



A CONSUMER HEALTH ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO THE 2015 GEORGIA LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Information for Action

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100 Edgewood Avenue, NE, Suite 1015
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
(404) 567-5016
www.healthyfuturega.org

ABOUT GEORGIANS FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE

Georgians for a Healthy Future (GHF) is a nonprofit health policy and advocacy organization that provides a voice for Georgia consumers on vital and timely health care issues. *Our mission is to build and mobilize a unified voice, vision and leadership to achieve a healthy future for all Georgians.*

Georgians for a Healthy Future approaches our vision of ensuring access to quality, affordable health care for all Georgians in three major ways

- 1) outreach and public education,
- 2) building, managing, and mobilizing coalitions, and
- 3) public policy advocacy.



Georgians for a Healthy Future's 2015 policy priorities include:

- » Close Georgia's coverage gap by expanding Medicaid
- » Ensure access to quality health care services for Medicaid and PeachCare beneficiaries
- » Maximize enrollment and ensure a positive experience for Georgia consumers with private health insurance
- » Increase the tobacco tax
- » Re-invest in Georgia's public health infrastructure to support a healthy and prosperous state

KEY STAFF CONTACTS

Cindy Zeldin
Executive Director
404-418-6179
czeldin@healthyfuturega.org

Laura Colbert
Community Outreach Manager
404-890-5804
lcolbert@healthyfuturega.org

Anna Cullen
Communications Coordinator
404-856-0714
acullen@healthyfuturega.org

Legislative Process Overview

I. HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

The Georgia General Assembly has operated continuously since 1777, when Georgia became one of the thirteen original states. In 1868 the state capital (and with it, the general assembly) settled permanently in Atlanta. The General Assembly consists of two chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate, each elected by Georgia voters every two years. Elections occur in even-numbered years (e.g., 2008, 2010, and 2012). The Georgia Constitution sets the Senate membership at "not more" than 56 senators, and the House membership at "not fewer" than 180 representatives. With a total membership of 236, Georgia's General Assembly ranks as the third largest in the United States. The Georgia Constitution also states that the General Assembly shall begin its session on the second Monday in January of each year, for no longer than 40 total days. Typically, the session runs into late March or early April because the 40 official session days are often not consecutive.

II. HOW DOES THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS WORK?

The legislative process begins with an idea – formed by a legislator, legislative committee, citizen or group of citizens, advocacy organization, etc. – that addresses a particular need or interest. A legislator decides to sponsor a bill addressing this need, either with a new law or a bill that will change an existing law. A non-partisan attorney in the Office of Legislative Counsel advises the legislator on legal issues and drafts the bill.

A) INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING:

Once the bill has been drafted, the legislator files the bill with the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate, who then assigns it a number.

On the next legislative day after filing, the bill is formally introduced.

In chamber, the bill's title is read during the period of 1st readings.

Immediately after 1st reading the chamber's presiding officer assigns the bill to a standing committee. Bills are usually assigned to committees based on subject matter, but the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House have the choice about where a bill is assigned.

B) SECOND READINGS (HOUSE):

In the House only, on the next legislative day, the House Clerk reads the bill's title in chamber, although the actual bill is now assigned to a committee. In the Senate, the 2nd reading before the entire chamber comes after a bill receives a favorable report from the committee to which it has been assigned.

C) COMMITTEE:

A committee is tasked with considering and studying the bill. The committee often seeks advice and testimony from experts, relevant information concerning the bill, and comments from those who are interested in the bill. During the Committee meeting, the bill's author and other legislators may also testify. After considering a bill, committees may:

- (1) Recommend Bill or Resolution Do Pass; or
- (2) Recommend Do Not Pass; or
- (3) Recommend Do Pass with changes (amendments or substitutes);
- (4) Report without recommendation (in House); or
- (5) Hold Bill.

Often, a bill will be referred to a subcommittee – again, based on subject matter – then the full committee can hold hearings and make revisions. If the full committee approves the bill, it is “reported” to the full chamber. If the committee takes no action on the bill, it “dies.” Final Committee action is reported to the chamber in a written report.

D) SECOND READING (SENATE):

Bill is read for the second time on the legislative day following Committee report.

E) THIRD READING AND PASSAGE:

If a bill is reported favorably by committee, it is returned to the Clerk or Secretary who prepares a General Calendar of bills that have been favorably reported from committee. For the first ten days of session, the chamber's presiding officer will call up bills from this calendar for floor action (e.g. debate, amendments, or voting). Beginning the 10th day of session, the Rules Committee meets, chooses bills placed on the General Calendar, and prepares a Rules Calendar for the next day's floor consideration. During the last 30 days of session, the chamber's presiding officer calls up bills from the Rules Calendar for consideration by the entire membership. Once the presiding officer calls up a bill from the Rules Calendar, the Clerk reads bill's title (3rd reading). At this point, the bill is now ready for floor debates, amendments, and for voting.

F) TRANSMISSION:

If the bill is approved by a majority of the voting membership of that house, it is signed by the Clerk or the Secretary and sent—or “transmitted”—to the other house for its consideration. The process described above is then repeated. If the second house passes the bill, it is returned to the house where it originated. Most of the time, any important bill passed in one house will be amended (changed) by the other. If those changes are accepted by a majority of the voting membership in the originating house, this bill is approved and ready to be submitted to the Governor.

G) CONFERENCE COMMITTEE:

However, if the originating house rejects the changes, a conference committee may be formed. A conference committee is comprised of three members from each house, appointed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate. Both versions of the bill will go before the conference committee to be reconciled. In this situation, a bill's passage requires both Houses to agree to the Conference Committee's final report. If both houses accept the Conference Committee report, the bill is approved and may be sent to the Governor.

H) GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE/VETO:

If requested, a bill may be sent to the Governor immediately after passage. Most of the time, bills go to the Governor following adjournment sine die, the final day of the legislative session. The Governor may approve or veto a Bill within six days after receipt while the General Assembly is in session. After the final day of the legislative session, he has 40 days to approve or veto a bill. If the Governor takes no action within the prescribed time, the bill becomes a law. If the Governor vetoes the bill, the General Assembly may override the veto with a two-thirds vote by each house during the next session. A law becomes effective the following July 1, unless a different effective date is provided in the language of the law.

After a bill has become law, it is assigned to the appropriate state or federal agency for implementation. At this point, advocacy organizations, interest groups, and the public have additional opportunities to shape a law's effect, as the agency develops rules and policies related to the new law.

III. PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Georgia Constitution requires that both the House of Representatives and Senate maintain a journal of their proceedings; the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate are tasked with keeping legislative records. Each Office serves as the custodian for all bills, resolutions, substitutions, amendments, records, papers and official documents filed with their respective chamber. Other responsibilities include keeping record of the daily proceedings of the chamber, tallying votes, and certifying all engrossed and enrolled copies of bills.

The *Clerk of the House of Representatives* is an officer of the House, elected by a majority of the members of the House for with the same two-year term as the members of the body. The Office of the Clerk of the House makes copies of bills available to the public. For official records of the House or the Clerk of the House, call (404) 656-5015 or write to: Clerk of the House, 309 State Capitol Building, Atlanta, GA 30334.

The *Secretary of the Senate* is elected by a vote of the Senators for the same two-year term as the members of the body. The Office of the Secretary of the Senate provides legislation, applicable votes, and other documents online at <http://www.legis.ga.gov>, or in Room 353 of the State Capitol. These documents include:

- **Senate First Readers**—a brief summary of all bills and resolutions read the first time and referred to committee (<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/FirstRead.aspx>);
- **Senate Daily Status**—details actions taken by the Senate on all bills and resolutions during the legislative day (<http://www.senate.ga.gov/sos/en-US/SenateStatusReports.aspx>);
- **Senate Rules Calendar**—set by the Committee on Rules, lists bills and resolutions to be read the third time and acted upon by the Senate (http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011_12/calendars/sr/index.htm);
- **Composite Status** shows the bill number, title, committee referral and actions on Senate and House legislation in both chambers. (<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/Composite.aspx?CompType=S>) and actions on Senate and House legislation in both chambers. (<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/Composite.aspx?CompType=S>)

How a Bill is Passed in the Georgia Legislature



Legislator sees need for a new law or changes in existing law and decides to introduce a bill.

