

{{FirstName or 'Friends'}} --

Hard to believe we are coming up on the start of another legislative session in the Georgia General Assembly!

Team Au has been hard at work all year, but as usual the start of the session kicks everything into overdrive. **Let's take a moment to review some priority issues** as we dive into what promises to be a very exciting year in Georgia, as I also bring you up to speed on my work as I continue to represent the 50th District in the Georgia House of Representatives.



I could not do any of this without your support, and I thank you as always for enabling me to do this work in **one of the most competitive districts at the**

heart of the #1 battleground state in the nation.

As legislators are not allowed to fundraise after midnight on Sunday January 7th, **this is the last chance for us to ensure that our campaigns start strong in the Spring.** Thank you as always for the donations that make our work possible.

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Now let's dive in!

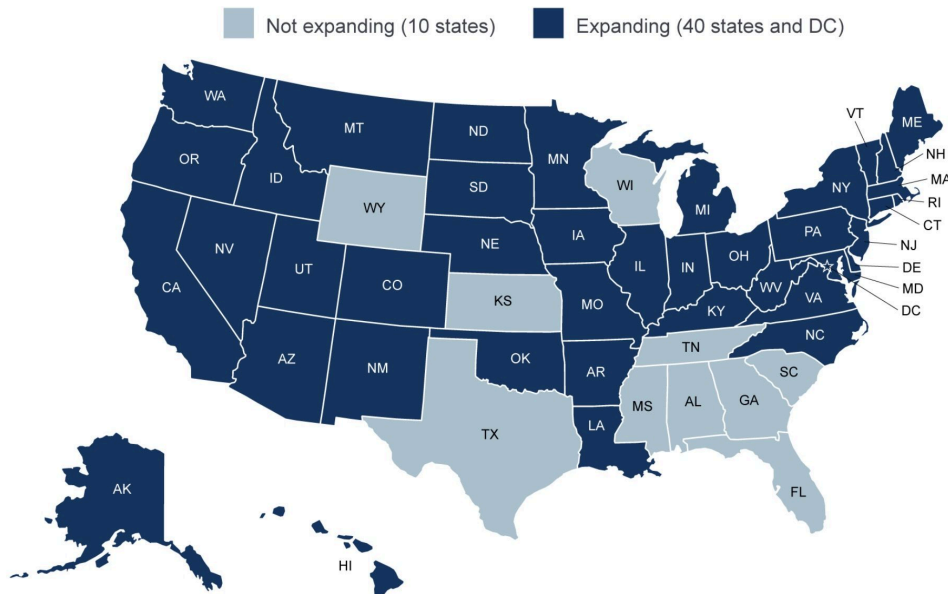
ISSUES TO WATCH IN THE 2024 SESSION

2024 is the second year in the biennium (or two year term) in the Georgia State Legislature, which means that work will ramp up faster, and while many pieces of legislation are already in progress from 2023, we will undoubtedly see some new bills affecting some of the biggest issues we face in the state.

What should we expect?

MEDICAID EXPANSION AND CERTIFICATE OF NEED

State Medicaid Expansion Decisions, March 2023



Notes: Some states use Section 1115 research and demonstration waivers to test policies not allowed under traditional Medicaid, such as imposing higher cost sharing for some expansion enrollees or placing limitations on certain mandatory benefits.

Source: [Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission](#)

Healthcare policy is going to play a central role in the 2024 session, and the issues of Medicaid Expansion and Certificate of Need reform may be advanced as paired initiatives.

As many know, **Georgia is [one of only ten remaining states](#) in the nation that has thus far still refused to expand Medicaid**, an option under 2010's Affordable Care Act that would [avail us of more than a billion dollars in federal funds](#) to cover approximately half a million low-income Georgians who at the moment [cannot afford health insurance yet also do not qualify](#) for Georgia's stringent Medicaid income requirements.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Latest push to expand Medicaid shows promise



Credit: Arvin Temkar/AJC

HEALTH NEWS

By [Ariel Hart](#)

Jan 5, 2024



[Click here to read full article](#)

[There are indications this may change in 2024](#), particularly after we've seen that Governor Kemp's "[Pathways to Care](#)" Medicaid Waiver program [continues to underperform](#), and that Georgia's under-resourced Medicaid redetermination program has resulted in [more than 150,000 children losing their health insurance coverage](#) before the holidays.

