



Friends --

We have one week left till Crossover Day.

With the exception of Sine Die, which is the last day of the legislative session, **Crossover Day is one of the session’s most crucial milestones**, as it marks the date by which legislation must be passed out of its first chamber in order to “cross over” for consideration in the other. Therefore, the volume of bills being heard in committee and coming to floor vote is increasing exponentially.

Read on and see what we have been up to this last week here at the Capitol...



LEGISLATION AND ISSUES TO WATCH

Our top priority bill for this session is [HB 161](#), The Pediatric Health Safe Storage Act. Guns are the [#1 cause of death in children and teenagers](#) in the United States, and as leaders it is our duty to respond.

BY THE NUMBERS

4.6M

4.6 million American children live in homes with at least one gun that is loaded and unlocked.

Stat

59%

Over the past decade, the firearm suicide rate among children and teens has increased by 59 percent.

Stat

14x

Black children and teens are 14 times more likely than white children and teens of the same age to die by gun homicide.

Stat

3M

Approximately three million American children witness gun violence every year.

Stat

However, **Georgia is a state with some of the most lax gun laws in the country**, and with a [Republican trifecta](#) in the state legislature and governor's office, it has remained difficult to get a single gun safety bill even the courtesy of a hearing in committee.

This inaction is unacceptable. [The overwhelming majority of Georgians support common sense gun safety legislation](#), and if our Republican colleagues can't do their jobs and listen to their constituents, *they don't need to be here at all.*

Let's send them a message. You can contact the Chair and committee members of the [House Public Safety and Homeland Security committee](#) to hear [HB 161](#) and the rest of our slate of gun safety bills, including [HB 44](#) (universal background checks), [HB 45](#) (three day waiting periods for firearm sales), and [HB 135](#) (personal responsibility for unsecured firearms).

We are working with a broad coalition of partners in this fight, including [Moms Demand Action](#), [Everytown for Gun Safety](#), the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), and the [Community Justice Action Fund](#). Brent Bailey and Kimberly Gutierrez from CJAF spoke with us this week about the impact they see in their own communities as they work to end gun violence in communities of color by empowering those most affected to build political power and advocate for policy change.



Our other top priority bills this session, [HB 191](#) and [HB 192](#), deal with **raising the state tax on tobacco and vaping products**. At 37 cents per pack, [Georgia has the second lowest tobacco tax in the nation](#), and the goal of raising the tax would be to both disincentivize a harmful and costly health behavior while also generating revenue that could be reinvested into our public health system to defray smoking-related medical costs.

The good news is that we were able to [get both bills heard](#) in the **Ways and Means subcommittee on Tax Revision** this week. The following organizations came to testify in favor of the bills, and **we are grateful for their help and expertise** in communicating the importance of this incredibly effective public health legislation:

- [The American Cancer Society](#)
- [The American Heart Association](#)
- [Medical Association of Georgia](#)
- [Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies](#)
- [Georgia Academy of Family Physicians](#)
- [Georgia Public Health Association](#)
- [Georgia Society of Clinical Oncology](#)

• [Georgians for a Healthy Future](#)

The marginal news is that **a number of our colleagues seemed quite resistant, and in many moments deeply cynical, about the support behind this bill.** Below is a clip of [Rep. Jason Ridley](#), a Republican from Chatsworth, grilling a representative of the American Cancer Society who came to testify in support of **HB 191.**



GEORGIA RECORDER

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

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS HEALTH

Georgia House proposal for cigarette tax hike to promote public health runs into anti-tax buzzsaw

BY: AALEAH MCCONNELL AND ROSS WILLIAMS - FEBRUARY 24, 2023 1:00 AM



We are well aware that there are those with differing opinions on the importance of mitigating the health harms that result from smoking, and while [the anti-tax sentiment is predictable](#), I want to reiterate that note **we're all paying a smoking tax already**. [Each Georgia household now pays ~\\$900 per year in tax money](#) to cover the health costs of those who choose to smoke. It is this invisible tax that we look to defray, while levying what should be thought of as a **“users fee” on those who choose to engage in this harmful, and ultimately very costly, habit.**

Smoking-Caused Monetary Costs in Georgia	
Annual health care costs in Georgia directly caused by smoking	\$3.69 billion
Medicaid costs caused by smoking in Georgia	\$699.1 million
Residents' state & federal tax burden from smoking-caused government expenditures	\$894 per household
Smoking-caused productivity losses in Georgia	\$10.0 billion

Amounts do not include health costs caused by exposure to secondhand smoke, smoking-caused fires, or use of non-cigarette tobacco products. Productivity losses are from smoking-caused premature death and illness that prevent people from working. Tobacco use also imposes costs such as damage to property.

It is my hope that both HB 191 and HB 192 will come to a subcommittee vote soon, and move along to the full committee, after which point it might be up for consideration to be put on the Rules calendar for a full vote on the House floor.