1



Legislator goes to Office of Legislative Counsel. There, attorney advises legislator on legal issues and drafts bill.

2



Legislator files bill with the Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate.

3



On legislative day after filing, bill is formally introduced. In chamber, bill's title is read during period of 1st readings.

4



Immediately after 1st reading, presiding officer assigns bill to a standing committee.

5



In the House only, on next legislative day, Clerk reads bill's title (2nd reading) in chamber, although actual bill is now in committee. In Senate, 2nd reading comes after bill is reported favorably from committee.

11



Once presiding officer calls bill up from Rules Calendar, Clerk reads bill's title (3d reading). Bill is now ready for floor debate, amendments, and voting.

10



For the last 30 days of session, presiding officer calls up bills from the Rules Calendar for floor consideration.

9



Starting with 10th day of session, the Rules Committee meets and from bills on General Calendar prepares a Rules Calendar for the next day's floor consideration.

8



Clerk or Secretary prepares a General Calendar of bills favorably reported from committee. For first 10 days of session, presiding officer calls up bills from this calendar for floor action.

7



Bill is reported favorably by committee and returned to Clerk or Secretary.

6

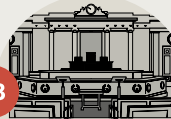
Bill considered by committee. Author and other legislators may testify. If controversial, public hearings may be held.

12



After debate, main question is called and members vote. If bill is approved by majority of total membership of that house, it is sent to the other house.

13



If second house passes bill, it is returned to house where bill was introduced. If changes are accepted...

If first house rejects changes and second house insists, a conference committee may be appointed. If committee report is accepted by both houses...

14



Bill is enrolled and sent to the Governor (if requested). Otherwise, all enrolled bills sent to Governor following adjournment sine die.

15



Governor may sign bill or do nothing, and bill becomes law. Governor may veto bill, which requires two-thirds of members of each house to override.

16



Act and other laws enacted at the session are printed in the *Georgia Laws* series. Also, act is incorporated into the Official Code of Georgia Annotated. Act becomes effective the following July 1, unless a different effective date is provided in act.

Constitutional Officers & Health Policy Staff

Governor Nathan Deal

206 Washington Street
111 State Capitol
404-656-1776 (phone)

Key Health Policy Contacts in the Governor's Office:

- › **Katie Rogers, Health Policy Advisor to the Governor**
404-656-1784 (phone)
krogers@georgia.gov
- › **Ryan Teague, Executive Counsel**
404-651-7715 (phone)
rteague@georgia.gov

Governor's Office of Planning and Budget:

- › **Richard Dunn, Division Director, Health and Human Services Division**
404-656-7904 (phone)
richard.dunn@opb.state.ga.us

Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle

240 State Capitol
404-656-5030 (phone)

Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black

19 MLK Jr Drive SW, Atlanta, GA 30334
(404) 656-3600 (phone)

Attorney General Sam Olens

40 Capitol Square, SW, Atlanta GA 30334
404-656-3300 (phone)

Insurance and Fire Safety Commissioner

Ralph Hudgens

2 MLK Jr. Drive, West Tower, Ste 704
404-656-2070 (phone)

Key Health Policy/Legislative Liaison Contacts:

- › **Jay Florence, Assistant Commissioner**
404-232-1388 (phone)
JFlorence@oci.ga.gov
- › **Trey Sivley, Director, Division of Insurance and Financial Oversight**
404-656-5867 (phone)
tsivley@oci.ga.gov

Labor Commissioner Mark Butler

148 Andrew Young International Blvd NE Ste 600
404-232-7300 (phone)

Public Service Commission Chairman

Chuck Eaton

244 Washington St, SW
404-656-4501 (phone)

Secretary of State Brian Kemp

214 State Capitol
404-656-2881 (phone)

State Superintendent of Schools Richard Woods

2066 Twin Towers East
404-656-2800 (phone)

Agency Commissioners & Health Policy Staff

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Commissioner Frank Berry

2 Peachtree Street, NW, 24th floor
404-657-2252 (phone)

Department of Community Health Commissioner Clyde Reese

2 Peachtree Street, NW, 6th floor
404-656-4507 (phone)

Key Legislative Contacts in the Department of Community Health:

- › **Lisa Marie Shekell, Director of Communications and Legislative Affairs**
404-657-9118 (phone)
lshekell@dch.ga.gov

Department of Human Services Commissioner Keith Horton

2 Peachtree Street, NW
Suite 29-250
404-656-5680 (phone)

Key Legislative Contacts in the Department of Human Services:

- › **Ashley Fielding, Director, Office of Legislative Affairs and Communications**
404-656-4937 (phone)
asfielding@dhr.state.ga.us

Department of Public Health Commissioner Brenda Fitzgerald

2 Peachtree Street, NW, 15th floor
404-657-2700 (phone)

Key Legislative Contacts in the Department of Public Health:

- › **Jamie Howgate, Chief of Staff**
404-657-2700 (phone)
jchowgate@dhr.state.ga.us
- › **Russell Crutchfield, Deputy Chief of Staff**
rucrutchfield@dhr.state.ga.us

Georgia House of Representatives

in Alphabetical Order

Representative Stacey Abrams (D-89)

Minority Leader
408-A CLOB
404-656-5058
staceyabrams@gmail.com

Representative Kimberly Alexander (D-66)

512-D CLOB
404-656-7859
kimberly.alexander@house.ga.gov

Representative Stephen Allison (R-8)

504-A CLOB
404-656-0188
stephen.allison@house.ga.gov

Representative Tonya Anderson (D-92)

512-F CLOB
404-656-7859
tonya.anderson@house.ga.gov

Representative Alex Atwood (R-179)

401-B CLOB
404-656-0152
alex.atwood@house.ga.gov

Representative Mandi Ballinger (R-23)

601-A CLOB
404-656-0254
mandi.ballinger@house.ga.gov

Representative Timothy Barr (R-103)

612-E CLOB
404-656-0325
timothy.barr@house.ga.gov

Representative Paul Battles (R-15)

401-K State Capitol
404.657.8441
paul.battles@house.ga.gov

Representative Sharon Beasley-Teague (D-65)

509-A CLOB
404-656-0221
sharon.beasley-teague@house.ga.gov

Representative Simone Bell (D-58)

612-A CLOB
404-656-0325
simone.bell@house.ga.gov

Representative D. C. "Dave" Belton (R-112)

401-B CLOB
404.656.0152
davebelton112@gmail.com

Representative Karen Bennett (D-94)

507-G CLOB
404-656-0202
karen.bennett@house.ga.gov

Representative Patty Bentley (D-139)

607-C CLOB
404-656-0287
patty.bentley@house.ga.gov

Representative Tommy Benton (R-31)

613-D CLOB
404.463.3793
tommy.benton@house.ga.gov

Representative Beth Beskin (R-54)

601-F CLOB
404.656.0254
beth.beskin@house.ga.gov

Representative James Beverly (D-143)

509-G CLOB
404-656-0220
james.ber Beverly@house.ga.gov

Representative Bruce Broadrick (R-4)

507-E CLOB
404-656-0202
bruce.broadrick@house.ga.gov

Representative Buzz Brockway (R-102)