[Here I discuss the issue](#) with Democratic Leaders as we evaluate the sobering statistic that Georgia ranks the [third worst state in the nation](#) for [kicking needy children off Medicaid](#), and [how unprepared our Republican leadership has been](#) as we moved into the Medicaid redetermination process this past year.



[Click to watch video](#)

Some of this discussion is speculative, as no definitive piece of legislation has been filed yet, but there is also discussion that a proposal to fully expand Medicaid will be paired with a push to [repeal or revise Georgia's current Certificate of Need \(CON\) Program](#), which requires entities wishing to build a new hospital or medical service center to demonstrate a need for it in the community.

Conservatives and legislative Republicans have long advocated for a complete repeal of CON, while hospitals and health systems voice concern that such repeal allows entities to open up lucrative centers that could cherry pick the most well-compensated forms of care from the patient pool and cannibalize hospital systems, which would face increased financial losses in an already challenging environment.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Jones retreats on hospital overhaul, says lobbyists dangled deal he refused

The LG abandons 2023 push to rewrite health care rules



Credit: Natrice Miller/AJC

POLITICAL INSIDER

By [Greg Bluestein](#)

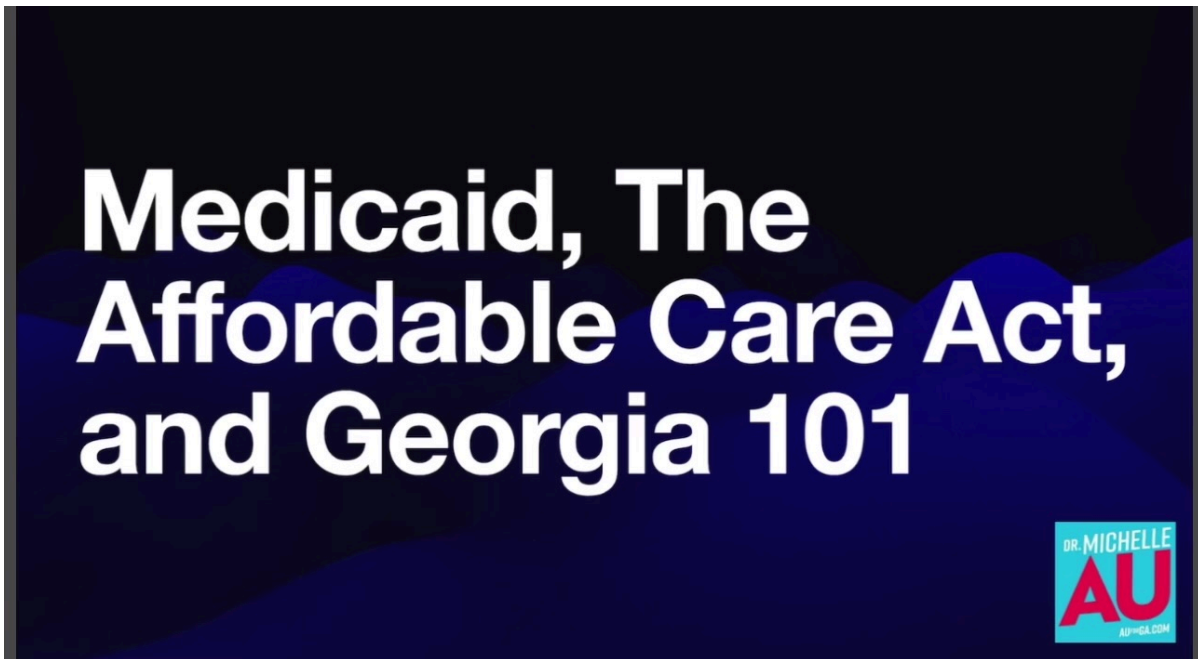
Updated March 25, 2023



[Click here to read full article](#)

It should be noted that [the Lieutenant Governor made CON repeal one of his key priorities last session](#), a controversial push tainted by observations that his family could personally profit tremendously as a result of such a regulatory change. **This measure failed in 2023, but remains viable for consideration in 2024.**

If indeed full Medicaid Expansion becomes conditioned on CON reform or repeal, my opinion is that **this could present a mixed bag for healthcare access and patient care in Georgia**, but I will withhold my judgment on the issue until I see the details of either of these two (still largely theoretical) pieces of legislation.



[Click to watch slideshow](#)

[Recently I made a primer on the history of Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, and Georgia](#), and this is an easy way to get caught up on what is inarguably a complex issue ahead of diving into the legislative session. You can watch the video [here](#), and please feel free to share!

