

{{FirstName or 'Friends'}} --

With just **five legislative days left in the 2024 session**, the pace has been picking up and in addition to moving some solid bills, we're seeing more of the backroom shenanigans and subterfuge that characterizes the end of a biennium.



Any bill that does not pass by midnight on Sine Die will need to be redrafted and introduced in 2025, so the tension is running as high, as are the stakes.

Here's the good, the bad, and the ugly of what went down under the Gold Dome this week.

PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Close followers of Georgia state politics may recall that **SB 233**, a bill which would **allow public money to be diverted to unaccountable private schools in the form of a \$6,500 voucher**, [failed to pass a House floor vote](#) on the final day of the 2023 session.

After sitting on the bill all session as revisions were made and Republican defectors were pressured, **SB 233** came back for a second House floor vote on Thursday morning. [This time it passed](#), though with the narrowest margin I've ever seen in the Georgia General Assembly. (A bill needs a constitutional majority of votes from the 180 member House of Representatives to pass. **It garnered exactly 91 yes votes**, with members from both parties voting no.)



EDUCATION

Georgia House votes for wider access to school vouchers, amid criticism



[Click here to read full article](#)

Private school vouchers are a popular issue in conservative politician circles, and have been pushed in state legislatures nationwide under the banner of “school choice” and with the ostensible goal of “rescuing” low-income students from “failing” public school systems.

EDUCATION

One Year In, Arizona's Universal School Vouchers Are a Cautionary Tale

They're a costly form of welfare for the wealthy that hurts rural and low-income students. They provide no educational accountability and lead to state-funded discrimination.

OPINION | Dec. 18, 2023 •

Beth Lewis and Sharon Kirsch, Arizona Mirror



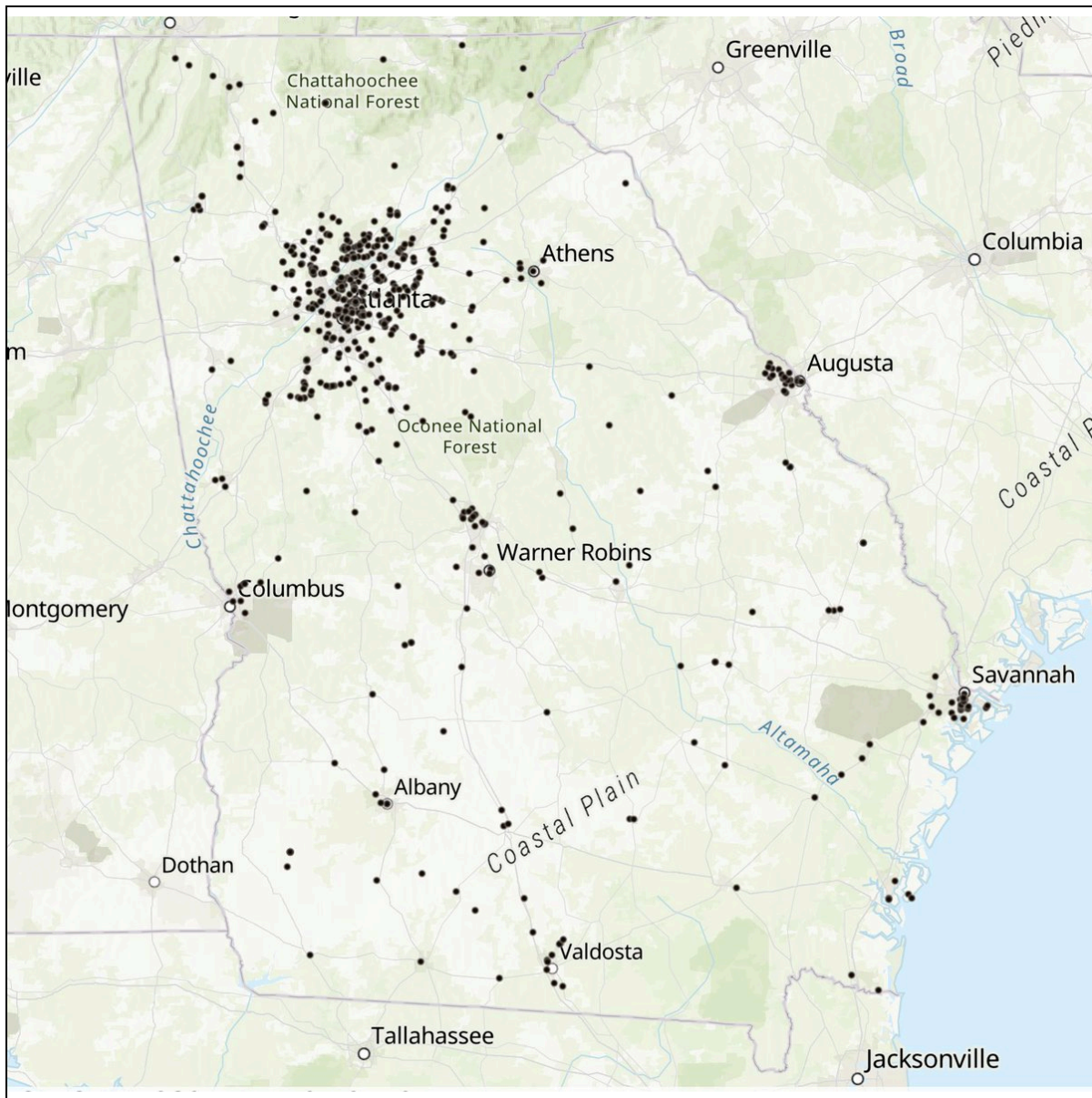
[Click here to read full article](#)