504-B CLOB
404-656-0188
buzz.brockway@house.ga.gov

Representative Tyrone Brooks (D-55)

511-H CLOB
404-656-6372
tyrone.brooks@house.ga.gov

Representative Roger Bruce (D-61)

611-B CLOB
404-656-0314
rbruce5347@aol.com

Representative Bob Bryant (D-162)

608-D CLOB
404-656-0298
bob.bryant@house.ga.gov

Representative Debbie Buckner (D-137)

409-C CLOB
404-656-0116
debbie.buckner@house.ga.gov

Representative Jon Burns (R-159)

228 CAP
404-656-5099
jon.burns@house.ga.gov

Representative Michael Caldwell (R-20)

512-H CLOB
404-656-7859
michael.caldwell@house.ga.gov

Representative Johnnie Caldwell, Jr. (R-131)

612-D CLOB
404-656-0325
johnnie.caldwell@house.ga.gov

Representative Wesley Cantrell (R-22)

507-E CLOB
404.656.0202
wesley.cantrell@house.ga.gov

Representative John Carson (R-46)

607-F CLOB
404-656-0287
john.carson@house.ga.gov

Representative Amy Carter (R-175)

218 CAP
404-656-6801
amy.carter@house.ga.gov

Representative David Casas (R-107)

601-H CLOB
404-656-0254
david.casas@house.ga.gov

Representative Joyce Chandler (R-105)

601-G CLOB
404-656-0254
joyce.chandler@house.ga.gov

Representative Mike Cheokas (R-138)

608-A CLOB
404-656-0298
mike.cheokas@house.ga.gov

Representative David Clark (R-98)

612-E CLOB
david.clark@house.ga.gov

Representative Heath Clark (R-147)

404-C CLOB
404.656.0202
heath.clark@house.ga.gov

Representative Valerie Clark (R-101)

507-F CLOB
404-656-0202
vclark123@charter.net

Representative Brooks Coleman (R-97)

416 CAP
404-656-9210
brooks.coleman@house.ga.gov

Representative Kevin Cooke (R-18)

504-D CLOB
404-656-0188
kevin.cooke@house.ga.gov



Georgia House of Representatives

in Alphabetical Order



Representative Christian Coomer (R-14)

109 CAP
404-651-7737
christian.coomer@house.ga.gov

Representative Sharon Cooper (R-43)

436 CAP
404-656-5069
sharon.cooper@house.ga.gov

Representative John Corbett (R-174)

607-E CLOB
404.656.0287
john.corbett@house.ga.gov

Representative Dee Dawkins-Haigler (D-91)

607-B CLOB
404-656-0287
dee.dawkins-haigler@house.ga.gov

Representative John Deffenbaugh (R-1)

507-C CLOB
404-656-0202
john.deffenbaugh@house.ga.gov

Representative Katie Dempsey (R-13)

245 CAP
404-463-2247
katie.dempsey@house.ga.gov

Representative Pam Dickerson (D-113)

611-E CLOB
404-656-0314
pam.dickerson@house.ga.gov

Representative Robert Dickey (R-140)

607-G CLOB
404-656-0287
robert.dickey@house.ga.gov

Representative Tom Dickson (R-6)

245 CAP
404-463-2247
tom.dickson@house.ga.gov

Representative Matt Dollar (R-45)

401-K CAP
404.656.5138
matt.dollar@house.ga.gov

Representative Demetrius Douglas (D-78)

512-E CLOB
404-656-7859
demetrius.douglas@house.ga.gov

Representative Karla Drenner (D-85)

507-H CLOB
404-656-0202
dren16999@aol.com

Representative Mike Dudgeon (R-25)

608-C CLOB
404-656-0298
mike.dudgeon@house.ga.gov

Representative Winfred Dukes (D-154)

411-H CLOB
404-656-0126
wdukes_2000@yahoo.com

Representative Emory Dunahoo (R-30)

401-D CLOB
404-656-0152
emory.dunahoo@house.ga.gov

Representative Geoff Duncan (R-26)

512-B CLOB
404-656-7859
geoff.duncan@house.ga.gov

Representative Darrel Ealum (R-153)

409-B CLOB
404.656.0116
darrel.ealum@house.ga.gov

Representative Chuck Efstration (R-104)

601-C CLOB
404.656.0254
chuck.efstration@house.ga.gov

Representative Earl Ehrhart (R-36)

245 CAP
404-463-2247
earl.ehrhart@house.ga.gov

Representative Terry England (R-116)

245 CAP
404-463-2247
englandhomeport2@windstream.net

Representative Bubber Epps (R-144)

608-B CLOB
404-656-0298
bubberepps@gmail.com

Representative Stacey Evans (D-42)

511-C CLOB
404-656-6372
stacey@staceyevans.org

Representative Barry Fleming (R-121)

401-H CLOB
404-656-0152
barry.fleming@house.ga.gov

Representative Hugh Floyd (D-99)

611-H CLOB
404-656-0314
hughfloyd@mindspring.com

Representative Virgil Fludd (D-64)

409-A CLOB
404-656-0116
vfludd@mindspring.com

Representative Gloria Frazier (D-126)

604-C CLOB
404-656-0265
frazier26@comcast.net

Representative Spencer Frye (D-118)

604-B CLOB
404-656-0265
spencer.frye@house.ga.gov

Representative Pat Gardner (D-57)

604-G CLOB
404-656-0265
pat@patgardner.org

Representative Dan Gasaway (R-28)

612-G CLOB
404-656-0325
dan.gasaway@house.ga.gov

Representative Harry Geisinger (R-48)

601-F CLOB
404-656-0254
harry.geisinger@house.ga.gov

Representative Mike Glanton (D-75)

612-C CLOB
404-656-0325
mike.glanton@house.ga.gov

Representative Rich Golick (R-40)

218 CAP
404-656-5943
rich.golick@house.ga.gov

Representative J. Craig Gordon (D-163)

607-H CLOB
404-656-0287
jcraig.gordon@house.ga.gov

Representative Micah Gravley (R-67)

612-F CLOB
404-656-0325
micah.gravley@house.ga.gov

Representative Gerald Greene (R-151)

507-D CLOB
404-656-0202
gerald.greene@house.ga.gov

Representative Mark Hamilton (R-24)

218 CAP
404-656-5132
mark.hamilton@house.ga.gov



Georgia House of Representatives

in Alphabetical Order

»

Representative Ben Harbin (R-122)

614-B CLOB
404-656-3949
ben.harbin@house.ga.gov

Representative Buddy Harden (R-148)

504-G CLOB
404-656-0188
bharden@planttel.net

Representative Brett Harrell (R-106)

601-D CLOB
404-656-0254
brett@voteharrell.com

Representative Matt Hatchett (R-150)

415 CAP
404-656-5025
matt.hatchett@house.ga.gov

Representative Lee Hawkins (R-27)

508-B CLOB
404-656-0213
lee.hawkins@house.ga.gov

Representative Michelle Henson (D-86)

512-I CLOB
404-656-7859
michele.henson@house.ga.gov

Representative Dustin Hightower (R-68)

401-G CLOB
404-656-0152
dustin.hightower@house.ga.gov

Representative Bill Hitchens (R-161)

501-A CLOB
404-656-0178
bill.hitchens@house.ga.gov

Representative Scott Holcomb (D-81)

511-E CLOB
404-656-6372
scott.holcomb@house.ga.gov

Representative Susan Holmes (R-129)

501-F CLOB
404-656-0178
sdholmes@bellsouth.net

Representative Penny Houston (R-170)

245 CAP
404-463-2247
penny.houston@house.ga.gov

Representative Henry "Wayne" Howard (D-124)

511-G CLOB
404-656-6372
wayne.howard@house.ga.gov

Representative Carolyn Hugley (D-136)