EDUCATION, VOUCHERS, SCHOOL SAFETY

Even prior to the 2024 session gaveling in, schools and education have been an early focus of the work of lawmakers and our constitutional officers. **Two controversial measures stand out.**

**The Atlanta
Journal-Constitution**

Georgia House GOP members break ranks to doom voucher bill



← Caption

Credit: AP

GEORGIA NEWS

By JEFF AMY, Associated Press

Updated March 29, 2023

Rural Georgia Republicans have defied lobbying from Gov. Brian Kemp to vote down a proposed state voucher plan funding private school tuition and home schooling

[Click here to read full article](#)

The last day of the 2023 session ended with the failure of **SB 233**, a bill which sought to **divert public money towards private schools**, and in doing so further disadvantage poor students, rural students, and families of color who could not benefit from this voucher program while their school systems would be further undermined and under-resourced.

Related specifically to HD 50:

- **Only students at public schools performing at the bottom 25% would qualify for these vouchers.** Given our excellent public schools here in Johns Creek and Alpharetta, no students in this district would therefore qualify.
- Further, while the voucher program purports to provide “choice” for poor families, **the \$6500 voucher would cover < 1/4th of the tuition of many private schools in the area**, and it is specious reasoning at best to think that a low-income family could somehow absorb the remaining cost.
- Vouchers are often marketed as a solution for students with special needs. However, **private schools are not required to follow an Individualized Education Plan** — the written plan public schools are obliged to adhere to while teaching students with disabilities. Further,


there is nothing stopping a private school from discriminating against a child's (or their parents') sexuality, religion, or language proficiency.

Further, what we've seen in the months since Sine Die in other states that have passed similar voucher bills is that [such vouchers generally do not help low-income families and students](#), rather end up being paid out to [wealthy families who have *already* been paying for private schools](#).

The New York Times

\$7,200 for Every Student: Arizona's Ultimate Experiment in School Choice

More states are making all students eligible for private school subsidies. In Arizona, it has often benefited wealthier families.

 Share full article



 693



Voucher programs allow families to use state money to pay for private schools, including those that use a religious curriculum. Caitlin O'Hara for The New York Times

[Click here to read full article](#)

While Georgia's voucher bill, SB 233, failed in a House floor vote at the end of last year, **it is not dead**. Immediately after the vote, Republican members put forth a Motion to Reconsider, after which it was [withdrawn and recommitted to the Rules Committee](#), meaning that **the bill could be brought back to the floor and voted on again as early as our first few days back in 2024**. This is a piece of legislation I would continue to watch closely.

Next, school security.

GEORGIA RECORDER

COMMENTARY

Bookman: Turning teachers into guns for hire an absurd answer to school shootings



JAY BOOKMAN

NOVEMBER 2, 2023 1:00 AM



 Lt. Gov. Burt Jones is proposing to arm teachers in the name of school safety. Ross Williams/Georgia Recorder

[Click here to read full article](#)

[State Senator Clint Dixon](#) plans to [introduce a bill](#) that would **offer teachers a stipend of \$10,000 a year if they voluntarily take firearms courses and carry loaded guns into classrooms** while they are teaching our children. Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones insists the legislation would make schools "safer."

Meanwhile, The Professional Association of Georgia Educators has ranked letting non-officers carry guns as *last* among preferred school safety measures. Lisa Morgan, the president of the Georgia Association of Educators, also said her teacher group "categorically" opposes anyone besides certified officers carrying guns in schools.

“Teachers should not be armed in the classroom,” Morgan said. “We are not there to serve as law enforcement and **introducing more firearms into the school is not a way to solve the problem of violence in our schools.**”

I won't dignify this ludicrous piece of legislation with any more seriousness than it deserves, but I will note that **it is particularly troubling to propose a measure that involves loaded weapons around children in a state with no affirmative safe storage requirements.**

“The more guns that are coming into the equation, the more volatility and the more risk there is of somebody getting hurt.”

J. Thomas Manger, president of the Major Cities Chiefs Association⁶

Source: [Linda Darling-Hammond, "More Guns In Schools Is Not The Answer To School Shootings", Forbes.com](#)

Here are the facts about arming staff in schools:

- 1. Students will access these guns*
- 2. Access to a gun triples the risk of death by suicide and doubles the risk of death by homicide*
- 3. Arming teachers is opposed by law enforcement, school resource officers, teachers and parents.*

Meanwhile, **Team Au will continue to advance our slate of gun safety bills**, including [HB 161, the Pediatric Health Safe Storage Act](#), and our recently prefiled bill [HB 855, the Safe Storage Tax Credit Act](#). Look for our next

newsletter in a week where we will reintroduce our bill tracker and update everyone on some promising developments on this and our other priority legislation!

