



MARCH/APRIL 2023

JAMES

MOST INFLUENTIAL READERSHIP IN GEORGIA

CEO SPOTLIGHT
BLACKSTONE'S
STEPHEN SCHWARZMAN PAGE 40

THE 2023 Most Influential Issue

GEORGIAN OF THE YEAR, SHEPHERD CENTER'S
ALANA SHEPHERD

GEORGIA'S CIDS CONTINUE TO SPUR ECONOMIC GROWTH
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TOWERY: COULD KEMP BE A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE?



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ON THE COVER

ALANA SHEPHERD DOING WHAT SHE DOES BEST—
CHECKING ON A PATIENT.

JAMES

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PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

It's "Influential" listings time again

Who are the powerful Georgians in the public and private sector who help establish our state's political priorities? Who are top captains of industry who not only influence politics but strive to make our state the No. 1 place in which to do business? Who are many other movers-and shakers in various walks of life who shape our culture and impact our daily lives?

Georgians need to know. That's why our staff researches and prepares an annual roster of accomplished Georgians who are the guiding lights of our state's business, political, legal, media and cultural circles. Their ideas, policies and actions impact all Georgians.

We compiled as a public service a record number of prominent individuals in their fields of endeavor in our "Most Influential" edition. You'll see well-known names as well as new ones in brief bios and extensive chart listings. Some names have also been dropped from last year. Some retired, moved away or passed away. (Some were also defeated in elections.)

James also publishes a special salute, on a bipartisan basis, to three state "Legislators of the Year" for exceptional public service. We've also added a special category: "Big Winners of 2022." Three are elected public servants and a fourth, well, is in a special category of his own.

Obviously, our "influential list" is incomplete and difficult to compile. We've no doubt left out some important people around our big state who wield significant overt or covert influence that we haven't heard about. However, we can always count on our readers to point out omissions and submit their names for future consideration.

As for our "Georgian of the Year," we believe Alana Shepherd is an especially appropriate choice. My interview chronicles how this tireless advocate began a crusade almost 50 years ago to help found, fund and

expand an Atlanta hospital now ranked as one of the nation's top rehabilitation centers.

Every issue of *James* focuses on aspects of Georgia's impressive business climate. That's why we're especially pleased to secure an interview with Wall Street icon and prominent philanthropist Steven Schwarzman for our "CEO Spotlight." Learn why and how he's expanding his sizable Georgia presence. Continuing with the business theme, check out our features on the booming film and TV industry as well as the growing economic impact of important Community Improvement Districts.

Education, which naturally affects economic and workforce development, is another important *James* topic. In this issue we highlight two institutions experiencing educational growth and success— Young Harris College as well as the five-campus University of North Georgia. Matt Smith's piece on "bigger bets and bigger educational dividends" is also a must-read.

There are of course other compelling articles in this our largest issue ever but space doesn't permit further comment. So I'll conclude by again thanking our expanding number of readers and advertisers for their support that fosters our growth.

Phil Kent

PHIL KENT CEO & PUBLISHER

P.S. We always look forward to our annual online Sippin' Local poll of readers' favorite Georgia breweries, distilleries and wineries. The poll opens on March 13th so visit our website at insideradvantage.com and click on the Vote Here tab to cast your ballot. The number one ranked business in each category will be highlighted in our Sippin' Local feature in the May-June magazine.



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FLOATING BOATS

WHO'S RISING & SINKING IN GEORGIA BUSINESS & POLITICS

The devastating earthquake that hit Turkey in February destroyed thousands of homes and left more than 40,000 dead. It's one of the worst natural disasters of the 21st century. In Georgia, home to a large Turkish community, volunteers leapt into action by joining with the **Turkish American Chamber of Commerce of the South** to organize donation drives. They shipped pallets of goods, from baby formula to coats and jackets, for free each day aboard Turkish Airlines' daily flight from Atlanta to Istanbul. The generosity in response to such a terrible tragedy hopefully has survivors in need **RISING**.

Plans for **Spaceport Camden** appear to have been grounded following a ruling from the Georgia Supreme Court that ordered the county to obey a voter referendum stopping the county from purchasing land for the site. The latest twist in the spaceport saga is a major blow against Camden County officials who have spent millions on the project while many residents are opposed. Prospects for the spaceport are **Sinking**.

Blue Dog Democrats, a coalition of moderate Democratic U.S. House members, have been a dying breed. Many were knocked off by Republicans while others were defeated in primaries by more liberal candidates. For the remaining members drama struck when a debate broke out over rebranding the group, getting rid of the "Blue Dog" name over accusations it had "racist" connotations. After a secret ballot vote that rejected the new name, (the "Common Sense Coalition") seven members including Georgia **Rep. David Scott** left the group, leaving eight remaining members. Among those is Georgia **Rep. Sanford Bishop**. Obviously, the Blue Dogs' influence is **Sinking**.

Former Lt. Gov. **Geoff Duncan** and ex-Sen. **Butch Miller**, along with 12 others including "security" personnel, wasted hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on a so-called European "economic study" junket—just two months before the two left office. New Lt. Gov. Burt Jones' spokeswoman best summed up this selfish trip: "The lieutenant governor (Duncan's replacement) finds it disheartening that two outgoing elected officials would take a taxpayer-funded European vacation knowing they will have zero influence on future economic development opportunities." Duncan, Miller and their fellow shameless vacationers are **Sinking**.

Georgia's prison system has been in the spotlight for rising prisoner violence, gang recruitment of new inmates, underpaid, bribed guards who assist inmates and drones that deliver contraband (especially cell-phones) for inmates to pursue criminal activities inside prison walls. (FYI— Georgia's attorney general is urging Congress to pass legislation implementing a cell phone jamming system in state prisons.) But— get this!— the GBI actually arrested the Smith State Prison warden on charges he collected cash as part of a contraband operation he oversaw. A new Department of Corrections commissioner has been named. Good luck. He's facing prison conditions that are **Sinking**.

It appeared that former Georgia state **Rep. Calvin Smyre's** ambassadorship nomination had run out of steam as it expired at the end of the 2022 legislative session in Washington D.C. But good news dropped as the new session began when President Joe Biden immediately re-nominated Smyre for ambassador to the Bahamas, sending his name back to the Senate for its approval. Hopefully this time it moves forward quicker. With bipartisan support from Georgia lawmakers the nomination's odds of being approved are **RISING**.

Former Atlanta City Councilman and mayoral candidate **Antonio Brown** entered a plea deal with law enforcement authorities, admitting to a charge of bank fraud while having six other charges dropped. Brown was accused of opening up credit lines and making lavish purchases, then claiming the cards were stolen and attempting to refund the charges. The felony charge should have Brown's political ship **Sinking**.

Atlanta officials have put together a strong bid for the **2024 Democratic National Convention**, with Mayor Andre Dickens confident Georgia's capital will secure the blockbuster political event. Up against finalists Chicago and New York, the Atlanta team has lobbied hard and even has some GOP support. The weeklong event would bring more than 50,000 visitors and shine a bright political spotlight on the state, which has become a key battleground in recent election cycles. Atlanta's odds of securing the economic and political prize seem to be **RISING**.

GEORGIAN OF THE YEAR

SHEPHERD
CENTER'S

Alana Shepherd

by Phil Kent

As I prepared to interview Shepherd Center founder and self-described volunteer Alana Shepherd, I visited the Atlanta-based, nationally renowned rehabilitation hospital's website. It revealed an impressive array of services— more than I had imagined since I toured the facility a decade ago. Its patient programs deal with spinal cord injury, brain injury, stroke, multi-trauma, multiple sclerosis and pain. And, as an Army veteran, I especially appreciate its SHARE Military Initiative. (More about that later.)

Life may be forever different for many of its patients, but it's clear the Shepherd Center offers the best treatment, research and rehabilitation for those that come through its doors. What particularly struck me as we talked is that a lot of the news related to the Center involves story after story of people from Georgia and cities all over the country— and from some foreign countries— who have come for treatment there.

Countless people who have experienced a tragedy have been able to return home from the Center, welcomed with love and celebration by their neighbors.

GENESIS OF THE SHEPHERD CENTER

The private, not-for-profit hospital was conceived after Alana and Harold Shepherd's son James Jr. suffered a paralyzing spinal cord injury in 1973. She relays the short version of what happened:

"After graduating from college, he started out to backpack in Africa and South America. He was on the beach in Rio and his second day there ended badly. A wave tossed him to the bottom of the ocean breaking his neck. He drowned and washed up. A lifeguard walked up, looked at him and walked away thinking he was already dead. But his friends saw what happened and started resuscitation. They got him to an aid station, and we (Alana and husband Harold) arrived the next morning— and we quickly tried to learn Portuguese. He had a lot of complications and bleeding; and got hepatitis and pneumonia. He went downhill in that hospital. We wanted him out and they wanted him out. But there were no air ambulances at that time. And commercial planes couldn't take him because he was on a ventilator. So we made arrangements and obtained an Air Force plane which we paid for to get him back to Atlanta."

"In Atlanta nobody knew what complex spinal cord care required," she continued. "By the time he got down to 84 pounds, we researched and went to Craig Hospital in Denver where there were new treatment options. James was there for five and a half months and walked out with a leg brace and crutch. He got return of function. After that, he and some other people who had also been treated at Craig said there ought to be something like this in Atlanta. So that conversation circled right back to us."

The bottom line: James, Alana and Harold soon found a medical director. Alana recalled that "we called Dr. David Apple and he said I'll do the medical and you do the rest." That's when the Shepherds sought financial support from the Atlanta community, and, in 1975, the Center opened its doors as a six-bed unit in leased space in an Atlanta hospital. "We started getting more beds, the need was there, the people came, and the money came in," she said. "And wonderful doctors who had the experience came to join us."

GALVANIZING SUPPORT FOR EXPANSION

Sarah Morrison, who started as a physical therapist at Shepherd Center and worked her way up to become Shepherd's CEO in 2017, says, "Having experienced the unmet need for specialized rehabilitation firsthand while living through her son James' spinal cord injury, Alana did what many would find impossible. Not only did she find the right care for her son and support his path to healing, but in the few short years after his injury, she and her family galvanized support from the community to found Shepherd Center, which has gone on to help

thousands of patients and families to get the extraordinary care they need to begin to live life again."

They now treat approximately 850 inpatients, 280 day program patients, and more than 7,600 outpatients per year.

"Only about 45 percent of our patients are from Georgia," Alana says, "and we are undertaking the most exciting future for the hospital. We're adding two new buildings— one for increased housing for patient families and one that will allow us to expand our bed capacity to 200. We are also expanding the pain and the multiple sclerosis institutes." She also secured three prominent honorary chairs who have been working on Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center: Bernie Marcus, Arthur Blank and David Ratcliffe.

"When Billi and I first met her in the mid 1980's," Marcus recalls, "we immediately committed our support to her, her family, and their mission. Here we are more than 35 years later, and Alana is the force that has moved Shepherd Center from a facility that met an urgent need for the care of her son to America's leading neurorehabilitation center for patients and their families. She has affected so many lives positively, both in the state of Georgia and around the country."



SHEPHERD IS A WELCOMING AND ENCOURAGING PRESENCE TO PATIENTS AND FAMILIES AT SHEPHERD CENTER.

MILITARY INITIATIVE TREATS VETERANS

"Bernie Marcus came to us about starting the SHARE program and he bought us a three-story building to house it," Alana said. She explained that it is a comprehensive rehabilitation program for military veterans, service members and first responders who are ready to accept help and healing for their daily struggle with traumatic brain injuries and mental health concerns. The men and women coming in, she frankly says, have significant needs. "They come and stay in our housing and, if they have a family, the family comes with them." *continued on page 11*



Extraordinary Care for Extraordinary Outcomes – Right Here in Georgia

A community asset in Atlanta since 1975, Shepherd Center provides world-class clinical care, research, and family support for people experiencing the most complex conditions, including **spinal cord and brain injuries, multi-trauma, multiple amputations, stroke, multiple sclerosis, concussions, and pain.**

Ranked by *U.S. News* as one of the nation's top 10 hospitals for rehabilitation and the best in the Southeast, Shepherd Center treats more than 850 inpatients and 7,600 outpatients annually with unmatched expertise and unwavering compassion to help them begin again.



Shepherd
Center

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learn more?

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shepherd.org.

It's notable that SHARE clients receive their treatment at no cost to them. Shepherd Center is able to sustain the program through the generosity of individuals, families, corporations and private foundations. There is also a great group called the Shepherd's Men whose primary goal is to raise funds for the program.

Travis Ellis is a co-founder of the group, and notes that the Men have an annual run at different locations and host fundraisers throughout their journey to fund SHARE's operating budget. "It is our desire to shine light on the condition of those struggling in our veteran community— many of whom suffer in silence, isolating themselves from family, friends and the community," Ellis says.

"We won't rest until the number of lives lost every day to suicide goes from 22 to 0," Ellis continues. "Our veterans deserve to live meaningful lives with their families after their courageous service to our country."

The Center, by the way, has treated over 800 veterans and first responders, helping them renew their health, purpose, relationships and quality of life.

As for Alana Shepherd, Ellis says, "She is the matriarch of Atlanta and has done more to combat the condition of human suffering than anyone in my lifetime."

VOLUNTEER WORK AT THE CENTER

Alana Shepherd is certainly past the age most would consider retirement, yet she is involved daily as the chair of the board of directors and a volunteer.

"Even 47 years after founding Shepherd Center, Alana has a constant presence at Shepherd Center," CEO Morrison says. "She visits with new patients and their families, speaking to them from a place where only someone who has been through something similar can speak. Even when she is not physically in the building, she is thinking of ways that we can help more patients and families, retain our amazing staff, engage our donors, and remain at the top of our game."

Asked about what it has all meant to her, Shepherd said "It turned out to be my life. It's a life project and it has been a privilege to be part of it."

"We've developed an incredible staff of about 1,800, several campuses and all kinds of housing for our families, most of whom are from more than an hour away."

Alana's care and compassion is truly seen in her accomplishments. "She exemplifies one of my personal core values— give back to others— through the resources and support she provides for the community," says her friend Arthur Blank. "I've been a believer of Alana for a long time. One of our earliest gifts at The Home Depot was to the Shepherd Center, and I'm proud to continue supporting the organization through our family foundation. I often say that Alana's an angel here on earth."

To learn more about Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center, visit pursuingpossible.org

Phil Kent is the CEO and Publisher of James and InsiderAdvantage Georgia.

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MOST INFLUENTIAL Georgians

We again present our popular yearly roster of major business, political and media players from across the state. Space is always a factor in doing such a compilation, so in addition to the bio profiles are charts of the state's influential public servants ranging from prominent elected office-holders and Georgia's public university presidents to mayors of major cities and state Appeals and Supreme Court justices.

STACEY ABRAMS

2018 & 2022 CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR



Back-to-back losses in gubernatorial campaigns would spell the end of most political careers, but Abrams remains a dominant Georgia political force and one of the Democratic Party's biggest names, fundraisers and grassroots organizers.

SALLY AKINS

PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF GEORGIA



A full-time mediator at Ellis Painter in Savannah, Akins currently serves as the 60th president of the State Bar, the sixth woman to do so. She oversees more than 54,000 attorneys across the state, enforcing the Bar's code of ethics and providing resources and training to its members.

DAN AMOS

CHAIRMAN & CEO, AFLAC



The second-longest serving CEO in the Fortune 200 is one of its most successful, with revenues growing from \$2.7 billion in 1990 to \$22.1 billion in 2021. Amos has also made fighting childhood cancer a key component of Aflac's philanthropic mission, contributing over \$158 million to the cause.

STATEWIDE ELECTED OFFICIALS

GOVERNOR

Brian Kemp Athens

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Burt Jones Jackson

SECRETARY OF STATE

Brad Raffensperger
Johns Creek

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Chris Carr Atlanta

LABOR COMMISSIONER

Bruce Thompson White

STATE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDANT

Richard Woods Tifton

AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER

Tyler Harper Ocilla

INSURANCE COMMISSIONER

John King Doraville

ROY BARNES

FORMER GOVERNOR, ATTORNEY



Twenty-one years ago Georgia's 80th governor was defeated for re-election and to this day retains the title as Georgia's last Democrat chief executive. Yet Barnes remains a party elder statesman and remains busy as a practicing attorney. The lifelong Cobb Countian is always ready tell an old story, hammer home a closing courtroom argument, dispense political and business advice and donate to favored candidates.

ED BASTIAN

CEO, DELTA AIR LINES



Delta has firmly established itself as the nation's premier international airline since Bastian took the reins in 2016. *James'* 2021 "Georgian of the Year" deftly guided the airline through the pandemic and into clearer skies as the company looks to expand its lead over industry competitors.

BRANDON BEACH

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NORTH FULTON CID



The longtime Alpharetta resident pulls double duty as a state senator representing parts of Fulton and Cherokee Counties as well as

leading the North Fulton CID, the region's premier public-private partnership. Since 2018 the organization, benefitting from his deep business and political connections, has invested more than \$20 million into infrastructure projects.

BALRAM BHEODARI

GM, HARTSFIELD-JACKSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



Hartsfield-Jackson isn't just the world's busiest airport, it is also the state's largest single employer with more than 63,000 jobs on-site. That means Bheodari, or "B" as he is known in the office, must lean on his 30 years of aviation industry experience to keep things running smoothly.

SARA BLAKELY

FOUNDER, SPANX



Twenty-five years ago an obscure door-to-door saleswoman cut the feet off her pantyhose to smooth out the look under her white pants. Fourteen years later she became the world's youngest self-made female billionaire. She started her own foundation and joined the "Giving Pledge," whereby the world's richest people donate at least half their wealth to charity. When COVID-19 hit, for example, she gifted \$5 million to support female-led small businesses.

ARTHUR BLANK

BUSINESSMAN, PHILANTHROPIST



It's almost hard to say what Blank is best known for at this point—co-founding the Home Depot, one of the largest retail stores in the world, owning the NFL's Atlanta Falcons or his nationally renowned philanthropic efforts that have seen more than \$800 million donated by his foundation in the Atlanta area alone.

RAPHAEL BOSTIC

PRESIDENT & CEO, FEDERAL RESERVE BANK ATLANTA



This former economist served in the Obama administration before becoming the first African-American and openly gay man to lead a regional Federal Reserve bank in 2017. His name has been floated as a possible candidate for even higher roles including Secretary of the Treasury and chair of the Federal Reserve.

KAREN BREMER

CEO, GEORGIA RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION



As one of the key voices advocating for the state's nearly-19,000 eating and drinking establishments, the tireless Bremer continues to help navigate the minefield of federal relief, commercial leases and safety protocols in an industry that employs more than 500,000 Georgians.