408-B CLOB
404-656-5058
carolyn.hugley@house.ga.gov

Representative Mack Jackson (D-128)

611-F CLOB
404-656-0314
mack.jackson@house.ga.gov

Representative Mike Jacobs (R-80)

131 CAP
404-656-5116
repjacobs@gmail.com

Rick Jasperse (R-11)

504-C CLOB
404-656-0188
rick.jasperse@house.ga.gov

Representative J. B. Jones (R-167)

411-F CLOB
404.656.0126
jb.jones@house.ga.gov

Representative Jan Jones (R-47)

Speaker Pro Tempore
340 CAP
404-656-5072
jan.jones@house.ga.gov

Representative LaDawn Jones (D-62)

512-B CLOB
404-656-7859
ladawn.jones@house.ga.gov

Representative Sheila Jones (D-53)

411-D CLOB
404-656-0126
sheila.jones@house.ga.gov

Representative Darryl Jordan (D-77)

409-E CLOB
404-656-0116
darryl.jordan@house.ga.gov

Representative Margaret Kaiser (D-59)

604-D CLOB
404-656-0265
margaret.kaiser@house.ga.gov

Representative Trey Kelley (R-16)

607-E CLOB
404-656-0287
trey.kelley@house.ga.gov

Representative Dar'shun Kendrick (D-93)

404-E CLOB
404-656-0109
dkendrick@kendrickforgeorgia.com

Representative Culver "Rusty" Kidd (I-145)

507-A CLOB
404-656-0202
rusty.kidd@house.ga.gov

Representative Tom Kirby (R-114)

501-C CLOB
404-656-0177
tom.kirby@house.ga.gov

Representative David Knight (R-130)

401-H CAP
404-656-7857
david.knight@house.ga.gov

Representative Dominic Lariccia (R-169)

607-F CLOB
404.656.0287
dominic.lariccia@house.ga.gov

Representative Eddie Lumsden (R-12)

612-B CLOB
404-656-0325
eddie.lumsden@house.ga.gov

Representative Ronnie Mabra (D-63)

512-G CLOB
404-656-7859
ronnie.mabra@house.ga.gov

Representative Pedro "Pete" Marin (D-96)

611-A CLOB
404-656-0314
marinstatthouse@aol.com

Representative Chuck Martin (R-49)

417-B CAP
404-656-5064
chuck@martinforgeorgia.com

Representative Howard Maxwell (R-17)

402 CAP
404-656-5143
howard.maxwell@house.ga.gov

Representative Rahn Mayo (D-84)

511-D CLOB
404-656-6372
rahnmayo@gmail.com

Representative Tom McCall (R-33)

228 CAP
404-656-5099
tommccall@bellsouth.net

Representative Dewey McClain (D-100)

509-B CLOB
404.656.0220
dewey.mcclain@house.ga.gov

»

Georgia House of Representatives

in Alphabetical Order



Representative John Meadows (R-5)

HM-1 CAP
404-656-5141
john.meadows@house.ga.gov

Representative Billy Mitchell (D-88)

411-A CLOB
404-656-0126
billy.mitchell@house.ga.gov

Representative Greg Morris (R-156)

226 CAP
404-656-5115
greg.morris@house.ga.gov

Representative Howard Mosby (D-83)

607-D CLOB
404-656-0287
howard.mosby@house.ga.gov

Representative Chad Nimmer (R-178)

109 CAP
404-651-7737
chad.nimmer@house.ga.gov

Representative Randy Nix (R-69)

402 CLOB
404-656-5087
randy.nix@house.ga.gov

Representative Larry O-Neal (R-146)

Majority Leader
338 CAP
404-656-5052
larry.oneal@house.ga.gov

Representative Mary Margaret Oliver (D-82)

604-E CLOB
404-656-0265
mmo@mmolaw.com

Representative B.J. Pak (R-108)

601-B CLOB
404-656-0254
votebjpak@gmail.com

Representative Butch Parrish (R-158)

245 CAP
404-463-2247
butch.parrish@house.ga.gov

Representative Don Parsons (R-44)

401 CAP
404-656-9198
repdon@donparsons.org

Representative Allen Peake (R-141)

415 CAP
404-656-5025
allen.peake@house.ga.gov

Representative Jesse Petrea (R-166)

404-C CLOB
404.656.0109
jesse.petrea@house.ga.gov

Representative John David Pezold (R-133)

504-E CLOB
404.656.0188
john.pezold@house.ga.gov

Representative Alan Powell (R-32)

613-B CLOB
404-463-3793
alanpowell23@hotmail.com

Representative Jay Powell (R-171)

401-C CAP
404-656-7855
jay.powell@house.ga.gov

Representative Brian Prince (D-127)

409-D CLOB
404-656-0116
brian.prince@house.ga.gov

Representative Jimmy Pruett (R-149)

401-J CAP
404-656-7857
jimmy.pruett@house.ga.gov

Representative Regina Quick (R-117)

509-C CLOB
404-656-0220
regina.quick@house.ga.gov

Representative Paulette Rakestraw (R-19)

501-E CLOB
404-656-0177
paulette.braddock@house.ga.gov

Representative David Ralston (R-7)

Speaker of the House
332 CAP
404-656-5020
david.ralston@house.ga.gov

Representative Matt Ramsey (R-72)

415 CAP
404-656-5024
matt.ramsey@house.ga.gov

Representative Nikki Randall (D-142)

404-A CLOB
404-656-0109
nikki.randall@house.ga.gov

Representative Albert Reeves (R-34)

607-G CLOB
404.656.0287
albert.reeves@house.ga.gov

Representative Tom Rice (R-95)

220 CAP
404-656-5912
tggrice@aol.com

Representative Jay Roberts (R-155)

218 CAP
404-656-7153
jay.roberts@house.ga.gov

Representative Carl Rogers (R-29)

401-D CAP
404-656-7855
carl.rogers@house.ga.gov

Representative Terry Rogers (R-10)

501-B CLOB
404-656-0178
terry.rogers@house.ga.gov

Representative Dale Rutledge (R-109)

404-B CLOB
404-656-0109
dale.rutledge@house.ga.gov

Representative Ed Rynders (R-152)

245 CAP
404-463-2247
erynders@bellsouth.net

Representative Sandra Scott (D-76)

611-D CLOB
404-656-0314
sandra.scott@house.ga.gov

Representative Ed Setzler (R-35)

401 CAP
404-656-7857
ed.setzler@house.ga.gov

Representative Dexter Sharper (D-177)

411-B CLOB
404-656-0126
dexter.sharper@house.ga.gov

Representative Jason Shaw (R-176)

508-C CLOB
404-656-0213
jason.shaw@house.ga.gov

Representative Barbara Sims (R-123)

401-E CAP
404-656-7855
barbara.sims@house.ga.gov

Representative Earnest Smith (D-125)

511-F CLOB
404-656-6372
earnest.smith@house.ga.gov

Representative Lynn Smith (R-70)

228 CAP
404-656-7149
lynn.smith@house.ga.gov



Georgia House of Representatives

in Alphabetical Order

»

Representative Michael Smith (D-41)

604-F CLOB
404-656-0265
michael.smith@house.ga.gov

Representative Richard H. Smith (R-134)

220 CAP
404-656-6831
richard.smith@house.ga.gov

Representative Calvin Smyre (D-135)

409-G CLOB
404-656-0116
calvinsmyre@synovus.com

Representative Jason Spencer (R-180)

411-E CLOB
404-656-0126
jason.spencer@house.ga.gov

Representative Mickey Stephens (D-165)

604-A CLOB
404.656.0265
mickey.stephens@gmail.com

Representative Ron Stephens (R-164)

226-A CAP
404-656-5115
ron.stephens@house.ga.gov

Representative Pam Stephenson (D-90)

