband we must invest in rural healthcare and education.

Incentive programs in rural areas should focus on the resources specific to those areas. Solar energy credits, farming innovations such as Bioplastics, and rural downtown revitalization projects should be enacted to deliver sustainable business models that we know work in rural communities. I was raised in a rural community and know the value that such places can provide is substantial if aided properly.



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.

Industries of the future will rely on high skilled workers. Georgia must create and attract these workers if the state is to remain competitive. This means investing in our schools, from Pre-K to graduate school and investing in the resources that attract a talented workforce. By offering our workforce top notch schools, quality healthcare, and world class entertainment, more graduates would remain in Georgia and more would choose to move here.

Access to capital is a critical issue for Georgia's entrepreneurs. We need to be more proactive in raising Georgia capital for Georgia businesses, as local capital has greater local expertise and staying power. Our clustered startup industry has shown that Georgia is capable of producing top quality start ups, but we must look beyond Atlanta to the state at large for new perspective business models and entrepreneurs.

Autonomous vehicles are a next generation technology that will transform our economy. As a transportation executive, I have worked with industry leaders to ensure that the necessary regulatory framework and business investments are in place to foster this coming technological innovation. Called the Smart Belt Coalition to Collaborate on Autonomous Vehicle Development, the organization brings together state agencies and universities to collaborate on insights and standards across states. As Lt. governor I would work to bring such collaboration to bear in Georgia to promote the state as a leading innovator in technology.



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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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