MOST INFLUENTIAL

SENATE LEADERSHIP

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Burt Jones Jackson

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

John Kennedy Macon

MAJORITY LEADER

Steve Gooch Dahlonega

MAJORITY CAUCUS CHAIR

Jason Anavitate Dallas

MAJORITY WHIP

Randy Robertson Cataula

DEMOCRATIC LEADER

Gloria Butler Atlanta

DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS CHAIR

Elena Parent Atlanta

DEMOCRATIC WHIP

Harold Jones Stone Mountain

OTIS BRUMBY III

NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER



Journalism is in the blood for this Cobb County native, who serves on boards ranging from Wellstar Health System to the Georgia Press Association. His center-right political bent is a rarity in Georgia's journalism world, giving his 21 papers operated by the Times-Journal company (the flagship being the *Marietta Daily Journal*) an influential news/editorial voice in the Peach State.

STEVE CANNON

VICE CHAIRMAN, ARTHUR M. BLANK SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT



The day-to-day leader of Arthur Blank's entertainment empire over the past seven years, Cannon received something of a promotion as Blank recently shuffled his executive team. He will now oversee the "next evolution" of the Falcons, Atlanta United and Mercedes-Benz Stadium as they move into new eras and look forward to hosting the 2026 World Cup.

ANDREW CATHY

CEO, CHICK-FIL-A



In 2021 Andrew became the third generation of Cathys to lead the fast-food giant, which has steadily risen to become the third-largest restaurant chain in the U.S. Having grown up inside the company he is well placed to lead the family operation into the next generation.

CHRIS CLARK

PRESIDENT & CEO, GEORGIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



It's no coincidence that Georgia's economy has undergone one of its most prolific periods of growth during Clark's 13 years leading the state's largest business advocacy organization. He works well with Gov. Brian Kemp and the state's economic development team led by Pat Wilson, and he serves on the board of the U.S. Chamber as well as its prestigious Council of 100.

THOMAS CLARK

EXEC. DIRECTOR, CENTRAL SAVANNAH RIVER ALLIANCE FOR FORT GORDON



When Fort Gordon became the home base for the U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence, it took on a whole new level of importance as the backbone of the U.S. military's cyber defense system. As a former command sergeant at the Augusta area post, Clark was the perfect choice to head up the CSRA Alliance, a liaison between the base and the larger Augusta business community that supports it.

STEVE BRIGGS

PRESIDENT, BERRY COLLEGE



Berry has grown tremendously under Briggs' watchful eye, expanding academic offerings, making the athletics jump from the NAIA to NCAA-Division III, and opening or renovating more than a dozen new buildings. It has also doubled down on its relationship with nearby Rome including by opening the Rome Tennis Center at Berry College, one of the country's largest facilities.

JULIE BROWN

PRESIDENT & CEO, GEORGIA FOREIGN TRADE ZONE



Brown helps steer Georgia companies through the complex legal and regulatory puzzle that is international trade, helping see billions of dollars of merchandise travel through some of the nation's busiest air- and seaports.

KEVIN BROWN

PRESIDENT & CEO, PIEDMONT HEALTHCARE



Since Brown took the reins in 2013 the Piedmont system has nearly quadrupled in size, now serving over 3.4 million Georgians in more than 1,400 locations across the state. It has also grown from five to 22 hospitals, serving markets that represent over 80 percent of the state's population. All that while actually decreasing operating costs per unit.

GRETCHEN CORBIN

PRESIDENT & CEO, GEORGIA LOTTERY CORP.



The state's lottery continues to break records and generate billions of dollars for Georgia's HOPE Scholarship and Pre-K Programs. As a former commissioner for the Technical College System of Georgia and Department of Community Affairs, Corbin brought a deep knowledge of the state's education and economic development programs to market and foster lottery growth.

DAN CORSO

PRESIDENT, ATLANTA SPORTS COUNCIL



As Atlanta's lead recruiter for sporting events large and small, (mostly large) the list of big games hosted by the city in recent years serves as a look into Corso's resume. He was a major force in securing College Football National Championships, WrestleMania, Final Fours, the Super Bowl and coming soon—the FIFA World Cup.

STUART COUNTLESS

PRESIDENT & CEO, KIA GEORGIA



A fixture at Kia's West Point plant since it was first constructed in the late 2000's, Countless now oversees all operational facets of the sprawling, 2,200-acre facility as it pumps out more than 340,000 vehicles annually. His experience is called on as a committee leader for the state's Electric Mobility and Innovation Alliance.

NATHAN DEAL

FORMER GOVERNOR



Georgia's 82nd governor was also a longtime U.S. Congressman who helped usher in the Republican wave that began building around the state in the mid-1990's. Now an elder statesman of the party, he teaches college courses on politics and dabbles in consulting.

TED DECKER

CHAIR, PRESIDENT & CEO, HOME DEPOT



Decker has held a wide variety of positions throughout Home Depot in his 23 years with the home improvement giant, ascending to its highest rank at a time when business is booming. He now oversees an organization that operates over 2,300 stores in all 50 states, employs more than 500,000 associates, and saw sales surpass \$151 billion in FY2022.

GREG DOZIER

COMMISSIONER, TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM OF GA



A former lieutenant of Gov. Brian Kemp, Dozier brings a breadth of institutional knowledge to his job leading the state's technical college

system. He has emphasized 21st century job needs and pushed for further investment in the state's Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education courses.

JIM DURRETT

PRESIDENT & CEO, BUCKHEAD COALITION



Durrett stepped into some big shoes succeeding legendary former Atlanta Mayor Sam Massell, and through both groups he and his board have been trying to steer the prestigious Atlanta business section and neighborhoods through a difficult period of rising crime and the threat posed by a Buckhead cityhood secession movement.

GREGORY FENVES

PRESIDENT, EMORY UNIVERSITY



This former structural engineer brings a unique scientific background to one of the nation's premier academic institutions, which has leaned into its position as a public health leader coming out of the pandemic.

ROBBY FOUNTAIN

CHAIRMAN, MACON-BIBB COUNTY INDUSTRIAL AUTHORITY



A key figure in Middle Georgia's economic development growth, Fountain has helped secure more than \$2 billion in private investment and over 4,300 jobs since being named

chairman in 2017. Companies like Amazon, Kumho Tire and Embraer are all putting down roots in and around Macon and Fountain's leadership is a big reason why.

KIMBERLY GREENE

PRESIDENT & CEO, GEORGIA POWER



This veteran of the energy sector was named the next CEO of the state's largest and most influential utility in January and will help guide it through a transformative period. Big on that agenda will be addressing two new nuclear power units at Plant Vogtle, the proliferation of electric vehicles and accompanying charging stations and a gradual pivot away from coal power.

COLLIE GREENWOOD

CEO, MARTA



Greenwood stepped into a difficult job when he was confirmed as MARTA's full-time head late last year. The nation's 7th-busiest transit system is plagued by financial difficulties and a number of promised expansion projects, including some approved by voters back in 2016, that probably can't be completed.

ERNEST GREER

CO-PRESIDENT, GREENBERG-TRAURIG



Key in the growth of the international firm's Atlanta presence, Greer is a fixture in the city's business and law communities. He was the first lawyer to serve as chairman of the Georgia Chamber and continues to lend his expertise to the boards of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and the Atlanta Police Foundation among others.

TODD GROCE

PRESIDENT & CEO, GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Founded in 1839, GHS has a rich history unto itself as the state's oldest and most important public history institution. Now 17 years into his tenure as president, Groce has it running smoother than ever. Its endowment has grown from \$1 million when he arrived to nearly \$20 million today.

ANN HANLON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PERIMETER CIDS



Well-known for her expertise in transportation infrastructure, Hanlon oversees one of the fastest growing commercial districts in the Atlanta metro. She was the first female chair of the Council for Quality Growth and serves on an array of boards including the Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce, the Sandy Springs and Dunwoody Perimeter Chambers of Commerce and the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce.

HOUSE LEADERSHIP

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

Jon Burns Newington

SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

Jan Jones Milton

MAJORITY LEADER

Chuck Efstrotation Dacula

MAJORITY WHIP

James Burchett Waycross

MAJORITY CAUCUS CHAIR

Bruce Williamson Monroe

MINORITY LEADER

James Beverly Macon

MINORITY WHIP

Sam Park Lawrenceville

MINORITY CAUCUS CHAIR

Billy Mitchell Stone Mountain

Well starts with spring screenings

As you begin cleaning and decluttering your home this spring, don't forget to do the proper upkeep for your health, too. From wellness exams to routine screenings, Wellstar can help you stay well this season and beyond.

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Wellstar

CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

SENIOR SENATOR

Jon Ossoff Atlanta

JUNIOR SENATOR

Raphael Warnock Atlanta

CD1 Buddy Carter Pooler

CD2 Sanford Bishop Albany

CD3 Drew Ferguson West Point

CD4 Hank Johnson Lithonia

CD5 Nikema Williams Atlanta

CD6 Rich McCormick Suwanee

CD7 Lucy McBath Marietta

CD8 Austin Scott Tifton

CD9 Andrew Clyde Athens

CD10 Mike Collins Jackson

CD11 Barry Loudermilk Cassville

CD12 Rick Allen Augusta

CD13 David Scott Atlanta

CD14 Marjorie Taylor Greene Rome

LARRY HANSON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GEORGIA MUNICIPAL ASSN.



One of the oldest and busiest advocacy groups in the state, GMA represents a whopping 537 Georgia municipal governments, all of which lean on Hanson and his team for lobbying (especially at the state Capitol), training and technical consulting services.

JEFF HAIDET

LAW FIRM AND CIVIC LEADER



Haidet served in executive roles at several firms, most recently part of the leadership team creating the largest global law firm in the world, Dentons. He is also recognized as a leading lawyer in the area of commercial transactions. His civic involvements include board seats for Atlanta's Commerce Club, Points of Light Foundation, Catholic Foundation and The Atlanta Union Mission, among others.

JOHN HALL

CHAIRMAN, HALL BOOTH SMITH



As one of the founders of the law firm Hall Booth Smith, Hall has seen the firm grow to one of the largest firms in the country with offices all over the Southeast and all the way

to Montana. The firm now has around 400 attorneys. Hall also serves as Honorary Consul to the country of Georgia, and chairman of the Atlanta-Tbilisi sister city committee.

VENESSA HARRISON

PRESIDENT, AT&T SOUTHEAST COASTAL STATES



Formerly president of AT&T Georgia, Harrison's latest promotion in late 2022 now sees her at the helm of the telecommunication giant's operations in North and South Carolina as well. A success story for the ages, she began her career at AT&T three decades ago as a telephone operator and worked her way up to the top through the company's career development program.

JOHN HAUPERT

PRESIDENT & CEO, GRADY HEALTH SYSTEM



Since 2011 Haupt has led the state's largest public hospital, the fifth-largest in the U.S. and home to one of the busiest and most highly regarded Level I trauma centers in the world. His reputation extends well outside of Atlanta as he serves as chair of the American Hospital Association's Board of Trustees, making him a key healthcare figure on the national stage.

NICOLE HENDRICKSON

CHAIR, GWINNETT COUNTY COMMISSION



This longtime Gwinnett community leader became the first African-American to be elected chair of the Board of Commissioners in 2020. In addition to overseeing one of the state's most diverse and fastest growing counties, Hendrickson serves on several statewide boards as well including the Atlanta Regional Commission and Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

JAMES HILLENBRAND

CEO, W.C. BRADLEY COMPANY



W.C. Bradley has been a fixture in Uptown Columbus for close to 140 years, and today is a multi-brand supplier of consumer goods from backpacks and grills to oil lamps. Under Hillenbrand's watch it has doubled down on its real estate investments, with its next major project the \$250 million Riverfront Place alongside the Chattahoochee River in Columbus.

HILTON HOWELL

CHAIRMAN & CEO, GRAY TELEVISION



Howell oversaw Gray's transformation from a relatively small but respected regional television provider to a media giant in 2019 after its \$3.6 billion merger with Raycom. The company now has its fingers in 93 markets,

reaching nearly a quarter of all American households.

DONNA HYLAND

PRESIDENT & CEO, CHILDREN'S HEALTHCARE OF ATLANTA



Children's Healthcare is one of the premier pediatric clinical care providers in the U.S., and Hyland one of the industry's preeminent CEO's. She has taken home a litany of awards across her 32-year career in healthcare, but perhaps chief among them is being named a 2023 Georgia Trustee by the Georgia Historical Society.

BRIAN JACK

FORMER WHITE HOUSE POLITICAL DIRECTOR



A Peachtree City resident and graduate of Atlanta's Woodward Academy, Jack served as the White House Political Director for former President Donald Trump and remains one of his closest advisors. During the 2022 elections, he worked as the chief political strategist for now-U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy, earning the trust of House Republicans.

MARTY KEMP

FIRST LADY OF GEORGIA



Georgia's First Lady has been a fixture at her husband's side and isn't shy about using her position to push for a wide variety of noble causes important to her. During Gov. Kemp's first term she helped create the GRACE Commission which is leading the fight against human trafficking, and now in his second term she has turned her focus to early childhood literacy, mental health and foster care.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

DISTRICT 1

Jason Shaw Lakeland

DISTRICT 2

Tim Echols Bogart

DISTRICT 3

Fitz Johnson Atlanta

DISTRICT 4

Lauren "Bubba" McDonald Clarkesville

DISTRICT 5

Tricia Pridemore Marietta

MAYORS OF TOP CITIES

ATLANTA

Andre Dickens

AUGUSTA

Garnett Johnson

COLUMBUS

Skip Henderson

BROOKHAVEN

John Ernst

ATHENS

Kelly Girtz

SANDY SPRINGS

Rusty Paul

MACON

Lester Miller

JOHNS CREEK

John Bradberry

ALBANY

Bo Dorough

ALPHARETTA

Jim Gilvin

SMYRNA

Derek Norton

SAVANNAH

Van Johnson

Georgia. The group made hundreds of thousands of voter contacts ahead of the 2022 midterms, keeping pace with Democratic operations and allowing the GOP to retain control of every statewide office.

GRIFF LYNCH

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GEORGIA PORTS AUTHORITY



Month after month, year after year Georgia ports continue to break shipping records. Major infrastructure upgrades such as deepening the Port of Savannah have led to it becoming the fourth busiest port in the U.S. and kicked off a scramble to expand truck and rail access to meet demand. A good problem to have and a testament to Lynch's effective leadership.

BERNIE MARCUS

BUSINESSMAN, PHILANTHROPIST



After making his name and his fortune co-founding Home Depot alongside business partner Arthur Blank, Marcus has transitioned into one of the nation's most generous philanthropists since leaving the company more than 20 years ago. In addition to the billions he has donated to various charities both in Georgia and abroad he is a noted GOP mega-donor with a specific interest in economic policy.

JAY MARKWALTER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAUS



Markwalter traverses the state advocating for its \$65 billion tourism industry, which has bounced back in a major way following the pandemic. He works closely with state economic development officials to support an industry that employs more than 400,000 Georgians.

NICK MASINO

PRESIDENT & CEO, GWINNETT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Once Georgia's youngest mayor, Masino now serves as the face of Gwinnett's business community, which is growing nearly as fast as the county's population. He has built out the most diverse chamber board of directors in county history and implemented a new strategic plan that promises to make Gwinnett's next decade as fruitful as its last.

SHARON MASON

PRESIDENT & CEO, COBB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Few counties in the Southeast have seen such explosive growth in recent history as Cobb with many new businesses moving their headquarters to the county. Mason is well-respected outside of Cobb, also serving on the boards of the Council for Quality Growth and Georgia Regional Transportation Authority.

TREY KILPATRICK

CHIEF OF STAFF, GOV. BRIAN KEMP



A former aide to the late U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson, Kilpatrick became Gov. Brian Kemp's right-hand man during a successful first term.

Aside from his managerial duties, his counsel and behind-the-scenes skills assisted his boss in achieving impressive party primary and general election wins in 2022.

BERNICE A. KING

CEO, MARTIN LUTHER KING CENTER



Just five years old when her father, the legendary civil rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed, King has strived to follow in his footsteps as a pastor and attorney. As CEO of the Martin Luther King Center she promotes her father's legacy of nonviolent social change.

KATIE KIRKPATRICK

PRESIDENT & CEO, METRO ATLANTA CHAMBER



The chamber's former top lobbyist was named president and CEO in 2020, making her the second woman to lead Atlanta's top business advocacy group. In that time she has helped usher the city out of the pandemic and back into the very top tier of growth nationwide.

STEVE KOONIN

CEO, ATLANTA HAWKS



This lifelong Atlantan came to the Hawks in 2014 after stints at Coca-Cola and Turner Broadcasting, bringing decades of marketing expertise to the city's NBA franchise. During that time he has led the team through a rebrand, an ownership change and a major renovation of State Farm Arena, which was subsequently ranked first in the league for "Overall Game Experience."

DR. JONATHAN LEWIN

CHAIRMAN & CEO, EMORY HEALTHCARE



Lewin has had an entire esteemed career in medical research, (more than 200 peer-reviewed scientific manuscripts to his name) prior to taking an executive role as CEO of Emory Healthcare. The integrated academic healthcare system leans on its partnership with Emory University, which allows it to serve as a leading research institution on top of its top-rated healthcare services.

KELLY LOEFFLER

CHAIR, GREATER GEORGIA ACTION



This former U.S. senator, business executive and *James* "Georgian of the Year" remains a key political figure for her role in leading Republican voter outreach group Greater



Generational Comfort

"I feel safe and secure enjoying the comforts my natural gas appliances provide for me, and my family. I love natural gas. I've been using it to prepare meals to feed my family and keep them warm for decades. And I'm passing that love – and a few good recipes – down to my grandbabies for the next generation."

Rachel Cousins – Atlanta Gas Light customer

MOST INFLUENTIAL

RUSSELL McMURRY
COMMISSIONER, GA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



McMurry has spent his entire career with GDOT, starting as an engineering trainee in 1990 and working his way up through the department before being appointed commissioner in 2015 by then-Gov. Nathan Deal. He now heads up the nation's 10th-largest state transportation agency—a \$3.6 billion, 4,000 employee operation.

JANNINE MILLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GEORGIA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY, ATLANTA-REGION TRANSIT LINK AUTHORITY, STATE ROAD & TOLLWAY AUTHORITY



Wearing three hats as executive director for each of the state's major transportation authorities, Miller serves as a singular voice behind the interconnected agencies. The highly-respected public servant served in the Trump Administration as a senior advisor to then-U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao.

WILLIAM S. MORRIS IV
PRESIDENT & CEO, MORRIS COMMUNICATIONS



Carrying on the family tradition as the third generation of Morris men to lead the Augusta-based media company, he has grown his

company's broad portfolio to include online news and services in addition to newspaper and magazine publishing.