411-G CLOB
404-656-0126
pam.stephenson@house.ga.gov

Representative Valencia Stovall (D-74)

611-C CLOB
404-656-0314
valencia.stovall@house.ga.gov

Representative David Stover (R-71)

411 CLOB
404-656-0126
david.stover@house.ga.gov

Representative Brian Strickland (R-111)

404-C CLOB
404-656-0109
brian.strickland@house.ga.gov

Representative Jan Tankersley (R-160)

401-B CAP
404-656-7855
jan.tankersley@house.ga.gov

Representative Kevin Tanner (R-9)

401-E CLOB
404-656-0152
kevin.tanner@house.ga.gov

Representative Steve Tarvin (R-2)

404-F CLOB
404-656-0109
steve.tarvin@house.ga.gov

Representative Darlene Taylor (R-173)

501-G CLOB
404-656-0178
darlene.taylor@house.ga.gov

Representative Tom Taylor (R-79)

401-F CLOB
404-656-0152
tom.taylor@house.ga.gov

Representative Sam Teasley (R-37)

417 CAP
404-656-5146
sam.teasley@house.ga.gov

Representative "Able" Mable Thomas (D-56)

511-B CLOB
404-656-6372
mable.thomas@house.ga.gov

Representative Erica Thomas (D-39)

512-C CLOB
404.656.7859
erica.thomas@house.ga.gov

Representative Robert Trammell (D-132)

611-G CLOB
404.656.0314
robert.trammell@house.ga.gov

Representative Scot Turner (R-21)

611-G CLOB
404-656-0314
scot.turner@house.ga.gov

Representative Keisha Waites (D-60)

509-E CLOB
404-656-0220
keisha.waites@house.ga.gov

Representative Sam Watson (R-172)

501-D CLOB
404-656-0177
sam.watson@house.ga.gov

Representative Andrew J. Welch (R-110)

508-C CLOB
404 656 0213
awelch@swblawfirm.com

Representative Tom Weldon (R-3)

508-D CLOB
404-656-0213
tom.weldon@house.ga.gov

Representative William Werkheiser (R-157)

409-B CLOB
404.656.0126
william.werkheiser@house.ga.gov

Representative David Wilkerson (D-38)

409-F CLOB
404-656-0116
david.wilkerson@house.ga.gov

Representative Joe Wilkinson (R-52)

415 CAP
404-463-8143
joe@joewilkinson.org

Representative Wendell Willard (R-51)

132 CAP
404-656-5125
wendell.willard@house.ga.gov

Representative "Coach" Williams (D-87)

507-B CLOB
404-656-0202
earnest.williams@house.ga.gov

Representative Al Williams (D-168)

511-A CLOB
404-656-6372
al.williams@house.ga.gov

Representative Chuck Williams (R-119)

601-E CLOB
404-656-0254
chuck.williams@house.ga.gov

Representative Bruce Williamson (R-115)

401-C CLOB
404-656-0152
bruce.williamson@house.ga.gov

Representative John Yates (R-73)

217 CAP
404-656-5126
john.yates@house.ga.gov

** Special elections for House District 50 were held after this publication went to print.*

House Committees

with Jurisdiction over Health Care Issues

House Appropriations

245 CAP

404-463-2247

The main focus of the committee is the writing of the state's amended and general fiscal year budgets for Georgia's state agencies and departments. The committee also hears legislation that has considerable impact on the state revenue or expenditures.

Committee Members:

Representative Terry England, *Chairman*
Representative Gerald E Greene, *Vice Chairman*
Representative Alex Atwood,
Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Amy Carter,
Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Katie M. Dempsey,
Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Tom Dickson,
Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Earl Ehrhart,
Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Penny Houston,
Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Butch Parrish,
Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Ed Rynders, *Secretary*
Representative Allen Peake, *Ex-Officio*
Representative Jay Powell, *Ex-Officio*

Health Subcommittee Members:

Representative Butch Parrish,
Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Ben Harbin,
Vice-Chairman of Subcommittee
Representative Matt Dollar
Representative Pat Gardner
Representative Matt Hatchett
Representative Lee Hawkins
Representative Carolyn Hugley
Representative Regina Quick
Representative Barbara Sims
Representative Ron Stephens
Representative Darlene K. Taylor

House Health & Human Services Committee

436 CAP

404-656-5069

This committee is responsible for legislation that affects the conditions of safety regulations and social services for the citizens of Georgia. This Committee also addresses the legal areas surrounding medical professionals as well as medicinal provisions.

Committee Members:

Representative Sharon Cooper, *Chairman*
Representative Rick Jasperse, *Vice Chairman*
Representative Ed Rynders, *Secretary*
Representative Timothy Barr
Representative Karen Bennett
Representative James Beverly
Representative Bruce Broadrick
Representative Mike Cheokas
Representative Valerie Clark
Representative Katie M. Dempsey
Representative Demetrius Douglas
Representative Karla Drenner
Representative Spencer Frye
Representative Craig Gordon, J.
Representative Buddy Harden
Representative Matt Hatchett
Representative Lee Hawkins
Representative Michele Henson
Representative Henry "Wayne" Howard
Representative Sheila Jones
Representative Margaret D. Kaiser
Representative Trey Kelley
Representative E. Culver "Rusty" Kidd
Representative Billy Mitchell
Representative Howard Mosby
Representative B.J. Pak
Representative Don Parsons
Representative Allen Peake
Representative Jesse Petrea
Representative John David Pezold
Representative Jimmy Pruett
Representative Nikki T. Randall
Representative Carl Rogers
Representative Dexter Sharper
Representative Barbara Sims
Representative Mickey Stephens
Representative Pam Stephenson
Representative Joe Wilkinson

House Insurance Committee

220 CAP

404-656-6831

This committee deals with legislation concerning all aspects of insurance and the insurance industry.

Committee Members:

Representative Richard H. Smith, *Chairman*
Representative Jason Shaw, *Vice Chairman*
Representative John Carson, *Secretary*
Representative Alex Atwood
Representative Buzz Brockway
Representative Johnnie Caldwell, Jr.
Representative Mike Cheokas
Representative Matt Dollar
Representative Chuck Efststration
Representative Bubber Epps
Representative Dan Gasaway
Representative Rich Golick
Representative Ben Harbin
Representative Lee Hawkins
Representative Carolyn Hugley
Representative Eddie Lumsden
Representative Howard Maxwell
Representative Rahn Mayo
Representative John Meadows
Representative Albert Reeves
Representative Carl Rogers
Representative Mickey Stephens
Representative Steve Tarvin
Representative Darlene K. Taylor
Representative Sam Teasley
Representative Joe Wilkinson
Representative Bruce Williamson

House Rules Committee

HM-1 CAP

404-656-5141

This committee oversees the flow of legislation from passage in committee and making the determination of what bills should be debated and voted on the House floor. Also included in that task is the approval of guests who are invited into the chambers of the House of Representatives to be recognized.