What we have in fact seen around the country in states that have passed private school vouchers is that they are costly, predominantly accessed by wealthy families while hurting rural and low-income students, and channel public money into private schools with little to no accountability.

The latest version of **SB 233** has taken some of the lessons learned from other states into account, **adding some guardrails in place and sweetening the package** with a teacher pay raise and increased resources for Pre-K services.

However, at core, it remains a public subsidy for private schools that, regardless of a \$6,500 voucher, have no obligation to accept any student who applies and can discriminate for any reason, including poor academic performance, religion, or a family's inability to pay the balance of the tuition. **“School choice” means that the schools have all the choice, not the families.**

Further, even with the offer of vouchers, **private school may not be a practical option for many of the students in the lowest performing schools.** Below is a map showing every private school in the state of Georgia.

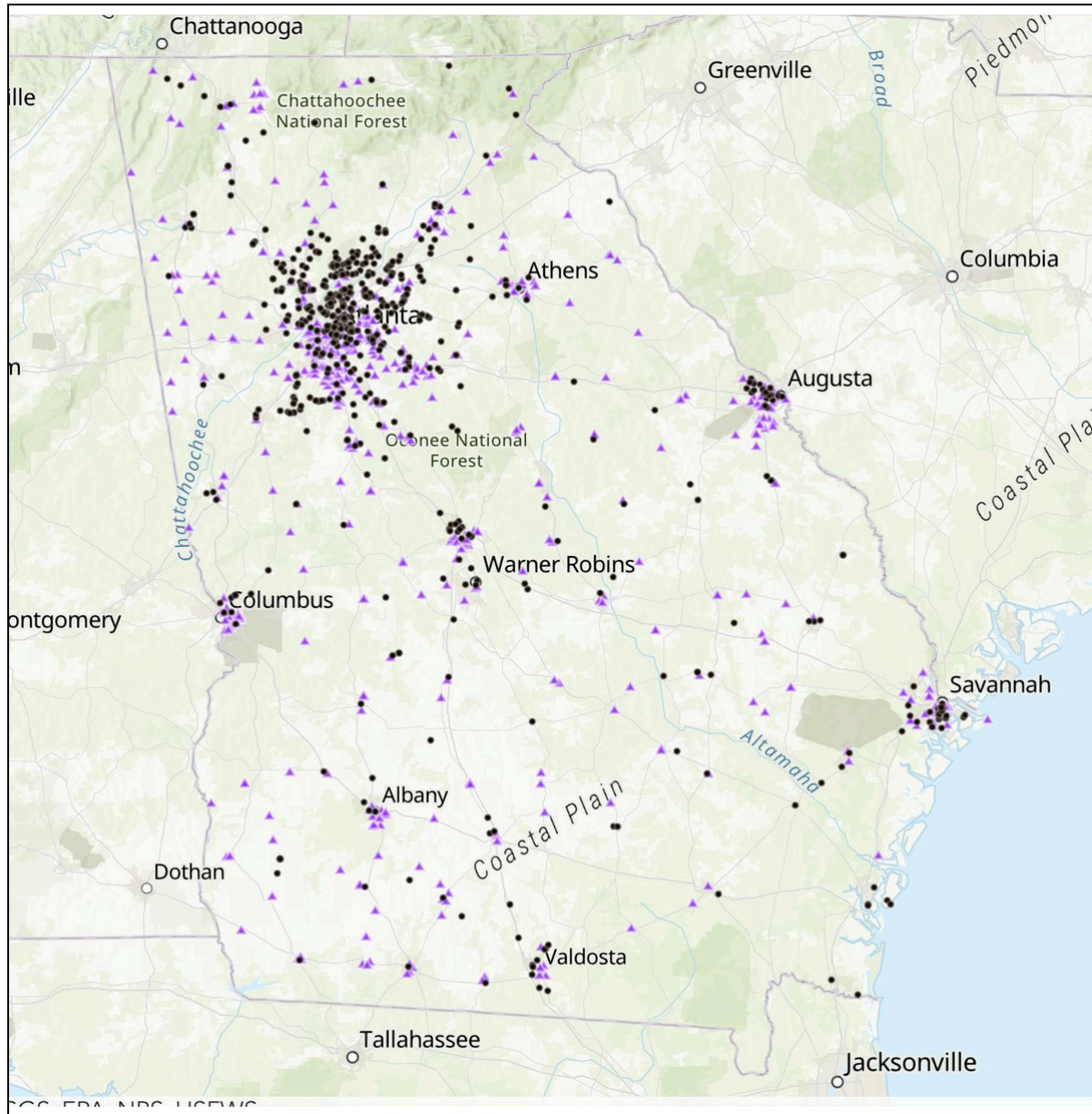


Source: [Dispersed Private Schools by GA Senate and House Districts - IDRA Map](#)

As you can see, the majority of private schools are clustered in metro regions, while **there are large swaths in rural areas with little to no access to a private school at all.** (This is particularly relevant given that private schools, unlike public schools, are not obligated to provide student transport.)

Now here is an overlay of Georgia's public schools (black dots) over **Georgia's schools performing in the bottom 25%**, the population of which would be

available for school vouchers under **SB 233**.



Source: [Dispersed Private Schools by GA Senate and House Districts - IDRA Map](#)