SARAH MORRISON
CEO, SHEPHERD CENTER



Morrison joined the Shepherd Center straight out of college in 1984 and has dedicated her career to the center's long-term success as one of the nation's premier rehabilitation hospitals.

SUZANNE NADELL
NEWS DIRECTOR, WSB-TV



After climbing the ladder at a series of other Cox-owned news stations around the country Nadell returned to Atlanta in 2019, taking the reins at one of the Southeast's most popular news teams. Her partnership with general manager Ray Carter has borne fruit as the station continues to maintain strong ratings.

TERRY NORRIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GEORGIA SHERIFFS' ASSN.



Norris serves as the lead advocate for all 159 of Georgia's sheriff's offices at the state Capitol, keeping him very busy as the state continues to deal with a violent crime surge and street gangs. He helps oversee the Georgia Sheriffs'

Youth Homes, which provides housing and care for abused and abandoned children.

SUSAN PARR
PRESIDENT & CEO, AUGUSTA METRO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Parr leads the Augusta Chamber, which serves as the key advocate for the business community in the rapidly growing Central Savannah River Area. The 13-county region includes Augusta and Fort Gordon, making it a key national hub in the cybersecurity industry.

FRANK PATTERSON
PRESIDENT & CEO, TRILITH STUDIOS



The largest film studio in the Southeast has transformed into something more than that under Patterson's leadership. Named the 2021 Mixed-Use Development of the Year, Trilith now includes homes, restaurants, retail and even a micro-school.

SONNY PERDUE
CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA



The former two-term Georgia governor and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture under then-President Donald Trump was selected by the University System of Georgia's Board of

HOUSE COMMITTEES AND CHAIRMEN

Agriculture & Consumer Affairs
Robert Dickey Musella

Appropriations
Matt Hatchett Dublin

Banks & Banking
Noel Williams, Jr Cordele

Budget and Fiscal Affairs Oversight
Steven Meeks Screven

Code Revision
Bill Yearta Sylvester

Creative Arts & Entertainment
Kasey Carpenter Dalton

Defense & Veteran's Affairs
Josh Bonner Fayetteville

Economic Development & Tourism
Ron Stephens Savannah

Education
Chris Erwin Homer

Energy, Utilities & Telecommunications
Don Parsons Marietta

Ethics
Buddy DeLoach Townsend

Game, Fish & Parks
Trey Rhodes Greensboro

Governmental Affairs
John LaHood Thomasville

Health & Human Services
Lee Hawkins Gainesville

Higher Education
Chuck Martin Alpharetta

Human Relations & Aging
Jesse Petrea Savannah

Industry & Labor
Bill Werkheiser Glennville

Information and Audits
Steve Tarvin Chickamauga

Insurance
Eddie Lumsden Armuchee

Interstate Cooperation
Mark Newton Augusta

Intragovernmental Coordination
Beth Camp Concord

Judiciary
Stan Gunter Blairsville

Judiciary Non-Civil
Tyler Paul Smith Bremen

Juvenile Justice
Mandi Ballinger Canton

MARTOC
Deborah Silcox Sandy Springs

Motor Vehicles
John Corbett Lake Park

Natural Resources & Environment
Lynn Smith Newnan

Public Health
Sharon Cooper Marietta

Public Safety and Homeland Security
J. Collins Villa Rica

Reapportionment & Redistricting
Rob Leverett Elberton

Regulated Industries
Alan Powell Hartwell

Retirement
John Carson Marietta

Rules
Richard Smith Columbus

Science and Technology
Todd Jones South Forsyth

Small Business Development
Mike Cheokas Americus

Special Committee on Access to Quality Healthcare
Butch Parrish Swainsboro

Special Committee on Access to Civil Justice System
Trey Kelley Cedartown

Special Committee on Election Integrity
Stan Gunter Blairsville

Special Rules
Steven Sainz St. Marys

State Planning & Community Affairs
Karen Mathiak Griffin

State Properties
Gerald Greene Cuthbert


Transportation
Rick Jasperse Jasper

Urban Affairs
Brian Prince Augusta

Ways & Means
Shaw Blackmon Bonaire

Regents to oversee its 26 public colleges and universities with a \$9.8 billion annual budget, nearly 50,000 faculty and staff and over 340,000 students.

TYLER PERRY
PRODUCER, DIRECTOR, PHILANTHROPIST


 A career that began in the theatre has turned into one of the great self-made success stories in state history as Perry has created a media empire that turned him into a billionaire. His Tyler Perry Studios in Atlanta is one of the largest in the nation and he rubs shoulders with some of the biggest names in show business. When it comes to politics, he is a Democratic mega-donor.

MIKE PLANT
PRESIDENT & CEO, BRAVES DEVELOPMENT COMPANY


 A former U.S. Olympian and Turner Sports executive, Plant now oversees real estate and development holdings for the Atlanta

Braves. His crowning achievement there has been The Battery Atlanta, the wildly successful Cobb County mixed-use development adjacent to Truist Park that serves as a template for similar projects across the country.


FRANK POE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GEORGIA WORLD CONGRESS CENTER

 A legend in the convention, sports and events industry, Poe has hosted some of the largest events in the world over his 40-plus year career. The nation's fourth-largest convention center has gotten back on track after the pandemic and Poe is currently supervising the construction of a signature 40-story Hilton hotel immediately between the GWCC and Mercedes-Benz Stadium.


NEIL PRUITT
CHAIRMAN & CEO, PRUITTHEALTH

 A nationally-renowned leader in the field of senior healthcare, Pruitt manages 86 skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers and 29 hospice agencies among other facilities. He has served as chairman for both the American Health Care Association and Georgia Health Care Association and was appointed by U.S. Congress to the Commission for Long Term Care.


JAMES QUINCEY
CHAIRMAN & CEO, COCA-COLA CO.

 The London-born Quincey brings international flair to Georgia's most iconic brand, having led Coke's Mexican and European divisions before ascending to its top spot in Atlanta in 2017.

RALPH REED
CHAIRMAN, FAITH & FREEDOM COALITION

 The former Georgia GOP chairman has been a major player in national politics since the 1990s when he rose to fame as the first executive director of the Christian Coalition. He's been a key figure in the GOP's ability to mobilize and turn out the religious vote over the past 30 years, which has been vital to the party's successes here in Georgia and elsewhere.


MICHAEL REGISTER
DIRECTOR, GEORGIA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

 Like predecessor Vic Reynolds, Register comes from a background in Cobb County law enforcement where he served as the county's public safety director and as chief of police. He was appointed last year to head up the state's independent bureau of investigation.


SUPREME COURT

- CHIEF JUSTICE
Michael Boggs
- PRESIDING JUDGE
Nels Peterson
- JUSTICE
Andrew Pinson
- JUSTICE
Sarah Warren
- JUSTICE
Charles Bethel
- JUSTICE
John Ellington
- JUSTICE
Carla Wong McMillian
- JUSTICE
Shawn LaGrua
- JUSTICE
Verda Colvin


KEVIN RILEY
EDITOR, ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

 The newspaper continues to be criticized because the ownership allows Riley and compliant editors to slant all too many articles and headlines in a political left-of-center direction. Critics complain that opinions are often injected into supposedly "objective" news stories. And Riley controls what stories are omitted or played down. But it still should be noted that the paper has staff writers who sometimes perform needed watchdog reporting on politicians and public institutions.

ANNA ROACH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

 Former chief strategy officer for Fulton County, Roach joined the ARC in 2022 where she oversees the agency's public policy work, interfaces with state and local officials from each of its 11-member counties and helps guide one of the nation's fastest-growing regions as it embarks on an ambitious 25-year plan.

DAVID RUBINGER
PUBLISHER, ATLANTA BUSINESS CHRONICLE

 Rubinger began his career as a reporter for the ABC in 1989, returning in 2015 as its publisher after turns as a communications executive for several major Atlanta companies. One of the largest business journals in the country, the ABC's influence and circulation clout rival that of Atlanta's daily newspaper.

COURT OF APPEALS

- CHIEF JUDGE
Brian Rickman
- VICE CHIEF JUDGE
Amanda Mercier
- PRESIDING JUDGE
Anne Elizabeth Barnes
- PRESIDING JUDGE
Yvette Miller
- PRESIDING JUDGE
Sara Doyle
- PRESIDING JUDGE
Stephen Dillard
- PRESIDING JUDGE
Christopher McFadden
- JUDGE
vacant
- JUDGE
Trenton Brown
- JUDGE
Elizabeth Gobeil
- JUDGE
Herbert Phipps
- JUDGE
Todd Markle
- JUDGE
Kenneth Hodges
- JUDGE
Trea Pipkin
- JUDGE
Benjamin Land



Georgia Southern University congratulates President Kyle Marrero for being named a **Most Influential Georgian.**

Georgia Southern University: Transforming Southeast Georgia, the state and beyond.

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- A Top 10 Military Friendly School in the nation (VIQTORY)
- Research focused on community and regional impact
- A leading producer of health care workers in Georgia
- A study abroad campus in Wexford, Ireland
- 48,000+ student community service hours in 2022
- Superior, in-demand programs including manufacturing engineering, logistics, coastal sustainability, education and more

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MOST INFLUENTIAL

23

CORY RUTH
CEO, MERGENCE GLOBAL



With more than 20 years of experience as a technology consultant, Ruth's expertise spans the globe with clients in 15 different countries worldwide. He's played a role in some major projects here in Georgia as well, serving as a board member for the Georgia Technology Authority and helping oversee the development of the renowned Georgia Cyber Center.

CANDICE SAUNDERS
PRESIDENT & CEO, WELLSTAR



With a background as a critical care nurse Saunders brings experience from all levels of the healthcare system to the board room at Wellstar. She has made patient access a priority at the statewide medical system, which today features 11 hospitals, over 300 medical offices and more than 25,000 employees across Georgia.

DEREK SCHILLER
PRESIDENT & CEO, ATLANTA BRAVES



Schiller runs day-to-day business operations for the Atlanta Braves—and business is booming. The Battery Atlanta continues to haul in record-breaking profits and the team's attendance is top five in Major League Baseball. He also serves as a board member of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau.

BILL SCHNEIDER
VICE PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER, FOX 5 ATLANTA/WAGA-TV



Going into his 14th year leading Fox 5 Atlanta, Schneider has maintained the station's spot as a local media powerhouse. Known for their political coverage, I-team investigative reporting and breaking news updates, Schneider's team including news director Scott Stucky and managing editor Cal Callaway are among the most respected members of Atlanta's large media market.

DAVID SHAFER
CHAIRMAN, GEORGIA REPUBLICAN PARTY



The longtime former legislator was President Pro Tempore of the Georgia Senate before a narrow primary loss in the 2018 race for Lt. governor, after which he was elected state GOP chairman in 2019. The past two election cycles have been a mixed bag for the party as it retained control of all statewide offices but saw its pair of U.S. Senate seats go to the Democrats. In February Shafer announced that he would be stepping away from the helm.

PAUL SHAILENDRA
PRESIDENT, SG PROPERTY SERVICES



The prominent commercial real estate executive does business throughout the Southeast. Shailendra is also a major Georgia Tech alumnus and booster, serving on the school's board for the College of Civil & Environmental Engineering. The avid outdoorsman also serves on the board for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

SACHIN SHAILENDRA
PRESIDENT, SG CONTRACTING



For two productive years, ending in January 2022, the well-connected businessman effectively chaired the University System Board of Regents. He enjoys "building things," and his company's record of projects reads like a "Wall of Fame" among subcontractors, architects and designers. He chairs the Rowen Foundation, overseeing development of a 2,000-acre Gwinnett County "knowledge community" which is envisioned to be a global research destination.

ALAN SHAW
PRESIDENT & CEO, NORFOLK SOUTHERN



As one of the two largest railroad operators in the Eastern U.S., Norfolk moving its headquarters from Richmond, VA to Atlanta in 2021 was a major coup for the Peach State. Shaw oversaw the construction of the rail line's pristine new headquarters in Midtown, from which he and his executive team manage nearly 30,000 miles of railroads from Louisiana to New York.

SUSAN SHOWS
CEO, GEORGIA RESEARCH ALLIANCE



In 2001 Shows joined the GRA to help start its venture development program, one of the first of its kind in the U.S. Over the years that program helped launch more than 200 companies and brought in over \$1.2 billion in outside investment, an accomplishment that helped lead to her being named president of the Alliance in 2020.

SHERRIE SPINKS
GENERAL MANAGER, SAVANNAH CONVENTION CENTER



After bouncing back from a pandemic that was tough on the tourism industry, Spinks has the convention center back up and rolling with a fully booked schedule and another ambitious round of expansion at Savannah's beautiful riverfront facility.

JEFF SPRECHER
CEO, INTERCONTINENTAL EXCHANGE



In 2000 Sprecher founded ICE as an energy-trading start-up. The company's profile exploded 13 years later when it purchased the New York Stock Exchange and is now a Fortune 500 company with nearly 10,000 employees primarily in Atlanta and New York. The former *James* "Georgian of the Year" (along with wife Kelly Loeffler) is a high-profile Republican donor and civic leader as well.

BOARD OF REGENTS

DISTRICT 1

Patrick C. Jones

DISTRICT 2

Bárbara Rivera Holmes

DISTRICT 3

Thomas Hopkins Jr.

DISTRICT 4

Cade Joiner

DISTRICT 5

Sarah-Elizabeth Langford Reed

DISTRICT 6

Tim Evans

DISTRICT 7

Jose Perez

DISTRICT 8

Allen Gudenrath

DISTRICT 9

Jim Syfan

DISTRICT 10

Harold Reynolds Chair

DISTRICT 11

Tom Bradbury

DISTRICT 12

Everett Kennedy

DISTRICT 13

Doug Aldridge

DISTRICT 14

Lowery Houston May

AT-LARGE

Erin Hames Vice Chair

AT-LARGE

Samuel Holmes

AT-LARGE

James Hull


AT-LARGE

Neil Pruitt, Jr.


AT-LARGE

Dallas Smith


MICHAEL “SULLY” SULLIVAN
PRESIDENT & CEO, AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
ENGINEERING COMPANIES OF GEORGIA

 This longtime attorney and lobbyist joined ACECG in 2012, where he advocates for more than 200 engineering firms in the vital, quickly growing industry. He serves on boards including the Technical College System of Georgia, Georgia Chamber and Georgia Transportation Alliance.

ERIC TANENBLATT
PRINCIPAL, DENTONS

 With a political resume a mile long including a stint as chief of staff to former Gov. Sonny Perdue, this longtime Republican brings considerable experience and influence to his position leading Dentons’ public policy practice. He also lends his expertise to civic causes outside the office, most recently being named chair of the Buckhead Coalition.


BEN TARBUTTON, III
PRESIDENT, SANDERSVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

 In 1916 the Tarbutton family first assumed control of the Sandersville Railroad Company, which has served as a key cog in the state’s kaolin industry ever since. The railroad titan and proud Georgia Tech grad is a former member of the USG Board of Regents, president of the Georgia Railroad Association and board member for the Georgia Research Alliance.


ALEX TAYLOR
CHAIRMAN & CEO, COX ENTERPRISES

 Since taking over the Atlanta conglomerate in 2018 Taylor has expanded the company’s business holdings into industries including advanced recycling and sustainable agriculture. Cox of course maintains its vast media and automotive empire, which was founded at the turn of the 20th century by Taylor’s great grandfather, former Ohio Gov. James M. Cox.

GREG TEAGUE
CEO, CROY ENGINEERING


 Taking over the reins from founder Jim Croy just last year, Teague leads an award-winning engineering firm that takes on major projects throughout the Southeast. With deep roots in Cobb County, he currently serves as chairman of the board of directors for the Cobb Chamber.

DAVID THOMAS
PRESIDENT, MOREHOUSE COLLEGE

 The award-winning author became Morehouse’s 12th president in 2018, quickly making fund-raising a priority as he embarked

on the most successful capital campaign in the HBCU’s history. He also launched the school’s first online degree programs, giving it an even greater reach and amplifying its position as a center of intellectual discourse.

LEE THOMAS
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, GEORGIA FILM, MUSIC
& DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT

 If there is one name that has been a constant in Georgia’s prodigious ascent to the top of the film industry, it is Thomas. She has capably overseen the state’s Film, Music & Digital Entertainment office since 2010. In 2022 film and TV productions spent an astonishing \$4.4 billion in Georgia, and with new film studios popping up across the state that number figures to only keep rising.

ERIC TOLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GEORGIA CYBER CENTER


 During his 27-year career in the U.S. Army Toler became a pioneer in the development of Cyberspace Operations Capabilities for the

Army and the Department of Defense. That made him an easy choice to head up the newly-founded Cyber Center in 2018, where he navigates complex public-private partnerships between academia, government, business and the U.S. Military.

HUGH “TRIP” TOLLISON
PRESIDENT & CEO, SAVANNAH ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

 With his fingerprints on nearly every major economic development project in southeast Georgia over the past decade Tollison brings a wealth of experience and connections to Savannah’s business community, one of the fastest growing in the U.S.

CAROL TOMÉ
CEO, UPS

 This former Home Depot executive became UPS’ 12th CEO in 2019, bringing a background in finance to the helm of the Atlanta-based shipping giant. Twice named to the *Forbes* list of ‘The World’s 100 Most Powerful Women,’ Tomé’s civic endeavors include

SENATE COMMITTEES AND CHAIRMEN

Administrative Affairs
Gloria Butler Stone Mountain

Agriculture and Consumer Affairs
Russ Goodman Cogdell

Appropriations
Blake Tillery Vidalia

Banking and Financial Institutions
Carden Summers Cordele

Economic Development and Tourism
Brandon Beach Alpharetta

Education and Youth
Clint Dixon Gwinnett

Ethics
Max Burns Sylvania

Finance
Chuck Hufstetler Rome

Government Oversight
Marty Harbin Tyrone

Health and Human Services
Ben Watson Savannah

Higher Education
Billy Hickman Statesboro

Insurance and Labor
Larry Walker Perry

Interstate Cooperation
Colton Moore Trenton

Judiciary
Brian Strickland McDonough

Natural Resources and the Environment
Lee Anderson Grovetown

Public Safety
John Albers Roswell

Reapportionment and Redistricting
Shelly Echols Alto

Regulated Industries and Utilities
Bill Cowsert Athens

Retirement
Rick Williams Milledgeville

Rules
Matt Brass Newnan

Science and Technology
Chuck Payne Dalton

State and Local Governmental Operations
Frank Ginn Danielsville

State Institutions and Property
Ed Harbison Columbus

Transportation
Greg Dolezal Cumming

Urban Affairs
Donzella James Atlanta

Veterans, Military and Homeland Security
Mike Dugan Carrollton

FirstNet connects Georgia first responders – every day and in times of emergency.