Committee Members:

Representative John Meadows, *Chairman*
Representative Rich Golick, *Vice Chairman*
Representative Richard H. Smith, *Secretary*
Representative Stacey Abrams
Representative Tommy Benton
Representative Jon G. Burns
Representative Sharon Cooper
Representative Katie M. Dempsey
Representative Tom Dickson
Representative Karla Drenner
Representative Earl Ehrhart
Representative Stacey Evans
Representative Barry Fleming
Representative Gerald E Greene
Representative Mark Hamilton
Representative Carolyn Hugley
Representative Mack Jackson
Representative Jan Jones
Representative David Knight
Representative Greg Morris
Representative Larry O' Neal
Representative Butch Parrish
Representative Allen Peake
Representative Alan Powell
Representative Jay Powell
Representative Matt Ramsey
Representative Tom Rice
Representative Jay Roberts
Representative Ed Setzler
Representative Barbara Sims
Representative Lynn Smith
Representative Calvin Smyre
Representative Ron Stephens
Representative Tom Weldon
Representative Wendell Willard
Representative Al Williams

Georgia State Senate

in alphabetical order

Senator John Albers (R-56)

301-A CLOB
404-463-8055
info@senatorialbers.com

Senator Brandon Beach (R-21)

303-B CLOB
404-463-1378
brandon.beach@senate.ga.gov

Senator Charlie Bethel (R-54)

109 CAP
404-651-7738
charlie.bethel@senate.ga.gov

Senator Ellis Black (R-8)

607-A CLOB
(404) 656-0287
blackellis@bellsouth.net

Senator Dean Burke (R-11)

305-A CLOB
404-656-0040
dean.burke@senate.ga.gov

Senator Gloria Butler (D-55)

420-C CAP
404-656-0075
gloria.butler@senate.ga.gov

Senator Bill Cowsert (R-46)

121-E CAP
404-463-1383
bill.cowsert@senate.ga.gov

Senator Mike Crane (R-28)

325-B CLOB
404-656-6446
mike.crane@senate.ga.gov

Senator Gail Davenport (D-44)

304-A CLOB
404-463-5260
gail.davenport@senate.ga.gov

Senator Mike Dugan (R-30)

323-B CLOB
404-656-0036
mike.dugan@senate.ga.gov

Senator Vincent Fort (D-39)

121-J CAP
404-656-5091
vincent.fort@senate.ga.gov

Senator Frank Ginn (R-47)

321-A CLOB
404-656-4700
frank.ginn@senate.ga.gov

Senator Steve Gooch (R-51)

421-C CAP
404-656-9221
steve.gooch@senate.ga.gov

Senator Marty Harbin (R-16)

324-B CLOB
(404) 656-0078
marty.harbin@senate.ga.gov

Senator Ed Harbison (D-15)

431 CAP
404-656-0074
ed.harbison@senate.ga.gov

Senator Tyler Harper (R-7)

301-B CLOB
404-463-5263
tyler.harper@senate.ga.gov

Senator Bill Heath (R-31)

110-C CAP
404-656-3943
billheath@billheath.net

Senator Steve Henson (D-41)

Minority Leader
121-B CAP
404-656-0085
stevhenson@mindspring.com

Senator Hunter Hill (R-6)

323-A CLOB
404-463-2518
hunter.hill@senate.ga.gov

Senator Jack Hill (R-4)

234 CAP
404-656-5038
jack.hill@senate.ga.gov

Senator Judson Hill (R-32)

421-D CAP
404-656-0150
judson@judsonhill.com

Senator Chuck Hufstetler (R-52)

320-A CLOB
404-656-0034
chuck.hufstetler@senate.ga.gov

Senator Bill Jackson (R-24)

109 CAP
404-651-7738
bill.jackson@senate.ga.gov

Senator Lester Jackson (D-2)

432 CAP
404-463-5261
lester.jackson@senate.ga.gov

Senator Donzella James (D-35)

304-B CLOB
404-463-1379
donzella.james@senate.ga.gov

Senator Rick Jeffares (R-17)

109 CAP
404-651-7738
rick.jeffares@senate.ga.gov

Senator Burt Jones (R-25)

327-A CLOB
404-656-0082
burt.jones@senate.ga.gov

Senator Emanuel Jones (D-10)

420-D CAP
404-656-0502
emanj@mindspring.com

Senator Harold V. Jones II (D-22)

323-B CLOB
(404) 463-3942
haroldjoneslawoffice@gmail.com

Senator John F. Kennedy (R-18)

109 CAP
(404) 656-7454
john.kennedy@senate.ga.gov

Senator Greg Kirk (R-13)

320-A CLOB
(404) 463-5258
greg.kirk@senate.ga.gov

Senator William T. Ligon (R-3)

324-B CLOB
404-656-0045
william.ligon@senate.ga.gov

Senator David Lucas (D-26)

305-A CLOB
404-656-5035
david.lucas@senate.ga.gov

Senator P. K. Martin IV (R-9)

304-B CLOB
(404) 656-3933
p.k.martin@senate.ga.gov





Senator Joshua McKoon (R-29)

319-A CLOB
404-463-3931
jrm2016@yahoo.com

Senator Fran Millar (R-40)

319-B CLOB
404-463-2260
fran.millar@senate.ga.gov

Senator Butch Miller (R-49)

421-A CAP
404-656-6578
butch.miller@senate.ga.gov

Senator Jeff Mullis (R-53)

453 CAP
404-656-0057
jeff.mullis@senate.ga.gov

Senator Jack Murphy (R-27)

325-A CLOB
404-656-7127
jack.murphy@senate.ga.gov

Senator Nan Orrock (D-36)

121-C CAP
404-463-8054
nan.orrock@senate.ga.gov

Senator Elena Parent (D-42)

321-B CLOB
(404) 656-5109
elena@elenaparent.com

Senator Ronald B. Ramsey, Sr. (D-43)

303-A CLOB
404-463-2598
ronald.ramsey@senate.ga.gov

Senator Michael “Doc” Rhett (D-33)

321-A CLOB
(404) 656-0054
michael.rhett@senate.ga.gov

Senator Valencia Seay (D-34)

420-B CAP
404-656-5095
valencia.seay@senate.ga.gov

Senator David Shafer (R-48)

President Pro Tempore
321 CAP
404-656-0048
david.shafer@senate.ga.gov

Senator Freddie Powell Sims (D-12)

110-A CAP
404-463-5259
freddie.sims@senate.ga.gov

Senator Cecil Staton (R-18)

421-F CAP
404-656-5039
cecil.staton@senate.ga.gov

Senator Jesse Stone (R-23)

320-B CLOB
404-463-1314
jesse.stone@senate.ga.gov

Senator Horacena Tate (D-38)

121-A CAP
404-463-8053
horacena.tate@senate.ga.gov

Senator Bruce Thompson (R-14)

324-A CLOB
404-656-0065
bruce.thompson@senate.ga.gov

Senator Curt Thompson (D-5)

121-I CAP
404-463-1318
curt.thompson@senate.ga.gov

Senator Lindsey Tippins (R-37)

302-B CLOB
404-657-0406
lindsey.tippins@senate.ga.gov

Senator Ross Tolleson (R-20)

121-D CAP
404-656-0081
ross.tolleson@senate.ga.gov

Senator Renee S. Unterman (R-45)

121-H CAP
404-463-1368
renee.unterman@senate.ga.gov

Senator Ben Watson (R-1)

404-D CLOB
(404) 656-0109
bwatson@southcoastmedical.com

Senator John Wilkinson

321-B CLOB
404-463-5257
john.wilkinson@senate.ga.gov

Senator Michael Williams (R-27)

323-A CLOB
(404) 656-7127
michael.williams@senate.ga.gov

Senator Tommie Williams (R-19)

110 CAP
404-656-0089
tommie.williams@senate.ga.gov

Senate Appropriations

234 CAP
404-656-5038

The Appropriations Committee is responsible for proposing legislation that allocates funds to the numerous government agencies, departments, and organizations on an annual basis. With its fourteen sub-committees, Appropriations is responsible for holding hearings as well as approving said legislation for a \$22 billion balanced budget.