School vouchers, which would draw even more money out of these struggling school systems while students have little to no reasonable options for quality private alternatives, **sell out our rural communities and the schools that serve them.**

As **SB 233** was significantly modified in the House, it will still have to return to the Senate for an **agree/disagree vote** to the changes. As the Senate trends significantly more conservative than the House, they may well disagree to some of the temporizing edits, resulting in the bill being sent to a **conference**

committee. In that event, **there may be one more chance to kill this bill.**
We will know more at the start of the week.

SAFE STORAGE TAX CREDIT



After a testy first hearing, [HB 971](#), a bill offering up to a **\$300 tax credit for purchase of firearm safe storage equipment (e.g. a gun safe) and/or a gun safety training course**, passed readily out of the Senate Finance committee on Monday afternoon.

It now heads to the Senate Rules committee, and if it gets put on the Senate Rules calendar **could come up for a floor vote as soon as this week.**

GEORGIA RECORDER 

GOVERNMENT/POLITICS ENERGY/ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION HEALTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE CIVIL RIGHTS & IMMIGRATION ELECTION 2024

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Tax credit for gun safety devices nears vote by full Georgia Senate

BY: AMIRA DANIEL - MARCH 14, 2024 4:31 PM



 The concept of using a tax incentive to spur safer firearm storage gained broader appeal in Georgia after a gun rights advocacy group, GA2A, came out in support of a Democrat-sponsored bill that would create a \$300 income tax credit for safe storage devices. Rich Legg/Getty Image

[Click here to read full article](#)

While a tax credit to incentivize purchase and use of firearm safe storage equipment **may seem like a modest measure** when it comes to mitigating gun violence, we have to recognize the landscape we're in, and more importantly, how much it has changed.