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SCAN TO JOIN

MOST INFLUENTIAL

27

board seats for the Grady Memorial Hospital Corporation and the Buckhead Coalition, among others.

WILLIAM UNDERWOOD

PRESIDENT, MERCER UNIVERSITY



Over the course of Underwood's 17-year tenure Mercer has increased enrollment by more than 25 percent, launched two new medical school campuses, and added a wide array of Ph.D. programs. The school's 18th president also helped double its endowment and brought football back to Macon after a 72-year hiatus.

ALEX URBAN

PGA TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



It was just last year when Alex Urban left managing the Sentry Tournament of Champions in Hawaii to assume his current job. A Tour employee since 2013, he set the bar high at Sentry and fostered meaningful progress on all fronts. Urban, a University of Georgia graduate, has already continued that positive trend. Over the past 25 years, by the way, the tournament has generated over \$42 million in charitable donations to Georgia golf and other charities.

PAULA WALLACE

PRESIDENT, SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN



When she helped found SCAD in 1978, the tiny Savannah art school had seven faculty members and 71 students. Fast forward 45 years and Wallace oversees nearly 15,000 students on campuses as far away as Hong Kong and France as her beloved college is known as one of the premier art and design schools in the world.

ROCHELLE WALENSKY

DIRECTOR, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL



Thrust into to the fires of the COVID-19 pandemic after her appointment in late 2020, Walensky has navigated troubled waters that saw her dealing with vaccine mandates, quarantine guidance and school reopenings. As things have settled down she has launched a full review of the agency's handling of the pandemic.

BILL WHITE

CHAIRMAN & CEO, BUCKHEAD CITY COMMITTEE



Bursting onto the scene in 2020 as violent crime surged across Atlanta, White became the face of the Buckhead cityhood movement that took

center stage in the city's political landscape over the next two years. While cityhood legislation stalled in 2022, don't be surprised to see it back on the table in the future.

DAVE WILLS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASSOCIATED COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF GEORGIA



As the lead advocate for all 159 of ACCG's member counties, Wills stays very busy under the Gold Dome representing the needs of county governments large and small, totaling over 80,000 employees statewide. In recent years he has made broadband access and property tax formulas key legislative priorities.

PAT WILSON

COMMISSIONER, GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



James' 2022 "Georgian of the Year" has an extensive background in public service, having worked for the late U.S. Sen. Paul Coverdell and former Governors Sonny Perdue and Nathan Deal. Since 2016 he's helmed the wildly successful GDECD, which has helped the state spur explosive growth in industries from film and tourism to global commerce and electric vehicles.

CHRIS WOMACK

PRESIDENT & CEO, SOUTHERN COMPANY



Womack succeeds longtime CEO Tom Fanning at the head of one of the nation's largest utilities, which serves more than 9 million gas and electric utility customers across six Southern states. He formerly led Georgia Power, Southern Co.'s largest division, helping it pivot toward renewable energy as part of its strategic plan.

CAL WRAY

PRESIDENT, AUGUSTA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



The AEDA serves as a point of contact for all major economic development projects in the Augusta-Richmond County Area. Wray has taken a particular interest in military-related companies that orbit Fort Gordon's new Cyber Command Headquarters.

ANDREW YOUNG

FORMER ATLANTA MAYOR, FORMER U.N. AMBASSADOR



The civil rights legend has been out of public office for more than three decades, but the one-time Georgia congressman, former ambassador to the United Nations under President Jimmy Carter and two-term mayor of Atlanta remains active as a Democratic Party elder statesman as well as a prominent local business booster.

PUBLIC UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College

Tracy Brundage

Albany State University

Marion Fedrick

Atlanta Metropolitan State College

Ingrid Thompson-Sellers

Augusta University

Brooks Keel

Clayton State University

Georj Lewis

College of Coastal Georgia

Michelle Johnston

Columbus State University

John Fuchko

Dalton State College

Margaret Venable

East Georgia State College

David Schecter

Fort Valley State University

Paul Jones

Georgia College

Cathy Cox

Georgia Gwinnett College

Jann Joseph

Georgia Highlands College

Mike Hobbs

Georgia Institute of Technology

Ángel Cabrera

Georgia Southern University

Kyle Marrero

Georgia Southwestern State University

Neal Weaver

Georgia State University

Brian Blake

Gordon State College

Kirk Nooks

Kennesaw State University

Kathy Schwaig

Middle Georgia State University

Christopher Blake

Savannah State University

Kimberly Ballard-Washington

South Georgia State College

Gregory Tanner

University of Georgia

Jere Morehead

University of North Georgia

Bonita Jacobs

University of West Georgia

Brendan Kelly

Valdosta State University

Richard Carvajal

Vote!

Sippin' Local Poll

NAME YOUR FAVORITE BREWERIES
DISTILLERIES & WINERIES IN GEORGIA



POLL OPENS
March 13

THE NUMBER ONE
RANKED BUSINESS
IN EACH CATEGORY
WILL BE HIGHLIGHTED
IN OUR "SIPPIN' LOCAL"
FEATURE IN THE NEXT
ISSUE OF JAMES

VISIT [INSIDERADVANTAGE.COM](https://insideradvantage.com) & CLICK THE VOTE HERE BUTTON

TOP 10 VOTE-GETTERS IN EACH CATEGORY WILL BE LISTED IN THE MAY-JUNE ISSUE OF JAMES

BIG WINNERS

of 2022



GOVERNOR

Brian Kemp

Being the first governor to approve re-opening of many businesses early in the COVID-19 era, his continued emphasis on more economic development/job growth, waging war against criminal gangs and a disciplined center-right political strategy that resulted in a dominant 2022 party primary and general election victory naturally makes him a big winner. (All statewide constitutional GOP candidates rode his wake to wins up and down the 2022 ballot.) Governor Kemp's record and popularity have earned him national prominence in Republican circles going into 2023 and beyond.



U.S. SENATOR

Raphael Warnock

While Democratic candidates lost all the statewide constitutional offices last year, Warnock amassed the biggest financial war chest of any Senate candidate running in 2022. It was especially used for an effective ground game and a barrage of well-done ads (positive and negative) to defeat Republican Herschel Walker and win a second consecutive runoff election. The Ebenezer Baptist Church pastor's name has also gained traction among Democrats as a possibility for even higher office. And he's a friend of former President Barack Obama, which also helps.



LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Burt Jones

The oil and insurance executive served as a state senator from 2013 until this year when he assumed Georgia's No. 2 executive office. A co-captain of the 2002 University of Georgia football team, he ran an effective, conservative issue-based campaign to defeat the then-Senate President Pro Tem. He then beat his 2022 general election challenger. Election integrity, along with economic development and fighting crime, remain his priorities. As the presiding officer of the Senate, and surrounded by a loyal GOP leadership team, Jones has an opportunity to further compile a successful record of public service.



HEAD COACH, UGA FOOTBALL

Kirby Smart

Perhaps the most popular man in the state, Smart captured the second consecutive College Football Playoff National Championship at his alma mater, cementing the Bulldogs as the premier program in the country. The state's highest-paid employee earns every penny of his contract as the program's success, especially with recruiting, has led to record-breaking athletics revenue which helps fund nearly every other sport at Georgia's flagship university.

Agriculture unites us all.



Georgia farms are important to our state economy and our access to fresh food and fiber. They ensure we don't have to rely on other countries for some of our most basic necessities. GFB helps leaders and the general public understand the unique challenges of sustaining a local agriculture industry. Because when we have a strong agriculture industry, we all benefit.

Learn more and join today at [GFB.org](https://www.gfb.org)



2023 Top State LAWMAKERS



REPRESENTATIVE
James Beverly

Dr. James Beverly, D-Macon, is an optometrist who leads “the loyal opposition” in the Georgia House of Representatives. He was elected in 2010 in House District 143 and fellow Democrats elected him as their Minority Leader in November 2020.

A passionate speaker, he serves on several important committees: Rules, Appropriations, Ethics, Health and Human Services, Retirement and Small Business Development. A former chairman of the Macon-Bibb County Enhancement Authority, Beverly has especially been a tireless advocate in the area of protecting Georgians’ healthcare. He has also steered a course favorable to statewide economic growth, often working across party lines.

He received his bachelor’s degree in biology from Guilford College and also graduated from Pennsylvania College of Optometry. He received his MBA from Wesleyan College and his MPA from Harvard University.



SENATOR
Matt Brass

The 45-year-old Newnan Republican started off 2023 by being named head of the influential state Senate Rules Committee, and he’s tasked with ensuring each committee is adequately prepared to address policy issues and whether, and in what order, to schedule their consideration on the floor.

Elected to represent the 28th District in 2016, this private enterprise advocate has served as chairman of the Banking and Financial Institutional Committee, vice chairman of both the Banking and Financial Institutions Committee and Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee and served as well on the Economic Development and Tourism panel.

A 2002 University of Georgia graduate majoring in marketing and a one-time chief of staff for former U.S. Rep. Lynn Westmoreland, the senator is president of Brass Construction Company and is a U.S. Navy veteran.



REPRESENTATIVE
Matt Hatchett

State Rep. Matt Hatchett, R-Dublin, won election to the Georgia House of Representatives in 2010. Since then, the longtime ally of the late Speaker David Ralston has moved upward in the chamber. Last fall he was named to chair the House Appropriations Committee and has played a key role in writing the state’s \$58 billion budget.

The Dublin native, businessman and active civic leader earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Mathematics from Presbyterian College. In 1999, Hatchett became a Dublin city councilman, served honorably for a decade and was even mayor pro tem for a time.

Hatchett serves on various high-profile House committees, including Rules. In 2013 he was elected by his peers to chair the House Majority Caucus. In 2021 he was again elected by the Majority Caucus to serve as Majority Whip where he continues to serve in that vote-counting role.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IS GOOD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

AGC Georgia partners with commercial contractor members to host high school construction Skills Challenges. These events are in Augusta, Columbus, Gainesville, Macon, Marietta, Moultrie, Rome and Statesboro. During the 2022 series, more than 1,000 students representing 90 high schools competed in carpentry, electrical, masonry, plumbing and welding. Another 1,200 students attended as observers to learn about career paths from exhibiting industry professionals.



View our photo gallery celebrating high school students showing off their construction skills or visit bit.ly/40kHBS0 on your browser



Associated General Contractors of Georgia, Inc.



www.agcga.org



OUR CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

CRITICAL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

During Gov. Brian Kemp's 2023 State of the State address, he reported that Georgia gained 17,500 new jobs and more than \$13 billion in new investments during the last half of 2022. Reports like this make it clear why Georgia continues to be the top state for business in our nation. As a long-time advocate for our state's commercial construction industry, I commend state leaders for embracing strategies that build on years of extremely successful economic development.

With each announcement of a new plant being built, new jobs moving to Georgia, or a new company opening an office, all industries stand to benefit.

For these large investment dollars to pay dividends, though, significant involvement is required from the construction industry. Without contractors building the buildings and providing the infrastructure, companies looking to call Georgia home will not succeed. The demand for construction services from the robust private business market, the medical community, the University System, school boards and cities and counties is often more than contractors can fulfill in the desired time frame. However, the stress of bringing more large-scale businesses to our state only compounds the existing workforce shortage crisis.

So, who can we count on to continue building Georgia when our workforce is aging and all of our young people in public schools are not being exposed to careers in construction? I believe industry and state leaders must partner more than we ever have to bolster construction workforce development. The recent industry and hiring outlook survey conducted by Associated General Contractors of America and Sage reported 76 percent of Georgia construction companies plan to hire more personnel in 2023. This is seven percent higher than the average for contractors in all



MIKE DUNHAM

other states. Even after nearly all Georgia respondents said they increased pay and benefits in 2022, 79 percent are consistently having a difficult time filling all positions.

Adding to the urgency of the matter, the Construction Labor Market Analyzer shared by Build Your Future (byf.org) reports that Georgia needs over 338,000 additional skilled construction workers by December 2026 just to sustain current construction growth. AGC Georgia contractor members recognize their number one issue—developing a sustainable pipeline of skilled trades people—and they know it's up to them to find solutions.

AGC Georgia leaders consistently spend time with legislators to educate them on the need for appropriating more funds to expand industry-approved curriculum in schools. We are proud of our relationships with the Department of Education's Career Technical and Agricultural Education leadership and the Technical College System of Georgia and their respective campus leaders. Our team was successful in working with state leaders to earn the High Demand Career designation for construction to broaden post-secondary education opportunities. Together with our workforce partner, Construction Ready, we have great relationships with many of our 150 construction programs and their instructors.

We worked with the General Assembly to pass the CONNECT Act—Creating Opportunities Needed Now to Expand Credentialed Training. This legislation allows industry professionals to provide input on what curriculum and credentialing is taught to ensure skills needed in the marketplace are met.

AGC Georgia also partners with contractor members to host eight regional Skills Challenges. These

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events offered more than 1,000 high school construction program students the opportunity to compete in carpentry, electrical, plumbing, masonry and welding. During these events in the fall of 2022, an additional 1,200 students attended as observers. All these students also learned about career paths from exhibiting industry professionals. In recent years, the Skills Challenge series has raised more than \$1M from hundreds of construction firms interested in building the talent pipeline. These dollars are used to not only host the Skills Challenges, but a percentage of the proceeds are also shared with the competing high school construction programs. These donations help instructors buy materials and tools to enhance the learning experience in their construction labs.

Even with all our success thus far to bring awareness to construction careers, AGC Georgia and our members cannot solve our workforce shortage alone.

We are asking the General Assembly to support the Teacher Impact Fund to reward teachers for placing students in industry jobs. Our team is educating leaders on the importance of increasing the budget for CTAE teachers to receive Extended Day/Extended Year stipends. We are also sharing the benefits of providing significant funding for one-time equipment grants which will lead to having more certified high school construction programs in the state. Lastly, it's vital to



introduce students to careers earlier than high school. So AGC Georgia is requesting funding for CTAE vertically aligned construction programs to be opened in the elementary and middle schools that feed into existing high school programs.

As Georgia's economic development continues to thrive, our state's contractors want to be in the best position to meet the growing construction demands. We look forward to continuing to work with state leaders to grow funding and resources for construction curriculum so today's youth can help build Georgia's future.

Mike Dunham is the CEO of the Associated General Contractors of Georgia, Inc.



GEORGIA'S SECOND LARGEST AIRPORT

The Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport (SAV) is taking excellence to new heights with a thriving passenger traffic base, and it also serves as a major air transport hub for commercial and general aviation customers along coastal Georgia and South Carolina.

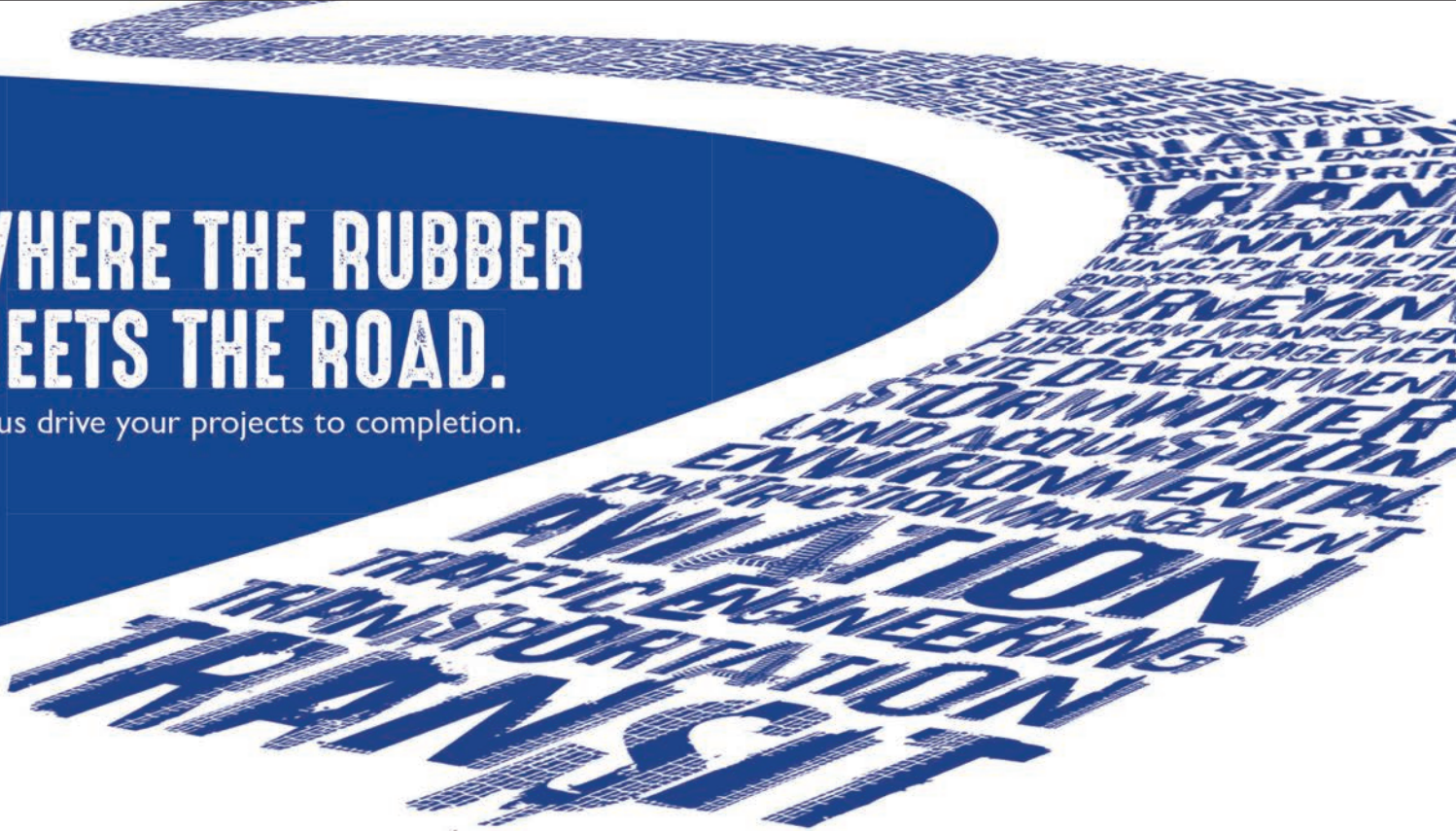
The majority of the airport's customers are business and leisure travelers who utilize flights on 11 commercial carriers through the main terminal building. SAV served over three million passengers in 2022. With an additional 92,000 general/corporate aviation visitors annually, it's no surprise that the airport has over 116,000 flight operations per year.