Committee Members:

Senator Jack Hill, <i>Chairman</i>	Senator Steve Gooch	Senator David Shafer
Senator Renee S Unterman, <i>Vice Chairman</i>	Senator Bill Heath	Senator Freddie Powell Sims
Senator Charlie Bethel, <i>Secretary</i>	Senator Hunter Hill	Senator Jesse Stone
Senator John Albers	Senator Judson Hill	Senator Horacena Tate
Senator Dean Burke	Senator Chuck Hufstetler	Senator Curt Thompson
Senator Bill Cowsert	Senator Bill Jackson	Senator Lindsey Tippins
Senator Mike Crane	Senator William T. Ligon, Jr.	Senator Ross Tolleson
Senator Gail Davenport	Senator Butch Miller	Senator John Wilkinson
Senator Vincent Fort	Senator Jeff Mullis	Senator Tommie Williams
Senator Frank Ginn	Senator Nan Orrock	
	Senator Valencia Seay	

Appropriations Subcommittee, Community Health

Senator Dean Burke, <i>Chair</i>	Senator John Albers
Senator Renee S Unterman, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Senator Valencia Seay
	Senator Tommie Williams

Senate Health and Human Services

121-E CAP
404-463-1368

The Health and Human Services Committee considers legislation that affects the conditions of safety regulations and social services for the citizens of Georgia. This Committee also addresses the legal areas surrounding medical professionals as well as medicinal provisions.

Committee Members:

Senator Renee S Unterman, <i>Chairman</i>	Senator Judson Hill, <i>Ex-Officio</i>	Senator Chuck Hufstetler
Senator Don Balfour, <i>Vice Chairman</i>	Senator Dean Burke	Senator Lester Jackson
Senator Fran Millar, <i>Secretary</i>	Senator Gloria Butler	Senator William Ligon, Jr.
	Senator Buddy Carter	Senator Nan Orrock
	Senator Steve Henson	Senator David Shafer

Senate Insurance and Labor

421-C CAP
404-463-5263

Primary jurisdictions are insurance, workers’ compensation, and unemployment compensation. Committee jurisdiction also includes child labor, convict labor, labor standards and disputes.

Committee Members:

Senator Charlie Bethel, <i>Chairman</i>	Senator Marty Harbin	Senator Ronald B. Ramsey, Sr.
Senator David Shafer, <i>Vice Chairman</i>	Senator Ed Harbison	Senator Renee S Unterman
Senator P. K. Martin IV, <i>Secretary</i>	Senator Burt Jones	
	Senator Joshua McKoon	

Senate Rules

453 CAP
404-656-0095

The Rules Committee establishes the rules for the orderly procedure and placement of bills on the legislative calendar.

Committee Members:

Senator Jeff Mullis, <i>Chairman</i>	Senator William T. Ligon, Jr., <i>Ex-Officio</i>	Senator Steve Henson
Senator Ross Tolleson, <i>Vice Chairman</i>	Senator David Shafer, <i>Ex-Officio</i>	Senator Jack Hill
Senator Bill Jackson, <i>Secretary</i>	Senator John Wilkinson, <i>Ex-Officio</i>	Senator Judson Hill
Senator Bill Cowsert, <i>Ex-Officio</i>		Senator Fran Millar
Senator Steve Gooch, <i>Ex-Officio</i>	Senator Gloria S. Butler	Senator Butch Miller
Senator Hunter Hill, <i>Ex-Officio</i>	Senator Bill Heath	Senator Horacena Tate
		Senator Renee S Unterman

Health Care Advocacy Organizations & Associations

Contacts for the 2015 Georgia Legislative Session

AARP

Greg Tanner
Georgia State Director
999 Peachtree St NE Suite 1110
404-870-3780
GTanner@aarp.org

Advocates for Responsible Care

Dorothy Leone-Glasser
Executive Director
404-633-5843
dlg@arxc.org

All About Developmental Disabilities

Kathryn Keeley
Executive Director
404-881-9777
kathy@aadd.org

Elizabeth J. Appley
Legislative Counsel
404-877-8772
eja@appleylaw.com

American Academy of Pediatrics, Georgia Chapter

Rick Ward
Executive Director
404-881-5091
rward@gaaap.org

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Inc.

Eric Bailey
Georgia Director of Government Relations
404-949-6437 (office)
404-909-0118 (cell)
eric.bailey@cancer.org

American College of Physicians, Georgia Chapter

Mary Daniels
Executive Director
770-965-7606
mdaniels@gacp.org

American Diabetes Association

Abe Saffer
Associate Director, State Government Affairs
202-450-8068 (mobile)
asaffer@diabetes.org

American Heart Association, Greater Southeast Affiliate

Marsi Thrash
Government Relations and Advocacy Director
678-224-2085 (office)
770-337-4513 (mobile)
marsithrash@heart.org

Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Atlanta

Helen Ho, Esq.
Executive Director
404-585-8446 (Office)
404-232-5219 (Direct)
helen@aalegal.org

Coalition of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses

Laura Searcy MN, APRN
Policy Director and Legislative Liaison
678-886-4503
lsearcy@caprn.org

Doctors for America — Georgia

Courtney Maniatis, D.O.
678-951-5158
courtneymaniatis@gmail.com

Families First

Linda Lowe
Public Policy Advocate
404-274-1746 (cell)
smithlowe@earthlink.net

Zach's Nikonovich-Kahn
Public Policy Associate
zach.nikonovich-kahn@familiesfirst.org

Feminist Women's Health Center

Kwajelyn Jackson
Community Education & Advocacy Director
404-248-5445 (office)
nextwave@feministcenter.org

Georgia Academy of Family Physicians

Fay Fulton, MHS
Executive Vice President
404-321-7445
fbrown@gafp.org

Georgia Association of Community Service Boards

Robyn Garrett-Gunnoe
Association Director
(912) 312-3205
rgunnoe@shpllc.com

Georgia Breast Cancer Coalition Fund

Linda Lowe
Public Policy Advocate
404-274-1746 (cell)
smithlowe@earthlink.net

Georgia Budget & Policy Institute

Timothy Sweeney
Director of Health Policy
404-420-1324 Ext 103
tsweeney@gbpi.org

GCAPP — Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power and Potential

Kim Nolte
President & CEO
404-475-6043
Kim@gcapp.org

Mary Frances Williams
Legislative & Policy Consultant
404-395-3485
m.f.williams@att.net

Georgia Council on Substance Abuse

Dawn Randolph
Governmental Affairs Director
678-764-4502 – cell
404-523-3440 – office
dawn@dirconsultinggroup.com

Georgia Dental Association

Fatimot Ladipo
Director of Government Affairs
404-636-7553
800-432-4357 (office)
Ladipo@gadental.org

Stephanie Lotti
Director of Member Practice Services
Lotti@gadental.org

Melana McClatchey
Senior Director and General Counsel
Mcclathey@gadental.org

Georgia Equality

Jeff Graham
Executive Director
404-523-3070
jeff@georgiaequality.org

Georgia Public Health Association

Scott Maxwell
Governmental Affairs Consultant
404-216-8075
scott.maxwell@comcast.net

Georgia Rural Urban Summit

Larry Pellegrini
Executive Director
404-483-0719 (office)
lobbywatch@aol.com

Georgia Watch

Beth Stephens
Health Access Program Director
404-525-1085
bstephens@georgiawatch.org

Liz Coyle
Acting Executive Director
404-525-1085
lcoyle@georgiawatch.org

Georgians for a Healthy Future

Cindy Zeldin
Executive Director
404-418-6179 (office)
404-536-7538 (mobile)
czeldin@healthyfuturega.org

Laura Colbert
Community Outreach Manager
404-890-5804 (office)
lcolbert@healthyfuturega.org

Anna Cullen
Communications Coordinator
404-856-0714 (office)
acullen@healthyfuturega.org

Andy Lord
Capitol Representative
404-454-6373
andylord@ga-lobbyist.com;

Grady Health System

Matthew Hicks
Vice President, Government Relations
404-616-5977 (office)
mhicks1@gmh.edu

Health Students Taking Action Together, Inc.