HOUSE DISTRICT 50 UPDATES

[Rep. Scott Hilton](#) and I had the pleasure of hosting **Student Leadership Johns Creek** this November for a visit to the Georgia State Capitol!



What started off just being just a planned tour turned into a mock legislative debate, where students sat at lawmaker's desks and evaluated [HB 191](#), my bill to raise the state cigarette tax. **These future leaders really ran with this assignment and brought their A-game**—I for one was convinced to vote in favor of the bill's passage! 😊

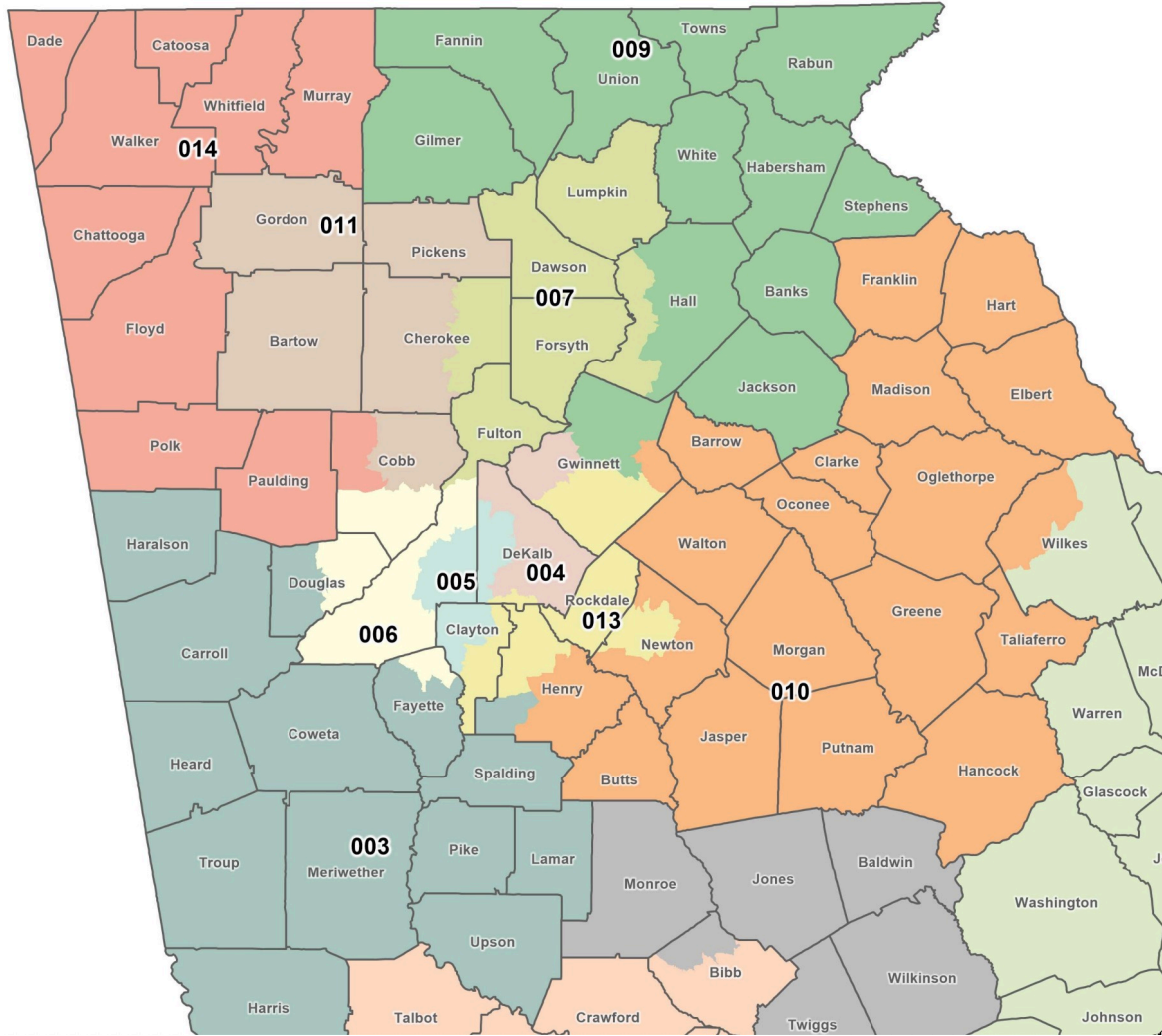


Later that same month I hosted a **Redistricting Town Hall**, where I walked through the federal judge's ruling regarding Georgia's remedial Congressional and state legislative maps, and charted out which areas would need to be reworked to include **additional Black-majority electoral districts**.

