

# GEORGIA CHAMBER

## SECRETARY OF STATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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# GEORGIA CHAMBER

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 Questionnaire will be published for the general public to access at [www.8for18.com](http://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 business climate in Georgia?**

Please address the following within your answer: corporate filings and professional licensure processes.

I authored HB87, which was passed by the General Assembly and signed into law. This legislation allows for corporation renewals for up to 3 years; 1, 2 or 3 years at the business owner's preference. The SOS department software needs to be updated to implement this and I will make that a priority. The Corporations Division interacts with business owners and legal professionals to register new corporations and annual renewals. I will continue to look at methods and ideas to streamline regulations and reduce paperwork for business owners. This is the model I believe in: less paperwork and more efficiency.

Leadership and vision gets set at the top. As a business owner with a diverse workforce of over 150 employees and manufacturing facilities in Columbus and Forsyth County, I set the vision, mission and key objectives for my business organization. I will bring that experience to ensure a positive pro-growth, pro-business focus to the Secretary of State office. I have the practical know how to focus the employee work team to provide remarkable customer service.

We can elevate remarkable customer service through employee training and communication and implementation of enhanced technology. The Office of Secretary of State mission is remarkable customer service for business owners, professional and occupational license holders and other key stakeholders who interface with the Secretary's office.

With new corporations we will establish published timelines for registering new corporations. Our office will use those timelines for benchmarking our employee performance.

As a licensed Civil Engineer in approximately 30 states and General Contractor in 9 states, I understand the critical importance of responsive, speedy licensure and renewals. I was a co-sponsor for House Resolution 1374 which creates a study committee to study the licensing of occupations. There is a proper role for occupational and professional licensing – public safety and health are paramount.

Similar to the process other states have undertaken recently, Georgia will be undertaking a comprehensive review on what professions should be licensed, how many hours for licensing and continuing education, how often renewals should be required, and the cost for fees. Again, with my key focus of providing prompt, customer centered service to our licensees.



**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.*

## **2. What is your plan to support Georgia’s economy for small business success?**

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

When small businesses prosper, Georgians prosper. Georgia is fortunate that some of our largest industries are agriculture, logistics-distribution and health-medical IT, because these are areas with positive industry growth uptrends and a key strength for our state. We have leading research universities and colleges that specialize in these areas.

Georgia’s Quick Start program is the nation’s leader in workforce development. I envision a similar model - “Quick Start for Business Builders” - with handy online resources and links for aspiring entrepreneurs to further equip them to grow their business and provide them the confidence to step out and start their new business.

What propels small business owners for success is their vision, tenacity, hard work ethic, our American entrepreneurial spirit and a knack for building a better mouse trap.

Gottwals Books, headquartered in Houston County has recently been nationally recognized for its book store franchise growth. Hudson Pecan Company in Irwin County is another example of being a key leader in developing the export market to China for Georgia pecans.

I intend to annually showcase new company successes like those mentioned above, with regional events for every urban, suburban and rural area represented. Outreach to local business organizations and Chambers and the banking industry to join this showcase event will be included.

As a business owner with one of my production facilities located in Columbus since 1988, I understand the pain points of the non-metro Atlanta areas. Because I have worked on construction projects in over 35 states and all over Georgia, I have seen first hand how some states make it easy to do business and others make it hard. I have travelled all over Georgia through my work as a State Representative and for the past 15 months as a candidate for Secretary of State seeing the local successes of our small business owners.



**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 support the growth of diverse and thriving communities?**

The franchise to vote is priceless and this right needs to be celebrated and broadcast. The Office of Secretary of State and many counties throughout Georgia and local and state level political parties all have events and opportunities for Georgians meeting voting eligibility requirements to register. Those efforts are to be commended. The Secretary of State Office will issue frequent press releases to increase awareness of these local initiatives and opportunities to register to vote.

Voter engagement will be a focus. Outreach to younger voters by engaging them as poll workers has been proven effective. As I travelled Georgia listening to ideas to update our voting systems, I was told about a fantastic program involving young adults in their early 20's in Springfield, Effingham County. These are very dedicated young adults and they take their responsibilities seriously. Forsyth County also had a very strong program with young adults becoming poll workers which was recognized for its positive impact in voter engagement turnout. These efforts build lasting positive attitudes on the importance and value of being an engaged Georgia voter.

I will look for opportunities to visit communities to share this message and use the 'megaphone' of the Office to encourage citizens to register and vote in our elections.





# GEORGIA CHAMBER

Thank you for your participation.

For questions, please contact  
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PRIORITIES FOR  
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