Jenny Besse
President
404-451-0580
info@healthstatgeorgia.org

Hemophilia of Georgia

Jeff Cornett RN MSN
Director of Training, Research, & Advocacy
770-518-8272 (office)
404-210-8861 (cell)
gjcornett@hog.org

Michelle Putnam
Associate Director of Research & Advocacy
mputnam@hog.org
770-518-8272 (office)
678-588-6561 (cell)

League of Women Voters of Georgia

Kelli Persons
Program Manager
404-522-4598 (office)
kelli@lwvga.org

»

Health Care Advocacy Organizations & Associations

Contact Information for the 2015 Georgia Legislative Session

»

Lupus Foundation of America, Georgia Chapter

Maria Myler
President & CEO
770-333-5930
m.myler@lfaga.org

Kim Schofield
Advocacy Chair
404-966-6397
kimschofield@bellsouth.net

March of Dimes

Julie Zaharatos
Director of Program Services
jzaharatos@marchofdimes.org
404-720-5304

Mental Health America of Georgia

Ellyn Jeager
Director, Public Policy & Advocacy
404-527-7175
404-358-7797

Parent to Parent of Georgia

Claire Dees
*Community Engagement
Specialist*
770-451-5484
1-800-229-2038
claire@p2pga.org

Karen Addams
Information Services Director
770-451-5484
1-800-229-2038

Planned Parenthood Southeast

Nikema Williams
Vice President of Public Policy
404.688.9300
Nikema.williams@ppse.org

Urban Health Initiative, Emory School of Medicine

Carolyn B. Aidman, PhD
Associate Director
404-778-1425
678-472-5858 (cell)
caidman@emory.edu

Voices for Georgia's Children

Erica Fener Sitkoff, Ph.D.
Policy & Outreach Director
404-521-0311
efenersitkoff@georgiavoices.org

Pat Willis
Executive Director
404-521-0311 (office)
pwillis@georgiavoices.org

Polly McKinney
Advocacy Director
678-427-5945 (cell)
pmckinney@georgiavoices.org

Women of W.O.R.T.H., Inc.

Kristen Sheeley
Office Manager
(706)232-3408 office
(706)512-0453 cell
kristensheeley@gmail.com

YWCA of Greater Atlanta

Helen Robinson
Director of Advocacy
404.892.3476 (main) Ext. 148
Helen.Robinson@ywcaatlanta.org

Media: Health Care, State Government & Political Reporters

Contact Information for the 2015 Georgia Legislative Session

The Atlanta Journal- Constitution

Greg Bluestein
Governor
gbluestein@ajc.com

Jim Galloway
Political Insider columnist
404-526-5520
jgalloway@ajc.com

Aaron Gould Sheinin
Legislature and state agencies
404-526-5823
asheinin@ajc.com

Chris Joyner
*State government watchdog
reporter*
cjoyner@ajc.com

Jim Salzer
*Investigative reporter: state tax,
budget and ethics rules*
404-526-5511
jsalzer@ajc.com

Carrie Teegardin
Health Reporter
404-526-5360
cteegardin@ajc.com

Kristina Torres
*State government, politics and
the Legislature*
ktorres@ajc.com

Misty Williams
Health Reporter
404-526-5610
mwilliams@ajc.com

Atlanta Business Chronicle

Ellie Hensley
Health Reporter
404-249-1064
ehensley@bizjournals.com

Atlanta Jewish Times

David Cohen
404-883-2130
david@atljewishtimes.com

Atlanta Voice

A Scott Walton
Executive Editor
(404) 524-6426 x13

Athens Banner-Herald

Blake Aued
State Government Reporter
706-208-2226
blake.aued@onlineathens.com

Augusta Chronicle

Tom Corwin
Health Reporter
tom.corwin@augustachronicle.com

Creative Loafing Atlanta

Max Blau
News Writer
max.blau@cln.com

Thomas Wheatley
News Editor
thomas.wheatley@cln.com

Georgia Health News

Andy Miller
404-386-8290
amiller@georgiahealthnews.com

Georgia Public Broadcasting Radio

Eric Burns
News Director
(404) 685-2677 or 404-685-2670

Georgia Report

Tom Crawford
404-522-9127
tcrawford@gareport.com

Georgia Trend

Susan Percy
Editor
(770) 931-9410
spercy@georgiatrend.com

Morris News Service

Walter Jones
Bureau Chief
404-589-8424 (office)
678-522-3574 (cell)
walter.jones@morris.com

Mundo Hispanico

Rodrigo Cervantes
Editor
(404) 881-0441
rcervantes@
mundohispanico.com

WABE News, Atlanta's NPR Station

Michelle Wirth
mwirth@pba.org

Jim Burress
jburress@wabe.org

ADVOCACY DEMYSTIFIED: Tools and Strategies

for Effective Consumer Health Advocacy



AD-VO-CATE (N. AD-VUH-KIT): ONE THAT DEFENDS OR MAINTAINS A CAUSE OR PROPOSAL

Advocacy may seem overwhelming, but it's a lot easier—and can have a bigger impact—than you might imagine. You already have the knowledge, passion, and commitment to be a successful and effective health care advocate.

All you need are the right tools.

THE THREE TENETS OF ADVOCACY:

HOOK	LINE	SINKER
<p>THE HOOK IS THE START OF ANY CONVERSATION.</p> <p>Make sure to tell the legislator (or whoever your audience is) who you are, where you live and why you are contacting them. Legislators hear from lobbyists all day long but they don't always hear from their constituents, whom they have a duty to represent.</p>	<p>THE LINE IS WHY THIS ISSUE IS IMPORTANT TO YOU.</p> <p>Is it because of a personal experience? Do you know someone who is affected by a lack of access to care? In your professional capacity, is this an issue that you deal with often? Why do you care and more importantly, why should they? The line is the opportunity to make this a personal issue and not a vague, anonymous one.</p>	<p>THE SINKER IS WHERE YOU TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE "THE ASK."</p> <p>Do you want your legislators to support a public policy measure that will improve access to health care in Georgia? Do you want to encourage other partners in your local community to support a cause? Make sure to ask, "Can I count on your support?" He or she may not immediately have a firm answer, but this is an opportunity to spur your target audience to think about the issue more deeply and come up with a reason to support or oppose a solution. It is also a great opportunity to follow up with useful information that can help you make your case. What would you like to see done to make a change?</p>

YOU KNOW WHY YOU'RE SPEAKING OUT...NOW HERE'S HOW:

MAKE A CALL, SEND A LETTER, SEND AN EMAIL

Whenever you reach out to a legislator or key decision-maker, make sure to include your name, address, why you care about the issue and ask for a concrete deliverable.

"Hello, my name is X and I am a constituent of Legislator Y. I want to encourage my legislator to support Issue Z because it will improve my community's access to affordable, quality health care. Can I count on Y's support?"

SOCIAL MEDIA

The power of social networking is that it is a simple way to share your opinions and proposed solutions to basic health care problems with friends and family and in turn get them thinking about the issues most important to them.

Like it, Tweet it, Share it

TELEVISION / RADIO / NEWSPAPER RELATIONSHIPS

See an article about health care that you agree with or disagree with? Writing a letter-to-the-editor to share your opinion and proposed solutions is a great way to maximize exposure for some of the most pressing health care issues across the state.

Take opportunities to meet with your local Editorial Board to inform them of key health care issues facing your community.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS

Are you a part of the local PTA? Do you attend Neighborhood Planning meetings or City Council Hearings? Do you volunteer with your church or other religious institutions?

Bringing the challenges and opportunities of the future of our health and health care to these groups and partners brings the people who have the most to gain from a local perspective into the problem solving process, helping ensure its success.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



***Information
for Action***

GXF GEORGIANS FOR A
HEALTHY FUTURE
Sound Policy. Effective Action.

100 Edgewood Avenue, NE, Suite 1015
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
(404) 567-5016
www.healthyfuturega.org