Even just a few years ago, we never would have seen *any* gun safety legislation even heard in committee in Georgia's Republican majority legislature. Last year, after years of hard work, [HB 161](#), the Pediatric Health Safe Storage Act, was heard in a House Public Safety subcommittee. Now this year, [HB 971](#), passed nearly unanimously in a House floor vote, flanked by Republican cosponsors and leadership support.

Here [I speak with 11 Alive News' Doug Richards](#) on **the progress we've made on the issue of gun safety legislation** in the past three years since the March 16th mass shooting in Atlanta.



[Click here to watch full video](#)

Big change consists of many small steps. Now let's get **HB 971** to the Senate floor, and after that, to the Governor's desk.

ALIEN LAND LAW BILLS

To my count, we have seen **five versions of Alien Land Law bills** pass through both chambers of the Georgia General Assembly this term. This week, **SB 132** (which failed to pass in 2023) got reanimated, as the body of **HB 1093** (which failed to pass by Crossover Day) was stuffed into it.

This substitution was...not subtle.



[Click here to watch full video](#)

It seems clear that, particularly in an election year, and given the heated rhetoric around immigration, border issues, and anti-China sentiment, **Georgia's Republican leadership is determined to pass some version of this bill before session ends.** I would expect to see this bill hit the House floor for a vote sometime this week.

REMEMBERING MARCH 16th, 2021



On Thursday, the AAPI Caucus gathered with community leaders to recognize a sad anniversary.

Nearly three years ago, on March 16th, 2021, a gunman traveled to three Asian-owned businesses and, in a spate of senseless gun violence, murdered eight people.

Of those eight people, six were Asian women.

The events of that horrific day, struck fear and punched a hole at the heart of Georgia's growing AAPI community. Whether or not we knew those we lost that day, this close, and painful, and deeply personal.

But from that tragedy grew something more.

The community knitted together. From anguish grew grace. From pain came strength. And from senseless loss grew purpose.

Nothing or no one can replace those we lost three years ago. But we come together again as a community, honor their memories with our work, and as we do every year, we say their names.



Soon Chung Park

Hyun Jung Grant

Suncha Kim

Yong Ae Yue

Xiaojie Tan

Daoyou Feng

Delaina Yaun Gonzalez

Paul Andre Michels

May our memories of them continue to be a blessing, and may the injustice of these losses continue to fuel the change we need to see.

TEAM AU IN ACTION

Georgia is a vibrant and rapidly diversifying state.

So is our legislature.

Leaders of Georgia’s Legislative Black, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Hispanic Caucuses are therefore proud to welcome you to our first ever **Tri-Caucus Town Hall!**

REP CARL GILLIARD
Chair, Georgia Legislative Black Caucus

REP MICHELLE AU
Chair, Georgia Legislative AAPI Caucus

SEN JASON ESTEVES
Georgia Legislative Hispanic Caucus

TRI-CAUCUS TOWN HALL
Coalition Building in a Rapidly Diversifying State
TUESDAY MARCH 19TH, 6:30 PM