SAV also serves as the backdrop for other aviation related business supported primarily by Gulfstream Aerospace's main manufacturing center with over 10,000 employees. In addition, Rolls Royce Aerospace-North America, Flight Safety International, Federal Express, Signature Flight Support, Sheltair Aviation, and the new CAE Savannah Training Center all have a significant presence at SAV. The airport is also home to the 165th Airlift Wing of the Georgia Air National Guard, with approximately 1,400 military-supported jobs.

To prepare for the future, Savannah/Hilton Head International is actively engaged in capital projects totaling over \$150M. Those improvements will allow for growth in passenger traffic, as well as lay the groundwork for a new air cargo complex and an expanded general aviation campus. All these improvements will stimulate regional growth and add to the airport's overall \$4.2B economic impact.

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MAKING BUCKHEAD A MORE ACCESSIBLE, SAFE AND LIVABLE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

From planning for a game-changing elevated pedestrian bridge to collaborating on a much-needed new police precinct, the Buckhead Community Improvement District is making a major impact.

The Buckhead CID's recent impact by the numbers:



750K

dollars in federal funding for HUB404



6M

dollars from local TSPLOST for Lenox Road Section II



11,800

hours of APD supplemental patrols



Elevated Pedestrian Bridge Concept for Lenox Road Complete Street (Section III)



Atlanta's First Multi-lane Roundabout Planned for Wieuca Road and Phipps Boulevard



Completed the 15-year Transformation of Peachtree Road



Atlanta Police Dept. One Buckhead Plaza Precinct Opening

BUCKHEAD >>>>>>

AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT in the Atlanta Recipe

ERIC TANENBLATT



If, as they say, home is where the heart is, my heart has been in—and with—Buckhead for the last 30 years.

From a young family to a couple of empty nesters, the life my wife and I built inside the four walls of our home changed as much in those three decades as the community outside them. The cityscape grew much like our sons, sometimes busting at the seams and not always without growing pains. But we made it to the other side better for it. Today, our corner of Atlanta is as much defined by its towering skyscrapers as its quiet, tree-lined streets; its historic neighborhoods as much as the bustling mixed-use developments; and its world-class schools as much as its arts and entertainment venues.

In January I assumed the chairmanship of the Buckhead Coalition, the civic group that was instrumental in setting Ga. 400's route through Buckhead's commercial center and created the Buckhead Community Improvement District (BCID). Over my term, I will strive to help make our little sliver of the city the most vibrant, welcoming and safe community in America. That begins with doing what the "city too busy to hate" is best at: beating expectations.

Buckhead is an essential ingredient in the 176-year-old recipe that makes Atlanta so unique. Today, our little corner of the city has grown into a singular economic powerhouse that uplifts and supports millions across the city, region and state. A rising tide, as President Ronald Reagan often said, lifts all boats. So we understand that the tide of opportunity that flows out of Buckhead interrupts generational cycles of poverty and crime that affect us all.

As we look to future challenges, the Coalition will hold to the lessons and legacies of its co-founders Charlie Loudermilk and

continued on page 38



Sam Massell, whose mutual love of their neighborhood and city helped make it the undeniable capital of the South. Last year, 1,650,000 commuters passed through Buckhead's arteries during business hours, and we expect that number to grow from there. But we'll adapt to meet the challenges borne of that growth, just as when Mayor Massell's visionary support for MARTA's creation helped alleviate pressure on our highways decades ago.

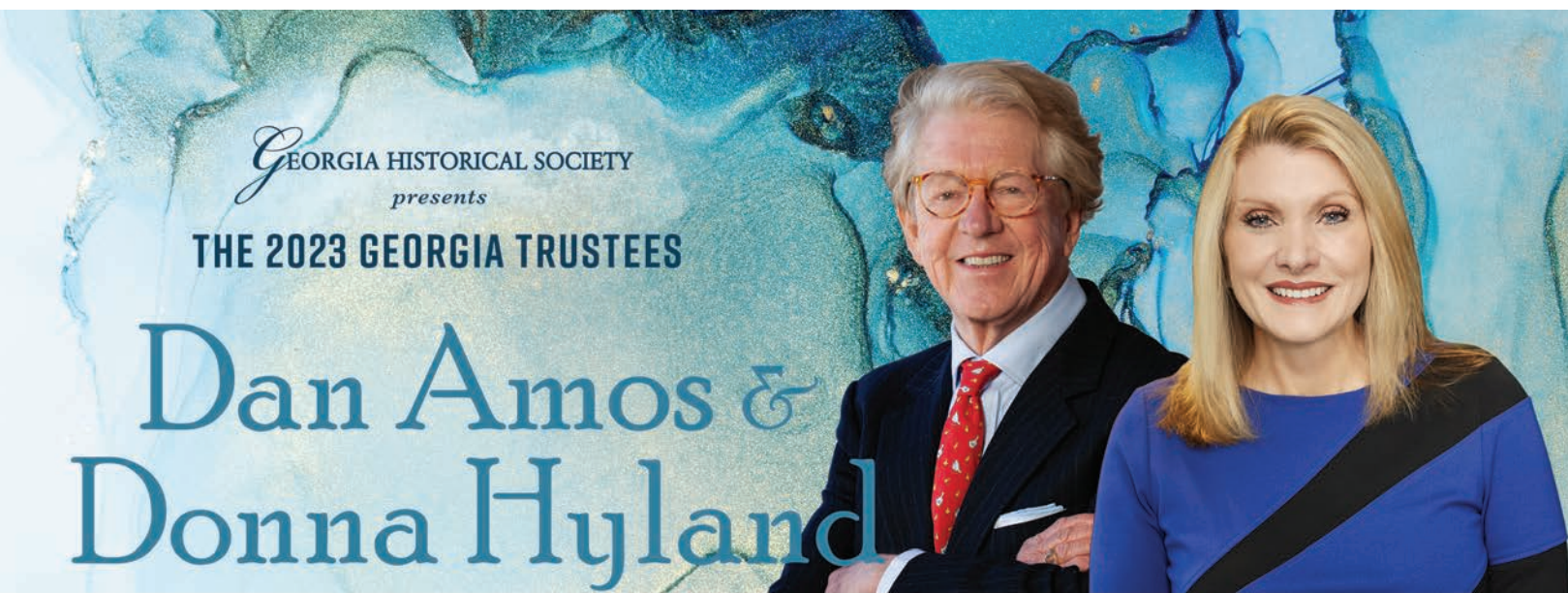
Today, the Coalition maintains a strong partnership with the BCID, which is essential in improving transportation corridors, enhancing streetscapes, and leading the HUB404 initiative to create a park and gathering place over GA 400. We also support Livable Buckhead as it expands the Buc shuttle— an app-based, on-demand ride-share service that takes patrons to some of Buckhead's

most popular retail and commercial centers in Mercedes Benz vans— and completes the PATH 400 bike trails.

But like any fast-growing area, Buckhead still has its share of challenges. As Chair of the Buckhead Coalition, our priorities for the next year include a continued focus on public safety. We will champion improvements to city services, transportation and infrastructure needs, and zoning regulations through new and stronger partnerships with local and state officials and community organizations. The Coalition will continue implementing the Buckhead Security Plan, including placing more security cameras to complement the new police precinct in the Buckhead Village through a collaborative effort of the Coalition, CID and the Atlanta Police Department.

The Buckhead model of civic and public-private cooperation is often imitated but never duplicated because it's taken decades of work to get us here. Today, Buckhead is as much a home to big businesses as small families. That these stark incongruencies exist simultaneously is a testament to the founding vision of the Buckhead Coalition and helps explain why our community is and will remain the jewel of Atlanta.

Eric Tanenblatt serves as Global Chair of Public Policy and Regulations at Dentons, the world's largest law firm. He has an extensive career in government service to three U.S. presidents, a U.S. senator, and a governor. He currently serves as chairman of the Buckhead Coalition.



The Georgia Historical Society, in conjunction with the Office of Governor, will induct Dan Amos, Chairman and CEO of Aflac Incorporated, and Donna Hyland, President and CEO of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, as the 2023 Georgia Trustees, the highest honor the State of Georgia can confer.

To support their induction, please contact Leanda Rix at 912-651-2125 ext. 137 or visit www.georgiahistory.com.



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Thurbert Baker



Dan Baskerville



Ashley D. Bell



Chan Creswell



Sharon A. Gay



Gordon D. Giffin



Anamaria Hazard



Benjamin P. Keane



Steven J. Labovitz



Edward H. Lindsey, Jr.



Ceasar C. Mitchell, Jr.



Rodney G. Moore



Samuel S. Olens



Elmer Stancil



Eric J. Tanenblatt

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BLACKSTONE'S

STEVE SCHWARZMAN

Interviewed by Phil Kent

STEPHEN A. SCHWARZMAN IS CHAIRMAN, CEO AND CO-FOUNDER OF BLACKSTONE, ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING INVESTMENT FIRMS WITH \$975 BILLION IN ASSETS UNDER MANAGEMENT. HE IS AN ACTIVE PHILANTHROPIST, WITH A HISTORY OF TRANSFORMATIVE GIVING IN SUPPORT OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND THE ARTS, AMONG OTHER AREAS. IN 2019, SCHWARZMAN PUBLISHED *WHAT IT TAKES: LESSONS IN THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE*, A *NEW YORK TIMES* BEST SELLER, WHICH DRAWS ON HIS EXPERIENCES IN BUSINESS, PHILANTHROPY AND PUBLIC SERVICE. BLACKSTONE HAS BUILT A SIZABLE PRESENCE IN GEORGIA AND HAS RECORD DRY POWDER TO DEPLOY TODAY.

How was Blackstone founded and how has the firm grown over the years?

I co-founded Blackstone with my partner Pete Peterson in 1985 with a balance sheet of \$400,000. Fast forward to today, we have a market cap of nearly \$120 billion and manage \$975 billion in assets for clients around the world. This growth has been astonishing, but is really based on a simple formula— deliver excellent investment performance for our clients and they will continue to entrust us with more capital and support our innovation into new areas. I'm proud to say that we've been doing this for nearly 40 years, and over that time have grown from 1 to around 60 different investment strategies.

We've also benefited by expanding the types of clients we serve. The alternatives industry traditionally catered to institutional investors like pension funds. That's still a major part of our business, and we invest on behalf of institutions that represent more than 40 million pensioners in North America, but we've also helped bring alternatives to insurance companies and individual investors through their financial advisors.



SCHWARZMAN SPEAKING TO EMPLOYEES AT THE FIRM'S NEW YORK CITY OFFICE.

Blackstone has a presence in Georgia, so what is the firm doing in Atlanta and statewide?

Stepping back, our global portfolio includes over 250 companies and \$577 billion value of real estate. Collectively, those companies and assets employ more than 700,000 individuals around the globe. When you zoom in on a great city like Atlanta, you get a sense for the local impact of this remarkable scale. We own real estate assets worth over \$7.7 billion in the city alone, and have 20 companies with a corporate presence there, employing over 1,400 Atlantans.

But the impact goes beyond those numbers. Look at an example like AmericasMart, a leading wholesale marketplace in downtown Atlanta. It was acquired in 2018 by our portfolio company, International Market Centers (IMC), one of the world's largest owners and operators of premier showroom spaces. According to a study done by Georgia State University, AmericasMart's operations had an economic impact equal to five Super Bowl-level events in downtown Atlanta from 2018-2019.

We also made a majority investment in Atlanta-headquartered Spanx, the iconic, category creating business founded by Sara Blakely. She's an exceptional entrepreneur and community leader. We're excited to help Spanx grow and find what that will mean for its "hometown" of Atlanta.

Tell us about your commitment to talent development and what Blackstone sees in Atlanta's community?

People are the most valuable asset in any business. That's certainly the case at Blackstone.

One of the draws for investment in Atlanta has been its talent, supported by great educational institutions and remarkable levels of diversity, creativity and innovation. This has helped attract top employers to the city.

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Blackstone has committed to further developing Atlanta's talent through efforts by our Charitable Foundation. In 2021, we announced a \$1.5 million partnership with three Historically Black Colleges and Universities—Morehouse, Spelman and Clark Atlanta—through our Blackstone LaunchPad program, which provides entrepreneurial skill-building and work-based learning on college campuses. The idea is that by providing training through partnerships with these institutions, we can increase access to career-building opportunities and support a more equitable and thriving economy in Atlanta. This was part of a broader \$40 million commitment with the United Negro College Fund to support Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and community colleges.

Beyond the university level, Career Pathways is a program aimed at helping portfolio companies recruit, retain and advance historically underrepresented talent. We've partnered with nonprofit organizations such as Year Up to help connect our portfolio companies with talent, solving both the talent shortage and strengthening career outcomes for people from all backgrounds. We've had great success and are excited to continue rolling out this program nationally.

You and your firm have an impressive commitment to hiring veterans across the country. Can you tell us more about this initiative?

In 2013, I heard then-First Lady Michelle Obama speak to a group of CEOs about the serious challenges faced by American veterans in their transition to civilian life, including high levels of unemployment. As I made my way home that night, I dictated a note to the First Lady committing Blackstone and its portfolio companies to hiring 50,000 veterans, veteran spouses and caregivers over the next five years. I wasn't sure exactly how we would do it but knew that it was our duty to try. Not only was it the right thing to do, I thought it made business sense. Veterans offer unique talent, drive and problem-solving skills that clearly were not being tapped to their fullest potential by the private sector.

Just four years later, we proudly announced that we hit our goal of 50,000 and doubled down with a new goal of 50,000 more hires in the next five years. In late 2021, again a year early, we hit that updated target, pushing the total past 100,000. It was a really proud moment for me, the firm and all those across

the portfolio who were involved. Georgia played a role in this—since launching the initiative in 2013, nearly 4,000 veterans, spouses and caregivers have been hired across our portfolio companies in the state. Georgia-based portfolio company QTS, a major provider of data center solutions, is especially focused on this and has made great progress on veteran hiring across its staff.

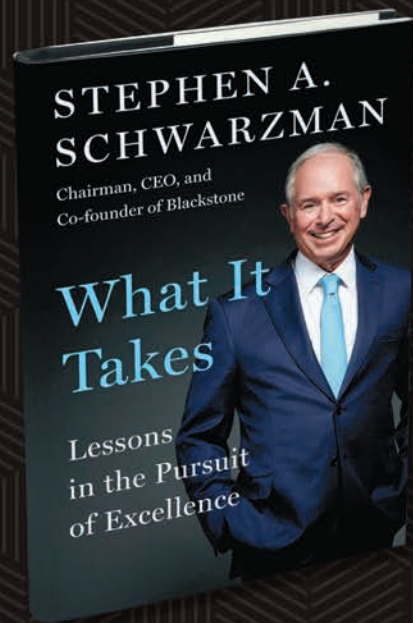
How would you describe your leadership style? How does that play into Blackstone's firmwide culture?

I'm not a natural manager, but I have improved over the years. I have also been deliberate about surrounding myself with others that have different skill sets. A trick to leading effectively is to find fantastic people, "10s out of 10," and provide them with the opportunity to be the best at what they do.

One of the "rules" I shared in my book *What It Takes* is that "no one person, however smart, can solve every problem... but a multitude of smart people speaking candidly with one another will." At Blackstone, our people are all different, but they share some common traits: self-confidence, intellectual curiosity, courtesy and an unwavering commitment to integrity and excellence. We've assembled an extraordinary team, driven by a collective responsibility to be the best at everything we do. Every person around the table, from the most junior to the most senior, is expected to have an opinion and participate. This helps create a culture that is collaborative and collegial, but also driven to get to the best answer for whatever issue is at hand.

What are your highest priorities for Blackstone in Georgia in 2023?

Our main priority remains consistent—deliver investment outperformance for our customers. That means supporting our existing portfolio, including those here in the state, particularly during the volatile economic environment we face today. It also means looking out for new opportunities to invest. With \$187 billion of dry powder, we have more capital than almost any other investor in the world to opportunistically buy assets when values are lower and liquidity is scarce. Atlanta and Georgia remain attractive for us, and we look forward to deepening our connections to the city and state.



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— PINES —

News From Your Neck of the Woods



AUGUSTA The first full week of April marks the start of the **Masters Golf Tournament** and also the Red Carpet Tour hosted by the Georgia Chamber and the Department of Economic Development. Dozens of national and international business leaders participate in the tour— an event designed to showcase Georgia's thriving business community for potential industrial locations or company expansions. The tour highlight is the Masters at the Augusta National Golf Club. Guests attend golf's most storied championship— and not only do they witness great golf but learn why Georgia is consistently ranked the No. 1 state in which to do business.

ALBANY Southwest Georgia is known as one of the premier spots in the world for quail hunting, which makes Albany the perfect location for the Georgia Chamber's annual **Georgia Quail Hunt**. It's one of the Chamber's biggest economic development events of the year. Business leaders from around the country join state officials flocking to hunting reserves to learn more about the state and shoot some birds. Since 1994 business guests of the hunt have invested more than \$2.5 billion and created over 10,000 jobs in Georgia.

COLUMBUS Who needs TV and film? More than 5,000 theatre actors, singers, stagehands and directors descended on Columbus for the 14th annual **Georgia Thespians Conference**, or ThesCon '23. More than 100 theatre professionals put on workshops for the high school thespians. They will also get the opportunity to audition for 25 of the nation's premier collegiate theatre programs, who all send representatives to the conference as well.

ROME Metro Atlanta is not the only Georgia region that's investing in public transit. The **Rome Transit Department** dedicated five new buses to the city's fleet. Ridership is up close to 40 percent over the past year and a half, seeing around 700 riders per day on

the service. And it's free of charge thanks to support from the Rome City Commission. RTD features three different routes, all converging on the Midtown Transfer Station which serves as the transfer point. It connects three different colleges, two hospitals and a wide array of residential and commercial buildings, giving Rome a transit network that punches well above its 38,000 population weight.


SAVANNAH To better accommodate massive ships coming in and out of the Port of Savannah, the Georgia Department of Transportation will raise the height of the **Talmadge Bridge** over the Savannah River. That's no small feat. The price tag is expected be around \$175 million and will entail replacing the bridge's cables while at the same time raising its height from its current 185 feet— all while keeping the bridge open for traffic. It will also feature a unique new contract bidding process which was approved by the General Assembly. That will allow potential contractors to get involved earlier in the process, necessary for projects of this magnitude and complexity.

UPSON COUNTY The city of **Thomaston** in Middle Georgia is getting in on the sustainability wave, welcoming a \$59 million investment from Green Georgia LLC to build a new headquarters from which it will produce eco-friendly building materials. The facility will create more than 170 jobs designing, producing and selling low-carbon materials for use in projects across the Southeast. Such supplies are in ever-increasing demand as they can be produced more quickly than traditional building materials and produce much less waste.