[Read more about why we needed to go back for a redistricting special session \(redux\).](#)



Though it was not initially clear what would come of the redistricting special session, in the end **HD 50 was not redrawn, so the borders of our district remain the same.** You can see [the new Congressional, state senate, and state house maps](#) under the “PROPOSED PLANS” tab.



One important thing to note is that HD 50, which was formerly located in GA-07 represented by Rep. Lucy McBath, has been **massively reconfigured to a new 7th district that extends from Sandy Springs all the way up to the Blue Ridge Mountains**. Incumbent Rep. Rich McCormick has announced that he will be running for this Congressional seat, which now heavily favors a Republican candidate.



In December I was honored to present [HR 666](#) (yes, I know) to HD 50's own **Avi Dhyani** and **Carter Fay**, who received the resolution on behalf of the **Georgia High School Democrats**, who have done incredible work engaging and turning out young voters!

We sat for conversation and boba tea at Ding Tea in Johns Creek, where we discussed **issues important to Gen Z Georgians, including a need-based HOPE Scholarship and gun safety laws**. I am so proud of the work these young voters have done here in Georgia, and can't wait to see how they will shape the conversation and election as we move into 2024!



Finally, **thank you to everyone who turned out for our pre-session Town Hall** this Saturday! I have been lucky to have such a highly engaged district, and we were able to highlight some of the top issues to watch for the 2024 legislative session, as well as have conversations about healthcare access, the state surplus, income taxes, vouchers, and school safety.

Our next in-person Town Hall will likely be our pre-Crossover Day briefing, so please follow me on [social media](#) so you can save the date once it's announced!

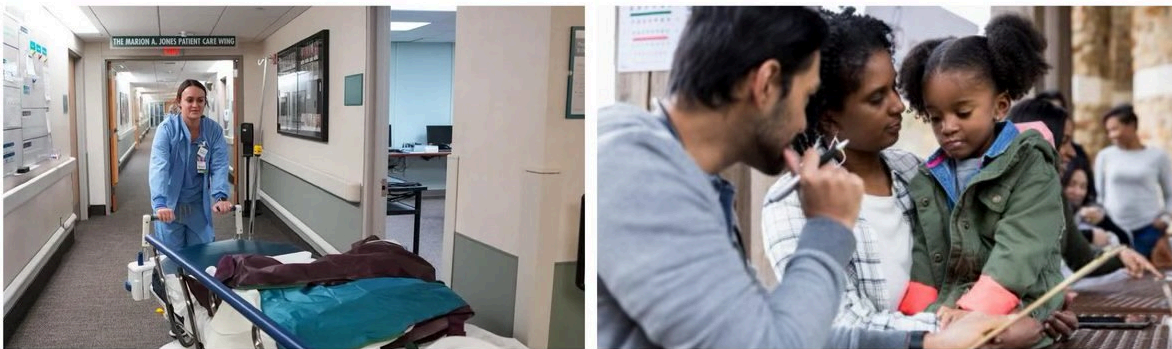
MEDICAID EXPANSION COMMITTEE HEARING

Join us at the Capitol this week for a public hearing of the **Medicaid Expansion Committee**.



**MEDICAID EXPANSION
COMMITTEE HEARING**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10TH
1:00 TO 3:00 PM
COVERDELL LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BLDG 515**



**Wednesday, January 10th, 1:00pm
Coverdell Legislative Office Building, Rm 515
18 Capitol Sq SW, Atlanta**

We've invited an excellent slate of experts in healthcare administration, fiscal policy, public health, direct clinical care, and other state leaders, with the goal of giving a non-partisan, practical, data-driven perspective on the state of healthcare access in Georgia and how Medicaid Expansion could play in.

There will also be a sign-up for public testimony. Open to all!

* * *

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. And

thank you again for [supporting our work](#) before midnight on Sunday 1/7, our fundraising deadline before session starts.

It has never been more important to invest in 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.

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As always, please **do not hesitate to [reach out to our office](#)** should you need any assistance, would like to drop by to visit the Capitol, 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,



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Paid for by Au for Georgia Inc.

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