2570 BUFORD HWY NE, ATL 30324
Space limited, RSVP @ tinyurl.com/tricaucus

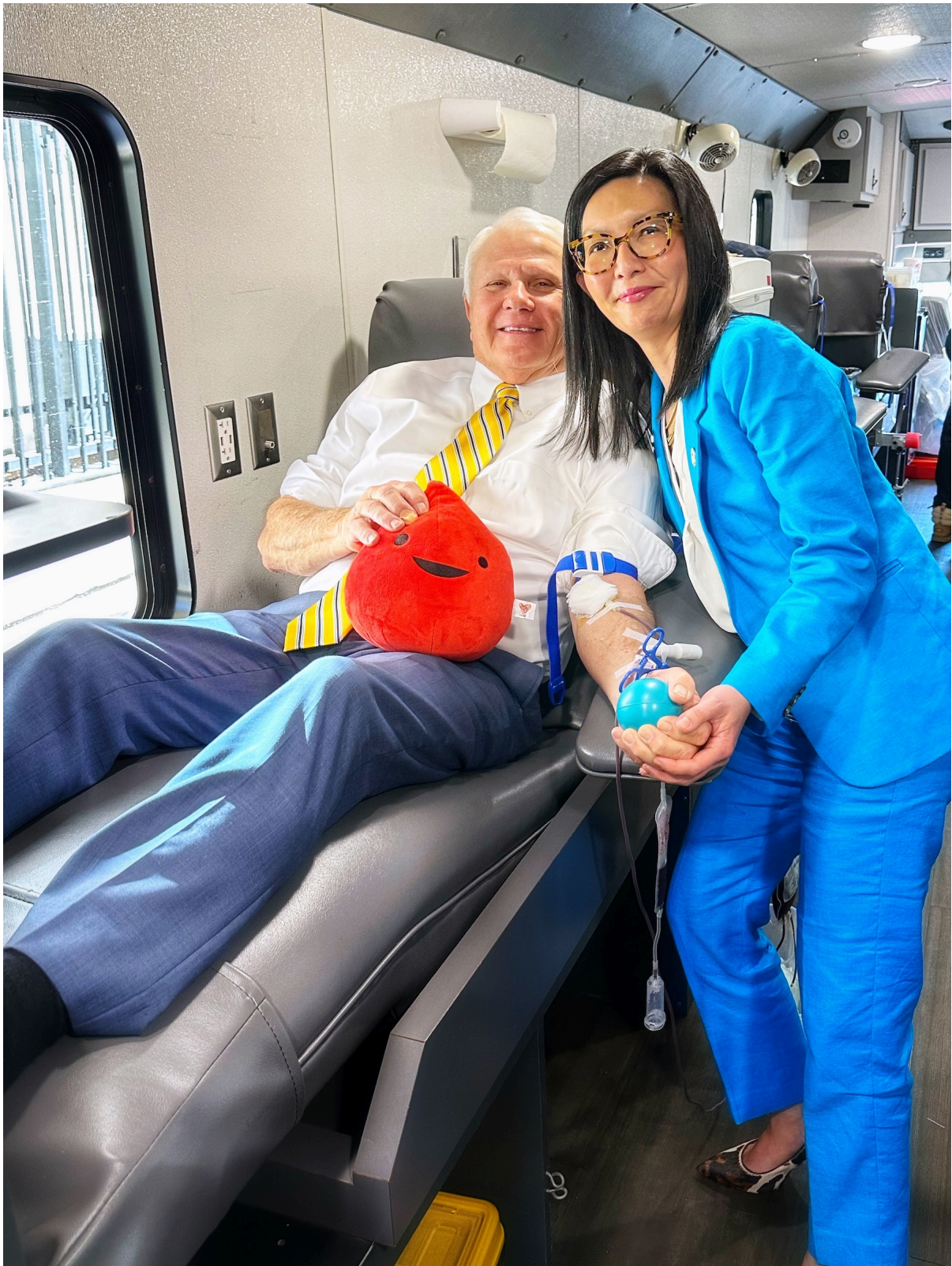
Join us **Tuesday, March 19th, 6:30pm**, at the **Latin American Association (2750 Buford Hwy, Atlanta, GA 30324)**. There, leaders from

all three Caucuses will discuss coalition building, priorities, and discuss what it means to be a leader in a multicultural state like Georgia.

[RSVP here for more information](#). Please note that **all three legislative Caucuses are bipartisan—all are welcome!**

* * *

Team Au usually tries to organize two blood drives during session each year. Our second blood drive will be taking place this week with our partners from **Life South** and some very prominent supporters!



GOLD DOME BLOOD DRIVE
Thursday, March 21st
8:00am - 5:00pm
Mitchell Street (between the Capitol and the CLOB)

This blood drive is (by design) 8 weeks and one day from our last drive, so **if you donated last time you can donate again!**

The nation is undergoing one of the worst blood shortages in a decade, and the effort we make here truly helps a large number of patients requiring blood transfusions in Georgia. *Every unit of whole blood donated, spun into its component parts, can help up to three patients.*

[Appointments are available here](#), or just walk in the day of! (Pro tip: remember to hydrate well before donating.)