WARNER ROBINS **Robins Air Force Base** is a huge economic driver for Central Georgia, so a major mission change means that its support system must also adapt. And a major mission change is coming since the JSTAR, the Air Force recon plane that operated out of Robins, is being decommissioned. In its place is the Air Force's new high tech command, the Advanced Battlefield Management System (ABMS). The nearby **Middle Georgia State University** is already pivoting to meet the new needs of ABMS, adding a new computer science program in addition to the several aviation-related degrees it offers as part of a pipeline to Robins.

If you've got news from your local community and want to share it with our readers, please email:

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JAMES MAGAZINE

20 CALENDAR 23

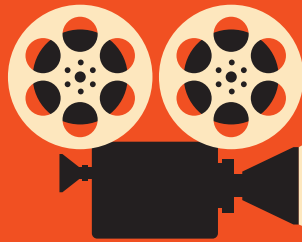
COMING MAY THROUGH OCTOBER

MAY JUNE	THE HOSPITALITY & TOURISM ISSUE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Sippin' Local Poll Results Georgia's Favorite Breweries, Distilleries & Wineries➤ Law & Politics Exploring Their Intersection in Georgia➤ Augusta-Richmond County Looks to the Future➤ An Update: The State of Georgia's Convention Industry	
JULY AUGUST	THE EDUCATION ISSUE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Rankings of Georgia's Top Colleges & Universities➤ The State of Georgia's Transportation Industry➤ The City of Rome A Model of Economic Diversity➤ ROWEN Working to Create a "Knowledge Community"	
SEPTEMBER OCTOBER	THE LOBBYIST ISSUE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Rankings of Georgia's Top Lobbyists & Lobbying Firms➤ Working to Better Georgia's Overall Healthcare➤ Columbus A Business, Convention & Leisure Destination➤ CEO Spotlight Find Out Who We Choose Next	

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GEORGIA'S PHENOMENAL FILM & TV INDUSTRY

BY
CINDY MORLEY

Is Georgia the new film-production capital of the world? Some say it is California, others New York. But it is Georgia! While there will always be disagreement, the film industry in Georgia is the largest among the states for production of feature films due to the sheer number produced. In fact, recent data indicates that Georgia overtook California in 2016.

More numbers favor Georgia. Last summer Gov. Brian Kemp announced a chart-topping year for the film and television industry as productions spent \$4.4 billion in the state during fiscal year 2022— an industry record. The Georgia Film Office— housed within the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDECd)— reports that the state hosted 412 productions, represented by 32 feature films, 36 independent films, 269 television and episodic productions, 42 commercials and 33 music videos between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

Interestingly, while many people view the Peach State's film industry as a new phenomenon, you must go back to the 1970s to truly appreciate its history.

In 1972 the movie *Deliverance* put the state on the big screen, and in 1973 then-Gov. Jimmy Carter noticed the potential and created a film commission. To be fair, there was no "film industry" in Georgia— just a few films produced here and there. From 1973 to 2003 there were only 58 productions in Georgia. Yet Carter's commission— now called the Georgia Film, Music and Digital Entertainment Office— stayed the course, and started marketing the Peach State as a shooting location. By 2007, the office had recruited more than 550 major projects to film in the state.

WHAT LED TO THE FILM INDUSTRY'S GROWTH

"Georgia's tax incentive was the game-changer," says Executive Director Kelsey Moore of the Georgia Screen Entertainment Coalition (GSEC). This tax incentive gives Georgia an advantage that no other state offers. It was initiated to spur the growth of Georgia's budding film industry, developing it in less than 15 years into an industry that has attracted the attention of the world. Success measured in jobs and money

spent directly with Georgia businesses— more than \$4 billion— has been spectacular.

"Take away the tax credit and that economic momentum will grind to a halt," Moore added. "That's exactly what happened in North Carolina, Florida and Louisiana. Think of the film tax credit as the fuel in the engine of Georgia's economic development."

GSEC is the unified voice of Georgia's film, television and digital entertainment industry. The members include all major studios, crew, workforce development and educational institutions, film commissions and leading industry infrastructure businesses. GSEC is also the go-to resource for legislators and policymakers for information and insight on how public policy— especially the innovative film tax incentive— affects the industry.

All stakeholders seem to agree that Georgia's film industry was boosted substantially by the tax incentive that was introduced in 2002— a point of purchase sales and use tax exemption— and later strengthened with passage of the Georgia Entertainment Industry Investment Act. It became law in 2005 and was updated in 2008. The law grants qualified productions a transferable income tax credit of 20 percent of all in-state costs for film and television investments of \$500,000 or more. An additional 10 percent tax credit is awarded to approved projects that embed a Georgia Entertainment Promotional logo within the titles or credits of each production.

"The tax credit fuels thousands of jobs for hardworking Georgians, creating jobs that range from electricians and construction workers to caterers and truck drivers. Families and small businesses throughout the state count on the opportunities created by the tax credit," said Moore.

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“Think of the film tax credit as the fuel in the engine of Georgia’s economic development.” KELSEY MOORE, Executive Director GSEC

For a project to be eligible for the 20 percent transferable tax credit, the GDEcD must certify the project. “Any conversation about Georgia’s film tax credit must include the context that— thanks to the effectiveness of our tax credit— the industry last year brought more than \$4 billion in direct spending to communities across the state,” Moore emphasizes. “Reduce or eliminate the credit and that revenue stream will be jeopardized.”

Courtney Bennett of PineLake Studios LLC and part owner of Blaquer production company, is among the major industry players who credit that tax incentive directly with the rapid growth. “The film industry has packed up and moved to Georgia,” he says. “This is a gypsy industry, and it goes where the money is and where the savings are the greatest. With the incentives in Georgia and the business approach— including the infrastructure and all support equipment— the industry has now moved to Georgia. And it looks like it’s here to stay.”

THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

“In 2022, Georgia boasted 3 million square feet of stage space, and within the next 12-18 months, that number is expected to grow by another 4 million square feet. That would push Georgia ahead of Los Angeles until they add more stage space. And they had a 100-year jump on us,” says Georgia Film Office Director Lee Thomas.

In 2010 Georgia was home to one purpose-built stage in Senoia— the 45,000 square foot Riverwood facility which was home to the “Walking Dead.” In 2007, the direct spend by film makers in Georgia was \$135 million. And from 1973 to 2008, that total number was \$1.1 billion. But last year alone, Georgia quadrupled that number.

Thomas also credits Georgia’s success to strong support from past Govs. Sonny Perdue and Nathan Deal and now Kemp. The number of people employed in the industry also tells a story. According to Tom Harrold of Miller & Martin— who has worked with the Motion Picture Association in Georgia for over 37 years— there were around 7,500 Georgians working in Georgia’s film industry when he first started working with them. That number has grown to about 60,000. And he says about 95 percent of all people employed at the studios across the state are Georgians.

A THREE-LEGGED STOOL HAS DEVELOPED

Georgia has also earned a globally-recognized reputation as a true heavyweight in production across television, film and streaming— but it certainly wasn’t by accident. In training and developing a skilled workforce and partnering with the private sector to develop a robust infrastructure that funnels billions of investment dollars into the industry, Georgia carved out a unique position within the entertainment space. Stakeholders will tell you that perhaps most important to this booming industry (aside from gubernatorial support) is a state legislature that understands the significance of a stable and predictable tax incentive.

One example of the benefits realized by consistent infrastructure investment in Georgia is Tyler Perry Studios. President and General Manager of Studio Operations Steve Mensch sees the state support as a major factor in Georgia’s success story. But there’s more.



EUE SCREEN GEMS OVERHEAD EXTERIOR.

“Why is Georgia successful? Three main reasons,” said Mensch. “The predictable and stable tax incentive, the sophisticated and highly trained workforce here that is growing by the day and infrastructure investment from the private sector. Notably, of course is Mr. Perry, who has invested in, and built a major production studio. A studio that relies on countless industries and companies downstream that support us here in Georgia.”

“We are not in the entertainment business; rather we are in the business of manufacturing entertainment,” he continues. “Georgia must maintain, and lean-into, its economic manufacturing advantage for the industry to continue to thrive. Always remember, this is a global manufacturing business with global competition.”

Another advantage Georgia has is a population that mirrors that global community in so many ways. Fostering and supporting an extremely diverse workforce has always been a primary focus for Perry, so he is hailed as a leader that sets everyone up for workplace success. “It’s my hope that in all of this change and this push for there to be more inclusion, we’re also providing time and training to make sure we can do a great job,” Perry has said in a recent interview.

Indeed, Tyler Perry Studios has a major impact on Georgia’s economy. Consider what Mensch underscores:

- A vast majority of the people who work at TPS live in Georgia and come from across the state to work on the studio lot.
- An average day sees roughly 4,000 people come to work at TPS.
- Over 99 percent of the workforce at TPS live in Georgia.
- TPS will have a \$154 million payroll next year.

In addition to hosting third-party productions, TPS will produce over 250 Tyler Perry Television/Streaming episodes, along with four feature films next year.

THE GEORGIA FILM ACADEMY’S IMPACT

Georgia has done yeoman’s work building a solid workforce pool, so consider the impact of the Georgia Film Academy, housed at Trilith Studios in Fayette County. It graduated its 10,000th student just last year— less than a decade into its existence. “Internships provide valuable experience. Many students transition from internships straight into jobs at the studios immediately after graduation with salaries starting at \$70,000 and quickly increasing to \$120,000,” notes Film Office Director Thomas.

The Academy is widely recognized by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), labor unions and numerous competing states and countries as “the gold standard” in film and television production workforce training. The GFA offers industry certifications in

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IT’S NOT JUST AN ATLANTA INDUSTRY

Much of Georgia’s prolific film production takes place in Atlanta— but it’s not entirely centralized there. According to Moore, there are currently over 12 major studios and three more are expected within the next year in Athens, Doraville and Forest Park. If all are completed as expected. Georgia should have 7 million square footage of studio space next year. (Prior to the tax incentive, Georgia had 180,000 square feet of studio space.) Stages are currently full through 2023.

“When folks think about the film industry in Georgia, they likely don’t picture lumber companies, motels, dry cleaners or catering companies. But the untold story of the film industry is the small and midsize business owners and workers who support productions around the state benefitting from the industry ‘ripple effect,’” says Brandon Reese, Vice President of State Government Affairs for the MPAA’s Southeast Region.

“This indirect economic impact is difficult to capture but impossible to overstate. Whether it’s a local diner in Rome, a flower shop in Rincon or a storage facility in Columbus, job creators across our state are benefitting from film production,” Reese added. “Further, there have been tremendous capital investments in sound stage infrastructure statewide that service our robust film industry. Prior to 2010, there was 40,000 square feet of soundstage in Georgia. By 2018, capital investment in stages grew to 2.3 million square feet. Today, there are more than four million square feet of

facilities across Georgia with more than \$500 million of construction underway. Brick and mortar facilities like these sound stages result in more dollars going back into local communities.”

Savannah is especially feeling the impact and benefits of the film industry. Here’s what Savannah Economic Development Authority President and CEO Trip Tollison reports:

“In 2015, the entertainment production industry generated a direct spend of \$59 million and we had about 50 crew members living in Savannah. Fast forward to 2022 and we had a record breaking nearly \$207 million direct spend and now have more than 250 crew members who live here. The Savannah region had 101 professional productions in 2022 including the Apple TV+ series *Man-hunt*, the AMC show *Fear the Walking Dead* and *Pan-handle*, a Sony production for Spectrum and Roku.”

THERE’S ALSO GEORGIA’S BURGEONING TV INDUSTRY

Television production is also taking off in Georgia— especially as the Assembly Studios in Doraville begins to take shape on the old General Motors auto plant campus. Atlanta-based Gray Television, one of the largest owners of broadcast TV stations in the nation, purchased the property last year and last May began building the first of what will be at least 20 soundstages. By the time it should open in June, Assembly will be one of the largest studios in metro Atlanta.

NBCUniversal, a sizable film and television producer, has signed a deal to utilize the sprawling production campus in Doraville— a major addition to the constellation of entertainment businesses planting roots in Georgia. Besides NBCUniversal, Gray’s own Swirl Films will use the space with remaining stages set to be leased out to others. Gray also purchased the adjacent Third Rail Studios last year.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE INDUSTRY’S FUTURE

Has Georgia hit its peak in the film industry? Most in the industry say “No.”

Patrick Millsaps, the CEO of Kane Studio, a new production studio on track to break ground in metro Atlanta this summer, provides insight.

“I believe we are in our infancy in this industry in Georgia, and that we are in a true transitional time,” Millsaps says. “We are beginning to see the transition from building studios and stages into developing actual production studios where the script is written, and the production is carried all the way through to distribution. I believe Georgia will see more post-production houses built here and see Georgia moving into the realm of the post-production eco-system where everything takes place here. And I truly believe post-production will be another game changer for the film industry in Georgia.”

Cindy Morley is a staff writer for James and InsiderAdvantage Georgia.



ONE INDUSTRY. ONE VOICE.

The Georgia Screen Entertainment Coalition (GSEC) is the unified voice of the state’s film, TV, and digital entertainment production industry — a booming economic giant responsible for hundreds of productions, tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in direct spending in Georgia.

GSEC’s mission is to promote, protect and advance Georgia’s production ecosystem and increase awareness of the significant economic impact of the industry across the state.

GSEC represents the leading organizations that define Georgia’s film industry, with a membership that includes all major film studios in Georgia, crew, workforce development and educational institutions, and top industry infrastructure businesses.

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A PROGRESS REPORT

GEORGIA'S TOP CIDs

by Baker Owens

Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) have been around in Georgia since the 1980s and are one of many tools to redevelop old or abandoned commercial centers into revitalized communities. A CID is a defined geographic area where a majority of commercial property owners join to pay extra property taxes to fund public improvements. After all, improved infrastructure and amenities are more attractive to businesses and help grow the economy.

Metro Atlanta has CIDs across the entire region and in nearly every county. Some are in the heart of Atlanta; some are in the older suburbs— job centers that sprouted in the 1960s and 70s but had grown stale by the 80s and 90s and have since been revitalized thanks to the CIDs and accompanying growth.

This piece highlights the work of several of these CIDs. And we'll be reporting on others in future issues.

BOULEVARD CID

This area is located on the thin slice of Fulton Industrial Boulevard, the last stretch of Fulton County overseen by the County Commission. For decades it was indeed a very "industrial" boulevard. Retail or pedestrian activity would have been unthinkable or very out of place. It was mostly truck traffic, with easy access to the interstate and airport. But that's changing.

Gil Prado, the executive director for 11 years, has received many honors for his work. Last year he was recognized by the South Metro Development Outlook Conference as the "Economic Developer of the Year." A main reason for that honor is that the Boulevard CID committed to an incremental turnaround. It focused first on public safety and, giving some credence to the "Broken Window Theory"— weekly landscaping maintenance and litter removal. In 2018, TSPLOST funds were used by the CID for construction on \$2 million in public improvements, including new streetscapes, sidewalks,

decorative crosswalks, gateway signage, streetlights and ADA ramps. Now, Boulevard CID has some 50 million square feet of industrial space, with a 97 percent occupancy rate. And it is home to more than 28,000 jobs.

"Fulton County also has a "Renew the District" initiative to invest millions into the Fulton Industrial District over the next ten years— especially in the Fulton County Airport," Prado reminds me. This also includes

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investments in an animal shelter, police training facility and in the redevelopment of a dozen properties around the I-20/FIB Interchange.

TOWN CENTER CID

Over in Kennesaw, the Town Center CID celebrated its 25th anniversary last October. It marked growth from a simple commercial retail area into a thriving community that includes small businesses, residential areas, major corporate headquarters and Kennesaw State University.

Even for those unfamiliar with the area but who have traveled on I-75 will have seen some of the significant improvements, thanks in part to the Town Center CID. The Skip Spann Connector has made traffic flow better and enhanced the pedestrian-friendly nature of the area, helping to mitigate the community-splitting canyon that is the interstate.

“For nearly three decades, the Town Center CID has leveraged funding for large infrastructure improvements like widening major roadways, adding more efficient thoroughfares and building greenspaces as well as focusing on everyday changes to improve beautification and safety,” said Tracy Styf, executive director of the Town Center CID. “Our goal is to take the critical first steps of planning and design to help our partners with transformative projects and con-

sistently add to our district, encouraging economic growth to allow businesses, employees, and residents to prosper. This year’s projects include the Electrification LCI Study, which aims to identify a need and promote the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure, and the Freight Cluster Plan, which will improve freight access and mobility in the area.”

PERIMETER CID

This CID is looking forward to the completion—finally— of the I-285/400 interchange overhaul. This transformative project is the biggest on their list in 2023, as its positive impact on the “Top End” and the region will be evident. In 2015, the PCID contributed \$10 million to help finance additional lighting, landscaping and the PATH 400 trail extension, which will eventually link Buckhead to Sandy Springs for several miles of bike/pedestrian usage.

This year, PCID will complete a ten-year update to the 2011 Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Plan, with forecasts for 2030 and 2040 economic growth and multi-modal transportation needs, then updating project plans in coordination with Sandy Springs, Dunwoody, Brookhaven, MARTA and the state Department of Transportation. Also to be launched is a Transit Oriented Development plan with MARTA for the Dunwoody transit hub for rail, express bus, local bus,

micro-transit and future Top End 285 bus rapid transit (BRT) connections. Finally, several bike/ped enhancements are planned.

The PCID, in collaboration with the City of Dunwoody, the Dunwoody Development Authority, MARTA and Living Walls (a non-profit public art group), issued an RFP in 2022 for a large outdoor public mural to be installed on the south side of the Dunwoody MARTA station’s parking garage (facing Hammond Drive). This will be their second art installation project at this site.

“Significant changes are coming to Perimeter this year and beyond, and we could not be more excited to be a part of its success,” says Executive Director Ann Hanlon. “With increased transit access to office, commercial, and hospitality businesses, extended trail systems in place and vibrant new developments underway, the Central Perimeter market will emerge better than ever.”

SUGARLOAF CID

The mission of this CID is to create and maintain a connected, safe, and attractive business and entertainment district— a vibrant downtown for Gwinnett County. It should be noted that Sugarloaf is one of metro Atlanta’s top ten employment centers. Including Gwinnett Place, the Sugarloaf business district ranks

fourth for jobs and third for businesses in the metro Atlanta region.

Sugarloaf CID saw significant expansion last year, adding 22 taxable parcels that included over \$212 million in appraised value. When property owners join the CID, they agree to pay an additional tax of 3.5 mills to fund projects that make the district more connected, safe and attractive. So adding these new properties increases the funding the CID can leverage to complete critical projects in the community.

Sugarloaf is also home to the quickly expanding Gas South District, a 118-acre campus that includes the Gas South Convention Center. It is home to 90,000 square feet of exhibit hall space, a 21,000 square-foot ballroom and 24 meeting rooms. The District also includes Gas South Arena, home to Atlanta’s minor league hockey team, the Gladiators, and its professional lacrosse team, the Georgia Swarm.

“It’s been fulfilling to reach a major milestone with the largest expansion of our district to date,” says Executive Director Alyssa Davis. “Since I began my role, I have worked to grow the district to a value that is more than five times what it was when the CID formed in 2016. This growth allows us to expand our initiatives focusing on transportation, security and placemaking improvements to make an even greater impact.”

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CUMBERLAND CID

Celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2023, this CID was the first one established in Georgia. When commercial property owners formed it in 1988, the “Platinum Triangle” area was primarily a nine-to-five job center. Now, the CID has leveraged \$160 million with county, state and federal funding, making strategic investments into transportation and infrastructure projects that have transformed Cumberland into a business center and entertainment destination.

“The Atlanta Braves and The Battery Atlanta helped create a community and culture where people want to be,” notes Executive Director Kim Menefee. “Along with a major league baseball team, Cumberland has it all with 840 acres of national parkland, 38 miles of trails, diversity of shopping, dining, entertainment and job options, topped with the pristine Chattahoochee River.”

With 84,000 jobs and 30,000 diverse residents, most of whom are millennials, the Cumberland CID is working to connect people to jobs with a major mobility project. Currently in progress is the Cumberland Sweep, a three-mile multi-modal corridor with dedicated walking and biking lanes and an autonomous (AV) shuttle system, making travel around Cumberland quick and efficient.

“We are taking a bold approach to transportation,” said Menefee. “We plan to have the latest AV technology

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Gerald McDowell

Executive Director, ATL Airport CIDs

integrated with the shuttle system, which will help address the region’s first and last-mile connectivity issues. The project is in the planning phase, but we are excited to have community support for the vision of the Sweep.”

The Cumberland Sweep will connect Truist Park, The Battery Atlanta, Cumberland Mall, Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, Cobb Galleria Centre, national parkland, and more, providing a cultural amenity but an essential and much-needed transportation resource. The alignment of the Sweep will connect to local transit options and MARTA. The Cumberland Bus Transfer Center will be a priority connection for the Sweep, providing individuals who do not own a car an efficient commute option.

BUCKHEAD CID

Founded in 1999, this CID funded many projects to make the area a more walkable, livable center. For decades, Buckhead was primarily known for high-end shopping and its stately (and pricey) homes. In a region known for being particularly car-centric, it was as car-centric as any neighborhood in Atlanta.

“2023 will be a big year for the Buckhead Community Improvement District. We will be wrapping up two capital improvements in the first half of the year: completing the third and final phase of the transformation of Peachtree and finishing up the streetscape, storm sewer, and road repair work in the west Buckhead village area bounded by Roswell, East Andrews and Irby,” says Executive Director Jim Durrett.

With the recent Buckhead Village District shopping area and many other new shops in that area of the intersection between Peachtree and Roswell Roads, Buckhead is quickly becoming more of a pedestrian-friendly shop and stroll area with new parks and greenspaces.

“In addition, construction will begin after years of planning, design and engineering on three major projects: Lenox Road between East Paces Ferry and Peachtree, the Wieuca/Phipps roundabout, and Piedmont between Peachtree and Lenox,” Durrett says. We will also be advancing the design and engineering for

Lenox between Peachtree and Piedmont, which will include pedestrian and cycling bridges spanning Lenox Road and GA 400, as well as the 9-acre HUB404 park over GA 400 spanning from Peachtree to Lenox and connecting to the aforementioned bridges.”

The HUB404 is part of the cap over the highway adjacent to the Lenox Road exit. The park will be part of a pedestrian and transit hub, connecting PATH400 users to Buckhead and the City of Atlanta and commuters headed to Hartsfield-Jackson Airport via MARTA.

NORTH FULTON CID

Located in the fast-growing region of Georgia’s most populous county, this CID has many projects in the pipeline. Since 2003, the CID that stretches from Mansell Road to McGinnis Ferry Road along GA 400 has leveraged \$22 million in direct dollars into more than \$116 million of transportation and infrastructure improvements. The NFCID represents more than 400 property owners and is home to more than 270,000 employees.

“The North Fulton CID is dedicated to making important investments that meet the needs of today for those who work, live and play in our district. We are fortunate to have wonderful partners who join us in creating a more connected, vibrant and economically successful North Fulton,” says Deputy Executive Director Kristin Winzeler.

The Davis Drive Extension— extending Davis Drive in Alpharetta from Mansell Road to Westside Parkway— creates a new, safe connection allowing vehicles to bypass some very congested intersections and eliminating the need for a dangerous cut-through many vehicles currently use to save time. As of today, several parcels are already being developed simultaneously as the roadway is constructed. The total project cost is \$6 million and is a partnership between the North Fulton CID, State Road & Tollway Authority, Fulton County and the City of Alpharetta. The project will be completed in the next few months.

An excellent example of a different type of project is the MARTA Station Area Planning Study. It’s a partnership between the North Fulton CID and MARTA to study the areas surrounding the future Bus Rapid Transit stations along the GA 400 corridor. The study will bring stakeholders, the cities and the transit operator together and focus on connecting the surrounding areas to the station and development opportunities on adjacent/nearby parcels. The study is \$220,000 and is being split by the North Fulton CID and MARTA. This type of work is what CIDs can help to drive forward and guide, getting estimates on feasibility and cost before going on the hunt for more funding, such as state or federal grants or private projects.

Baker Owens is a staff writer for James and InsiderAdvantage Georgia.

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KEMP FOR PRESIDENT? Possible.



VICE PRESIDENT? Highly Probable.

by Matt Towery | Co-founder & Chairman of InsiderAdvantage & James Magazine

In 1972 as a very young boy I sat in the room located just outside the entrance to the governor of Georgia's office. I was watching Mary Beasley, longtime Gold Dome stalwart and assistant to the governor, pack up items from the governor's formal office and some others.

That governor was Jimmy Carter. He was vacating his offices for a short time so that then-President Richard Nixon's diplomat of diplomats, Henry Kissinger, could utilize the facilities as he hosted a meeting of the Organization of American States in Atlanta.

For a then-smaller and mainly regionally prominent city to host such an event was a big deal. For Carter to rub elbows with the likes of Kissinger, international leaders and the national press corps was equally significant. This was the international debut of Carter, the fresh new face of a decidedly more modern Georgia.

Within four years he would become the Democratic nominee for president. The contacts and notoriety Carter gained during that short time proved invaluable to his political future.

GOVERNOR KEMP'S DAVOS VISIT

Much has been made of Gov. Brian Kemp's visit to the World Economic Forum in Davos. It is fair to say that a decent number of GOP and conservative voters view the organization with a healthy degree of skepticism if not just plain disdain. But Kemp's presence was explained by his staff as an opportunity not only to tout Georgia, but to show them the value of conservative government at the state level. From the polling numbers I've seen, most Georgians took Kemp and his

team at their word, and the trip had few if any political ramifications with the voters.

For Kemp the short visit likely had much the same impact for him as did Carter's OAS experience decades earlier. True billionaires, world players and media had a chance to see in person "the man who took on Donald Trump and won."

Prior to his visit, numerous national news organizations touted Kemp as strong potential candidate for the GOP nomination of president in 2024. Even the highly respected Cook Report suggested that Kemp's path to the nomination was clearer than many other potential candidates.

Having watched Ham Jordan, Jody Powell, Gerald Rafshoon, Bert Lance and a handful of others launch the seemingly improbable Carter candidacy and turn it into the defeat of an incumbent president, I know how quickly these amazing political achievements can take place. So, the idea of a Kemp presidential run doesn't seem impossible at all.

Yet consider what seems far more likely if former President Trump fails to win the 2024 GOP presidential nomination: A pick by whomever the Republican nominee is of Kemp as the vice presidential running mate. Why? Consider several scenarios.

2024 GOP PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY SCENARIOS

Any Republican presidential nominee who survives a Trump primary challenge would have put his presidency behind both of them and the GOP. And if

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Kemp would bring the conservative gubernatorial chops needed to motivate national Republicans.

Trump fails to capture the nomination, there would be no “Trump ally” who could take the VP nomination and satisfy Trump. He would label that person a traitor and some hardcore supporters would follow his lead.

The focus would quickly turn toward winning critical swing states. And what is the GOP’s most problematic one among those states? Georgia.

With Kemp’s overwhelming 2022 defeat of the Democrat’s international superstar (and TV’s Star Trek: Discovery’s “President of the United Earth”) Stacey Abrams, there would be little doubt that Kemp could lure even the most loyal of Trump devotees back to the polls to defeat President Joe Biden’s re-election effort (or any Democrat replacement nominee for the president who might emerge).

Kemp would bring the conservative gubernatorial chops needed to motivate national Republicans. Strong fiscal responsibility, tough on crime policies and a governor who first opened his state up ahead of most others following a failed national Covid lockdown.

For moderates and independents, his willingness to take on Trump would likely, on its own, make him an attractive VP nominee.

But what if the presidential nominee were from another Southern state? In past cycles that would be a political no-no. But that’s no longer a major issue. Winning the Electoral College for Republicans is all about 1) inspiring turnout in solid “red states” most of whom identify with and admire Southern Republican governors; and 2) tipping the balance in arguably “purple states” such as Georgia.

Floridian Ron DeSantis or South Carolinian Nicki Haley at the top of the ticket would in no way make the choice of the Georgia governor a problem.

And obviously with a former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo or a New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu as leader of the ticket, Kemp could add not only geographical diversity but the advantage that comes with having a big state governor on the ticket.

FACTOR IN A POSSIBLE PENCE CANDIDACY

Then there is former Vice President Mike Pence. Make no mistake, most of the so-called non-MAGA Republican Establishment not only wants Pence to be the nominee but prefers Kemp as the VP nominee in 2024. Pence’s Georgia connections are strong and politically talented.

While the former VP may currently sit near the bottom of the polls, he is my dark horse pick to upset the Republican appletart. Because despite his “awe shucks” demeanor, he is immensely ambitious. If Trump takes a tumble in the primaries, it won’t be without the behind-the-scenes help of the Pence brain trust. It is a formidable and savvy group and one with stronger ties to the Georgia governor than most in the media understand.

Of course, there remains the issue of Trump and his candidacy. If enough candidates enter the early GOP primaries, Trump will likely come out ahead. The anti-Trump vote will split, and Trump will be on top. Of course, hometown favorites running such as Sununu or Haley might complicate early contests in New Hampshire and South Carolina. But a victory in their home states would likely be treated by the press as a onetime “home” victory.

Trump’s real test would come in Florida (where currently DeSantis has massive popularity) and of course Georgia. Should the Georgia primary leave Trump in second or worse, it could prove his undoing. And a Kemp endorsement of an alternative nominee would allow him to play the role of kingmaker.

Primaries and predictions are fluid. Yet one thing is for sure. Never underestimate Donald Trump. Equally true is that, these days, you also never underestimate Brian Kemp.

It should be interesting.

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UNG President Says Goodbye

LEAVING IMPRESSIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

by Cindy Morley

Dr. Bonita Jacobs is president of the University of North Georgia, which serves students across five campuses and offers a range of degree programs from the associate to doctoral levels. With a doctoral degree in education under her belt, the Huntington, Texas, native moved from her home state in 2011 to become the 17th president of North Georgia College & State University. She then oversaw the consolidation between North Georgia and Gainesville State College to officially become the University of North Georgia in 2013.

In 2011 Bonita Jacobs made history—twice. With her appointment as president of UNG, she became its first female president and only the second woman to lead one of the country's six Senior Military Colleges. And this year, she is leading UNG through its year-long Sesquicentennial Celebration—marking 150 years of service to the region and the state—as she prepares to retire at the end of June. The annual Faculty-Staff Convocation ceremony, the first significant gathering for the academic year, served as the celebration kick-off. Throughout the year, UNG activities on each of its five campuses will focus on the university's legacies of academic scholarship, leadership and service.

"The determined spirit that led to the creation of then-North Georgia Agricultural College, sustains us still today," said Jacobs. "We have unwavering commitments to student success and service to our region



and state, and, for nearly 150 years, we have produced civic, professional and military leaders who make a positive impact in their communities and beyond. Our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members are an invaluable part of our legacy, and we are eager to celebrate this milestone with them.

"As I move forward into the next chapter of my life, I know that UNG will continue to be strong, building on the foundation that has been established."

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

"Not many institutions have the chance to celebrate 150 years," Jacobs added. "This is a remarkable accomplishment, especially when you look back at the beginnings of this institution as a small military college. We have come through several consolidations, and several name changes. Today, UNG has five campuses and has experienced tremendous growth."

At the outset I noted that the president leads one of the country's six Senior Military Colleges. (The other five are The Citadel, in Charleston, South Carolina; Norwich University, in Northfield, Vermont; Texas A&M University, in College Station, Texas; Virginia Military Institute, in Lexington, Virginia; and Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg, Virginia.) "It's quite an honor," said Jacobs. "It was definitely different for me to come in as a female,

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but it seemed to be a good fit for me. My dad was a Marine, and I have a great respect for the military. We have an amazing group of students, who succeed here, and then go on to succeed after graduation.”

UNG boasts of 50 general military officers, retired and active duty, and UNG’s ROTC Ranger Challenge Team has been named the No. 1 unit in the nation four years running.

UNG began as North Georgia Agricultural College in 1873 in Dahlonega and was renamed North Georgia College in 1929. In 1996, due to its much wider scope of academic programs, the University System of Georgia reclassified the college as a state university and renamed it North Georgia College & State University (NGCSU). Gainesville Junior College was founded in 1964, becoming Gainesville College in 1987 and Gainesville State College in 2005. It expanded in 2003 to include the university’s Oconee Campus. In 2013, NGCSU and Gainesville State College consolidated to become the University of North Georgia. The Cumming Campus opened as a joint venture between NGCSU and Gainesville State College months before the consolidation, and UNG opened its Blue Ridge Campus in 2015. Both campuses have expanded access to higher education across the north Georgia region.

The Dahlonega campus is the largest and is the main campus of today’s University of North Georgia. All UNG

cadets (657) attend classes at the Dahlonega campus. “What’s so exciting is that each UNG campus has its own special traditions that make it unique,” Jacobs told me. “Each campus is equally important; each student is equally important. None are the same, each has its role in the success at UNG.”

UNG’S IMPACT

UNG’s enrollment is near 20,000 and has seen a 23 percent increase since 2013. Now the sixth-largest university in the University System of Georgia, it enrolls students from 145 Georgia counties, 46 states, Washington DC and Puerto Rico, and 87 countries. According to Jacobs, 95 percent of UNG students are Georgia residents.

The university’s annual economic impact on the region climbed to a record \$755 million in 2021. In addition, research expenditures, the national standard for measuring research activity, will likely surpass \$2.23 million this year— a 36 percent increase over 2016. This growth in research activity and the expanded scope of graduate degree programs have placed UNG on a trajectory to be classified as a Doctoral/Professional University by the Carnegie Commission in 2024.

In fact, a recent report shows that UNG is among the top 20 percent of universities in the nation for economic mobility, an indicator of how well UNG serves low- and moderate-income students. “Key elements of this success are our affordability, the low amount of student borrowing to pay for college and getting students to graduation on target and on time,” Jacobs emphasizes.

She is also acutely aware of the many challenges facing students today and believes the institution is well-positioned to meet them. One of her top priorities, for example, is increasing scholarship support for students. “At a time when many colleges and universities are losing donors at dramatic levels, the number of donors to UNG grew more than 15 percent last year, and new gifts and commitments to the UNG Foundation this year will be more than \$23 million,” she notes.

IMPRESSIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

UNG has seen amazing change over the years. The \$35 million, 86,000-square-foot Cottrell Center for Business, Technology and Innovation opened this academic year, providing a new home for the business program that accounts for nearly 25 percent of the enrollment across all campuses.

The Doctorate in Education (Ed.D.) program is fully online; it is geared toward professionals in higher education. And most UNG graduate-level education programs have moved online because they tend to serve students who are working professionals and need the convenience of online instruction.

There are other major highlights:

- ▶ Physical therapy, nursing and teacher education are all fields that call for state certification exams, and the university has performed in the 95-to-100 percent pass rate on those.
- ▶ UNG has partnered with Northeast Georgia Health System on an accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program that will increase the number of nurses in the region by 280 over the next five years.
- ▶ This year, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked UNG as the No. 1 “Best Value School” and as the No. 1 “Best Colleges for Veterans” among public regional universities in Georgia.
- ▶ UNG was named as a national top-producer of Fulbright Students for the fifth consecutive year.
- ▶ A record 34 UNG cadets were named Distinguished Military Graduates last year, with nine ranked in the top 10 percent of the national Army ROTC class of nearly 7,000 cadets.
- ▶ UNG commissioned 123 cadets as second lieutenants into the regular Army, Army National Guard, and

Army Reserve in 2021-22, exceeding any other year in university history.

- ▶ UNG placed sixth out of 445 universities and colleges nationally with 46,303 total points in the 2022 National Security (NSA) Codebreaker Challenge and was the highest-finishing senior military college in the competition. With Georgia Tech in first place, Oregon State University and the University of California Santa Cruz rounded out the top three spots.

WHAT’S NEXT?

As Bonita Jacobs winds down her career, the University System of Georgia’s Board of Regents is conducting a national search for her replacement. Jacobs, who has children in North Carolina and Texas, plans to stay in Dahlonega. “We love it here, and want to stay here,” she says. “As for me, I plan to do some writing, teaching and finding other ways to stay active. I am also looking forward to having more time to read.”

As for the future of her beloved university, she leaves with her head held high. There is no doubt UNG will continue to innovate, serve students and hold strong to the traditions that have carried them for 150 years.

Cindy Morley is a staff writer for James and InsiderAdvantage Georgia.

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Austin Seidel is a member of UNG’s Corps of Cadets pursuing a bachelor’s degree in cybersecurity. A recipient of the Georgia Military Service Scholarship, which is valued at more than \$85,000 for college expenses at UNG, Seidel will commission into the Georgia Army National Guard when he graduates.

Each year, 42 Georgia high school seniors receive this prestigious scholarship to attend UNG.