* * *

This event is very slightly out of district, but I'm proud to be **returning to my alma mater [Wellesley College](#)** in April to participate in their inaugural [“Renewing Democracy”](#) summit.



Hillary Rodham Clinton '69
Former U.S. Secretary of State

Hillary Rodham Clinton has spent over five decades in public service as an advocate, attorney, First Lady, U.S. Senator, U.S. Secretary of State, and presidential candidat...



Leymah Gbowee
Nobel Peace Prize laureate; Liberian...

Leymah Gbowee, 2011 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, is a peace activist, trained social worker, and women's rights advocate. Ms. Gbowee's leadership of the Women of Liberia...



Maria Ressa
Co-founder and CEO, Rappler

Maria Ressa co-founded Rappler, the top digital-only news site that is leading the fight for press freedom in the Philippines. As Rappler's CEO, Maria has endured constant...



Michelle Au '99
Member, Georgia House of...

Dr. Michelle Au is a member of the Georgia House of Representative serving Georgia's 50th House District, which includes Johns Creek and a portion of Alpharetta. Rep. Au...



Chelsea Miller
Co-founder, Freedom March NYC

Chelsea Miller is one of the leading voices in social change and digital mobilization. After working in the Obama White House in 2016, Chelsea Co-Founded Freedom March NYC,...



Layla Zaidane
President and CEO, Future Caucus

Layla Zaidane is the President & CEO of Future Caucus (formerly Millennial Action Project), the largest nonpartisan organization of young lawmakers in the United States. Future Cauc...

[Click here to read full article](#)

“**Renewing Democracy: Women Leading the Way**” will explore the challenges facing democracy in the U.S. and abroad and highlight the many ways women leaders are working toward democratic renewal.

Speakers will include **Hillary Rodham Clinton '69**, former U.S. secretary of state; **Leymah Gbowee**, Nobel Prize laureate and Liberian peace activist; **Chelsea Miller**, co-founder of Freedom March NYC; **Maria Ressa**, Nobel Prize laureate and co-founder of Rappler; and **Keren Yarhi-Milo**, dean of Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. Also, me for some reason.

[RSVP for the event here.](#)

HOUSE DISTRICT 50 UPDATES

Loved meeting my page **Liberty Wisepearl** this week as she spent some time helping our work in the House chamber!



Liberty is a senior at Northview High School and will be hearing from some of her choice colleges this week! We hope that she decides to take advantage of our incredible HOPE scholarship and stay in Georgia for college, as does, I'm sure, her mom **Nazeera Daewood**. 😊

* * *

The end of session is quickly approaching, so save the date for our annual **Post-Sine Die Town Hall**, where we will review the events of the final weeks of session, what bills passed and failed, and our priority work before next year.

DR. MICHELLE
AU
AUforGA.COM

POST SINE DIE TOWN HALL



**THURSDAY 4/11, 6:30 - 9:30P
AREPITA CAFE
11105 STATE BRIDGE ROAD #160**

POST SINE DIE TOWN HALL

Thursday, April 11th

6:30pm - 9:30pm

Arepita Cafe

11105 State Bridge Rd #160, Alpharetta, GA 30022

[RSVP here](#)

As we are moving straight from session into the heat of the election season, we will combine this Town Hall with a little **meet and greet for newer voters** who would like more of a chance to chat with me one-on-one, and invite some special guests to drop by. Don't miss it!

* * *

Make sure you're [signed up to receive updates](#) on all these projects and more as we continue to ensure that we are best serving everyone in House District 50!

It has never been more important to pay attention to the work of state legislatures, and nowhere is it more evident than in our district, at the epicenter

of the changing electoral face of Georgia, the leading edge of where swing districts are still being fought and flipped.



As always, please **do not hesitate to [reach out to our office](#)** should you need any assistance, or if you have any concerns you'd like me to address on your behalf.

It is my honor to be your voice in the Georgia House of Representatives.

In Service,

W. Mitchell



Paid for by Au for Georgia Inc.

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United States

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