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Loganville, Georgia

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Big Bets & Bigger Dividends

Investing in People-Centered Education Systems

BY MATT SMITH

Thirty years ago, state leaders identified low educational attainment as a long-term threat to Georgia's economic competitiveness. In response, the General Assembly created the Georgia Lottery, which funds a pre-Kindergarten program for four-year-olds and the HOPE Scholarship and Grant programs for individuals enrolled in post-secondary education. To date, these programs have expanded access to high-quality educational opportunities for over 3.7 million Georgians and served as key components of attracting individuals and businesses to the Peach State.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a similar opportunity to reinvent the state's education and workforce systems to ensure they meet the needs of all Georgians, especially the 20 percent living in poverty and 45 percent who have not earned a post-secondary credential. In the 2023 edition of the *Top Ten Issues to Watch*, the Georgia Partnership for Excellence calls on state and local leaders to maximize this opportunity by investing in big bets—initiatives that reconfigure structures, systems and investments to increase personal prosperity, community resilience and state economic security.

The large-scale system changes inspired by big bets will contribute to attaining a new, audacious North Star—ensuring 65 percent of Georgians aged 25 to 64 have earned a post-secondary credential by 2033. State and local leaders will achieve this goal by placing individual and community needs at the center of

important decisions and re-inventing strategies when they fail to align with state needs. To that end, the *Top Ten* outlines three big bets that leaders should consider to reach the North Star goal.

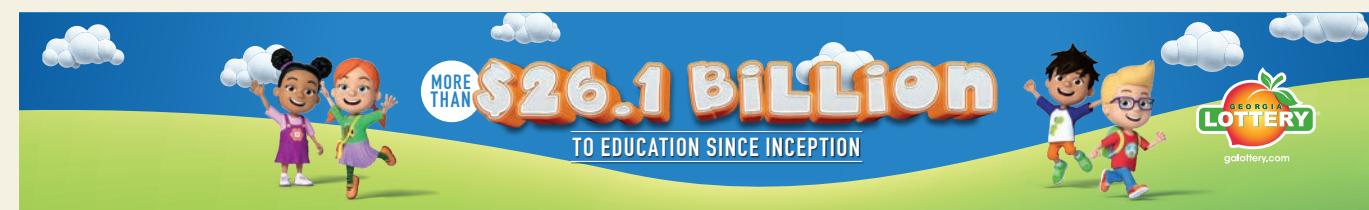
BIG BET № 1

A Statewide Child Development
and School Readiness Plan

Building a strong foundation during children's early years is critical for their successful transition into kindergarten and their development into proficient readers by the end of third grade. For children and youth, the most important academic milestone is reading at a proficient level by the end of third grade. Children who are not proficient readers at this juncture are four times less likely to graduate from high school than their peers who are proficient readers. Moreover, because reading is fundamental to adult functioning, low literacy affects lifelong earning potential, employment odds, access to health care, and life expectancy.

Gaps in reading proficiency are present long before children enter kindergarten. Since nonacademic factors like low parental education, community poverty, and lack of access to health care widen these gaps, a statewide strategy should also ensure greater access to early education, public health, and social services that foster an environment conducive to child development.

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Moreover, state agency and nonprofit leaders in the child development space should identify shared goals, coordinate investments, and, most importantly, design and execute a unified delivery plan that provides greater assurance that vulnerable children receive the education, health, and family services and supports necessary to be ready for school and life.

BIG BET № 2

Preparing High School Students for Enrollment, Employment, or Enlistment

While over 84 percent of Georgia's Class of 2022 graduated high school within four years, less than one-third of Georgia high school seniors in the Class of 2022 (30 percent) met the ACT college-readiness benchmarks in English, mathematics, reading, and science. This is significant because students who do not meet academic benchmarks are less likely to earn a college degree on time. In fact, on average, each unmet benchmark decreases graduation rates by about 8 percent for four-year students and 3 percent for students attending community and technical colleges.

To better prepare students for post-secondary opportunities, local school systems should develop—and state leaders should support—simple, transparent and

While over 84 percent of Georgia's Class of 2022 graduated high school within four years, less than one-third of Georgia high school seniors in the Class of 2022 met the ACT college-readiness benchmarks . . .

open-ended instructional systems that allow students to demonstrate skills mastery through diploma seals, badges, micro-credentials and other performance assessments.

To execute this vision, the Georgia Partnership recommends state and local leaders 1) create readiness milestones in math, English, science, and writing in the eighth, 10th, and 11th grades; 2) personalize and accelerate instruction based on students' status compared to these milestones; and, 3) use these data to provide students with proactive and personalized post-secondary advisement. In this case, the big bet involves creating a more student-centered, workforce-aligned approach to teaching and learning.

BIG BET № 3

Ensuring Multiple Pathways to Economic Prosperity for Recent High School Graduates and Working Adults

In May 2016, over 103,000 Georgians graduated from high school. Five years later, by 2021, only 36.9 percent of those graduates had earned a post-secondary credential. Of the remaining members of the Class of 2016 who had not earned a post-secondary credential:

- About one in seven graduates (13.8 percent) of the Class of 2016 remained enrolled in post-secondary programs in 2021.
- Nearly half (49.3 percent) of the 2016 cohort was not enrolled in post-secondary education and had never earned a post-secondary credential.

For Georgia to remain competitive on the global stage, state leaders will need to invest in strategies that not only motivate traditional college-going students, but also reconfigure systems that engage and support disconnected youth and working adults to enter post-secondary programs.

State leaders should use existing system assets to build a statewide post-secondary and workforce strategy that transcends sector-based decisions and governance. Expanding access to all types of credential programs could provide a way for all Georgians, especially nontraditional students, adult learners, disengaged youth, and low-income residents, to fully participate in the state's economic prosperity.

THE DRIVE TO 65

State and local leaders have ten years to achieve the North Star goal of 65 percent post-secondary attainment. The recommendations offered in this article demonstrate that big bets are distinguished by shifts and attitudes and mindsets as much as they are by radically altered systems and investments.

The recommended changes rarely require a change in public policy; rather, the reforms should encourage greater collaboration and crisper public messaging to build awareness of education and workforce opportunities. For example, the private sector, state, and local leaders should think about how to insulate education and workforce systems from outside disruption and instability. Meeting the ever-evolving needs of individuals, communities, and the workforce should produce big dividends by ensuring more Georgians can access high-quality education and workforce training.

Matt Smith is the Director of Policy and Research, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education.



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“SKILLS FIRST”

How Delta is Changing the Way It Views Talent

by Patrick Hickey

As the global economy continues to evolve, companies are changing the way they identify and develop talent to build their workforce. A new generation of Americans are learning that the traditional four-year college path may not necessarily benefit them the way it did their parents, and likewise companies in a range of industries small and large are discovering that they need to change the way they upskill and reskill in the 21st century.

For Delta Air Lines that means a full-on cultural shift to a “skills-first” talent mindset, one that focuses the tangible qualities and characteristics that are most important for determining success. As part of its shift in philosophy the airline has removed the four-year degree requirement from more than 90 percent of Delta jobs. That achievement feeds in directly to the company’s commitment to equity in the workforce; giving frontline employees the opportunity to move up in the company, removing economic barriers that once would have put a hard ceiling on those embarking on non-traditional career paths. Studies show that skills-first hiring is five times more predictive of a person’s future performance than their educational background.

“Delta’s frontline employees are our most diverse population. We know they bring invaluable skillsets and expertise,” says Ashley Black, Delta’s Managing Director of Equity Strategies. “We also know that a variety of barriers to college degrees have for too long kept certain roles out of reach. We’re working to bridge the gap through new programs so that we don’t continue to miss out on this vital talent.”

Apprenticeships

Delta’s commitment to developing its own frontline talent from within is apparent in its internal apprenticeship program, which works to identify, upskill, and promote employees to higher positions within the company. “Apprentices” in the program take on new responsibilities within departments like human resources, information technology and revenue management, spending up to two years “earning while learning” as they develop new skills and slowly begin their formal transition into a higher role.

The immersive experience offers hands-on mentorship and specific skills-based training that a modern airline relies on in 2023 and beyond.

Delta Analytics Academy

The flipside of the apprenticeship program is the Delta Analytics Academy, an Atlanta-based partnership with Georgia State University that offers three-semester program to selected employees to be able to enter the company’s high tech analytics department without the need for traditional education and all the costs— financial and otherwise— associated with college. Delta says they plan to expand the academy to all U.S.-based employees in the future with the goal of filling 25 percent of its analytics positions with former frontline workers.

Patrick Hickey is the office manager as well as a writer for InsiderAdvantage Georgia and James magazine.



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BY BAKER OWENS

Nestled in the mountains of north Georgia, some 20 minutes from Brasstown Bald (Georgia's highest peak), sits Young Harris College. Named after its benefactor Judge Young L.G. Harris, who also gave his name to the surrounding town, the college is a private, Methodist-affiliated liberal arts school with more than 1,400 students.

For many Georgians the school is often identified with one very high-profile cheerleader over the past 50 years: the late former governor and U.S. senator Zell Miller. Miller received his associate degree from Young Harris in 1950 and later taught history there before getting into politics. Miller even wrote a history of the school called "The Miracle of Brasstown Valley," and the circumstances that led a Methodist circuit-rider minister to have a dream of a school for the people living in Appalachia.

Former Georgia Secretary of State Cathy Cox was the college president from 2007 to 2017 before moving to Mercer. After a short interim, Drew Van Horn was appointed president—and he was very familiar with small, Methodist Appalachian schools, having previously served for nine years as president of Brevard College in North Carolina.

During his time at Brevard, Van Horn saw an increase in first-year student enrollment by 50 percent and improved student retention by 40 percent. He also led the college's first capital campaign that raised \$19 million and helped to create three new academic programs. Van Horn also had a stint as vice president of institutional advancement at Lenior-Rhyne University in Hickory, North Carolina, that raised more than \$65 million—surpassing their goal by \$1.5 million. Additionally, he also worked for nearly 10 years in student- and development-related roles at his alma mater Elon University.

Van Horn is the youngest of three boys from the mountains of North Carolina. "My father dropped out of school in the fourth grade because of the depression. But he and mom wanted us to be able to have a college education," said Van Horn. "But I was the first of the three boys, even though I'm the youngest, to go to college."

And I was able to do so through a basketball scholarship to Elon University."

Van Horn found his calling to university administration early—thus his extensive record, earning his M.Ed. from Campbell and a Ph.D. in education from the University of South Carolina. "The college experience opened my eyes to a whole new world of what was possible," said Van Horn. "So I endeavored to really make an impact in higher education, especially in the lives of kids who are like me, first-generation college students, but also the underserved population that don't really get a break every now and then."

Originally, Van Horn's goal was to be a vice president of a college by the age of 50. He accomplished that goal at age 36. Then he set a new goal. Become a college president by age 50. When he became the president of Brevard, he was 41.

continued on page 74



DREW VAN HORN



Van Horn's first experience with Young Harris was during his time at Brevard. At the time, Young Harris was still a two-year college but was working on becoming a four-year school. Van Horn's assistant called his office and said that the former governor of Georgia was on the phone. It was Miller, and he and a group of trustees wanted to pick Van Horn's brain a bit on the best way for Young Harris to transition from a two- to a four-year institution. When Cox left the presidency in 2017, Van Horn says he "put my name in the hat because of one, the mission of the institution, and two, the experience that I had had with Young Harris. And it just kind of worked out." He was hired to take over from Cox. "It goes back to my commitment to small church-related private, higher education institutions, and Young Harris just fits right in its mission of what my whole life has been devoted to," he emphasizes.

Van Horn's main priority is something that a lot of small, private institutions had to consider over the past decade: "The first priority for any small college is to say, are we viable? Or are we sustainable?" That is indeed something for small colleges to consider. In fact, one study shows that since 2004, more than 800 colleges have closed shop. For schools like Young Harris, with similarities in size and history, with declining support from religious institutions and the explosion of larger schools like the University of Georgia or Cox's current home at Georgia College and State University, the last couple decades have been difficult. Without proper planning, a college can find itself in precarious circumstances very quickly. It's something akin to that old saying about bankruptcy, "At first you go bankrupt slowly, then all at once." Some slowly declining

admission rates, lower application rates, for a school with only 300 or so students per class. Then one year there is a 30 percent drop in applications, not a huge number of students but that could be another big drop in the drip, drip that many schools have faced over the last few decades. "The college had made the transition as a well-known two-year school to a four-year institution. So we focused our efforts on increasing the awareness of Young Harris as a viable and needed four year institution," said Van Horn. "And it was very, very successful. We were seeing growth, we were expanding our programs in the appropriate way. And then Covid hit. Like all institutions, the pandemic has impacted the industry of higher education and the students that are in high school. So we focused on the New American College model of higher education. It basically says colleges need to look at their regions to identify what are the needs within that region, and then to do everything they can to help meet those needs." Young Harris shaped its academic programs to what was needed in the north part of Georgia, the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee. It worked very closely with the business community to determine what it was that they could offer to help business and economic development to be successful in their goals and missions. "We have been very successful. We have seen a growth in Georgia students attending and the academic quality of our kids has increased. We haven't really done that on our own, but it does mean that we're registering in the mindset of a lot of students now as a viable option," said Van Horn.

Now five years into his tenure as president, Van Horn has overseen increasing enrollment—the largest ever—at Young Harris. Some 85 percent of students are naturally from Georgia, but 32 countries were represented last year at the school. Asked what sets Young Harris apart, Van Horn points to two things. "Being a part of the Methodist Church we are committed to the Wesleyan tradition of higher education. That means all folks have worth and meaning, and we strive to have students have open minds and warm hearts. That's what the Wesley brothers went forward with and that really drives our educational aspect. We have that kind of environment where our faculty, although many of them do research, are here to teach. They are very engaged with our students." "The second thing that sets us apart is our location. We're in the beautiful Enchanted Valley, at the base of Brasstown Bald. We've got this beautiful environment all around us and students who are looking for an institution where they can really develop friendships. They're not sidetracked by what's going on in a bigger city, but they can be in communion with faculty members who care."

Baker Owens is a staff writer for James and InsiderAdvantage Georgia.



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RANK “Ranked Choice Voting” DEAD LAST FOR GEORGIA

A

laska and Maine have implemented “ranked choice voting,” a confusing, chaotic method of voting. Georgia should not follow suit.

“Ranked choice” really should be referred to as “rigged choice,” since it effectively disenfranchises voters and allows marginal candidates not supported by a majority of voters to win elections.

While far-left donors like George Soros and infamous crypto-king Sam Bankman-Fried have pushed hard for ranked choice, the system is too much for many card-carrying liberals. California’s former Gov. Jerry Brown (D) and current Gov. Gavin Newsome (D) both vetoed bills expanding ranked choice voting in the state, with Brown saying it is “overly complicated and confusing” and “deprives voters of genuinely informed choice.”

In ranked choice voting, voters don’t vote just for the candidate they want to win the race. Instead, they are supposed to rank all of the candidates, from their top pick to their least favorite, even if their last choice is someone they would never vote for or even know much about.

If no candidate wins a majority in the initial count, the candidate with the fewest number of votes gets dropped from the ballot, and the people who selected that candidate as their top choice automatically have their votes changed to their second choice. The ballots are then counted again (and again) until one candidate is finally awarded a majority of votes, even though those votes may be the second, third, fourth or last choice of most voters.

This rigs the system to allow candidates with only marginal support to win elections.

That’s exactly what happened in the 2009 mayoral election in Burlington, Vermont. In a race with four candidates, a third-party candidate initially received only 29 percent of the vote, coming in second behind the Republican candidate in the first two rounds of



HANS VON SPAKOVSKY

vote tabulation. The third-party candidate was declared the winner in the third round, even though he was not the first choice of nearly three-quarters of the voters. This result led the citizens of Burlington to jettison the system.

One of the worst problems with this confusing form of voting is what is called “ballot exhaustion.” In races with multiple candidates, many voters do not rank all the candidates. In a race with five candidates, for example, voters may rank only two candidates and ignore the three candidates they don’t like. *continued on page 78*

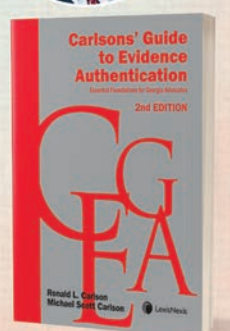
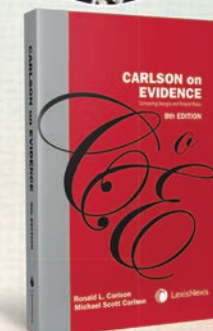
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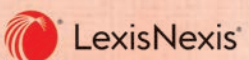


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But, if the two ranked candidates are eliminated in the first two rounds of tabulation, those voters' ballots are thrown out by election officials—and they will have no say in the remaining rounds of tabulation.

This ballot exhaustion disenfranchises voters and leads to the election of candidates like the third-party candidate in Burlington who are not the first choice of a majority of voters. The only majority they've won is a majority of whatever votes were left in the final round of tabulation.

Incumbent U.S. Rep. Bruce Poliquin (R) received the most first-choice votes in the 2018 congressional election in Maine, but lost to Jaren Golden (D) in the second round of ballot tabulation after the votes for two other third-party candidates were redistributed and the ballots of thousands of voters who had not ranked all four candidates were thrown out.

Frontrunners in ranked-choice contests may wind up losing in later rounds because, as one 2015 study found, "a substantial number of voters either cannot or choose not to rank multiple candidates." Many "opt to cast a vote for their top choice, neglecting to rank anyone else."

Ballot exhaustion played out again in the 2021 New York mayor's race. With 10 mayoral candidates on the ballot, it took eight rounds of vote tabulation over two weeks to determine the winner, Eric Adams. But by the eighth round, more than 140,000 ballots of voters had

been disenfranchised, their ballots thrown out because they had not ranked all of the candidates.

And the same thing happened in the 2022 U.S. House election in Alaska. It took three rounds of vote counting until the Democratic candidate was declared the winner over two Republican candidates. Over 15,000 ballots were thrown out and not counted in the third round, again, because those voters had not ranked all of the candidates in the race.

In the electoral process used in Georgia, like many other states, if no candidate in a general election wins a majority of the votes cast, the top two vote-getters compete in a runoff election several weeks later. This gives voters time to reeducate themselves about the two finalists and make a final decision.

Runoff elections also guarantee that the winner has a genuine mandate from a majority of the voters—a crucial factor in a democratic system where more and more voters distrust the government.

Ranked choice voting is a confusing, overly complicated gimmick—one that allows candidates with only marginal support the ability to win elections. This is a reckless "reform" that would make the electoral system much worse.

A former member of the Federal Election Commission, former Atlantan Hans von Spakovsky is a senior legal fellow in The Heritage Foundation's Meese Center for Legal and Judicial Studies and manager of the think tank's Election Law Reform Initiative.



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