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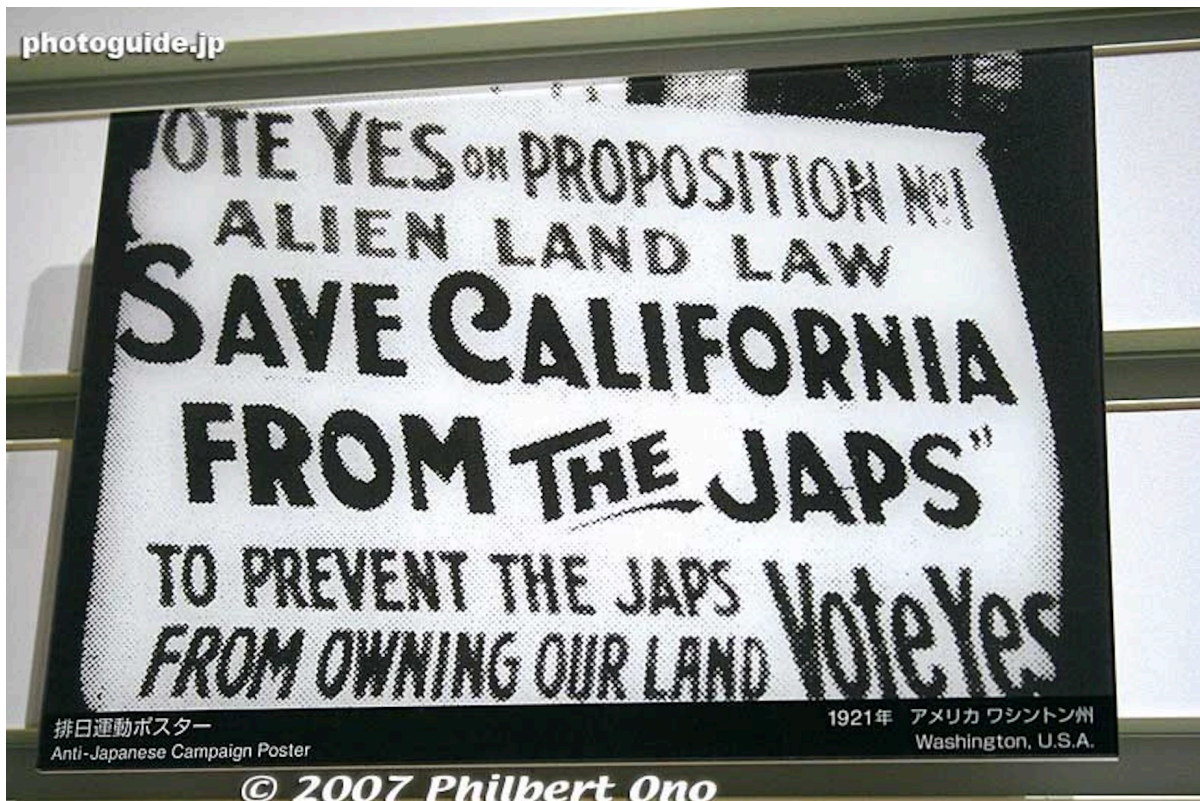
As a member of the legislature, particularly one representing several underrepresented minority groups, **sometimes it's my job not just to try to advance good bills, but also to flag problematic ones.**

In that vein, let's talk about [HB 246](#).

<p>23</p> <p>House Bill 246</p> <p>By: Representatives Momtahan of the 17th, Parsons of the 44th, Dickey of the 145th, Tarvin of the 2nd, Pirkle of the 169th, and others</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A BILL TO BE ENTITLED AN ACT</p> <p>1 To amend Article 2 of Chapter 5 of Title 44 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, 2 relating to conveyances, so as to prohibit China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia, their citizens, 3 and companies owned or operated by them to acquire title to property in this state; to provide 4 for related matters; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other 5 purposes.</p> <p>6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SECTION 1.</p> <p>8 Article 2 of Chapter 5 of Title 44 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to 9 conveyances, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows: 10 <u>*44-5-49.</u> 11 <u>(a) Notwithstanding any other law, the following may not purchase or otherwise acquire</u> 12 <u>title to real property in this state when such property is of a type described in subsection</u> 13 <u>(b) of this Code section:</u> 14 <u>(1) A governmental entity of China, Iran, North Korea, or Russia;</u> 15 <u>(2) A company or entity that is:</u> 16 <u>(A) Headquartered in China, Iran, North Korea, or Russia;</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">H. B. 246 - 1 -</p>	<p>LC 44 2195ER</p> <p>23</p> <p>17 <u>(B) Directly or indirectly held or controlled by the government of China, Iran, North</u> 18 <u>Korea, or Russia; or</u> 19 <u>(C) Owned by or the majority stock or other ownership interest of which is held or</u> 20 <u>controlled by individuals who are citizens of China, Iran, North Korea, or Russia;</u> 21 <u>(3) A company or other entity that is owned by or the majority stock or other ownership</u> 22 <u>interest of which is held or controlled by a company or entity described in paragraph (2)</u> 23 <u>of this subsection; or</u> 24 <u>(4) An individual who is a citizen of China, Iran, North Korea, or Russia.</u> 25 <u>(b) The purchase or acquisition of the following types of property is prohibited by</u> 26 <u>subsection (a) of this Code section:</u> 27 <u>(1) Farms;</u> 28 <u>(2) Property on which food is produced;</u> 29 <u>(3) Property on which energy is produced;</u> 30 <u>(4) Roads and highways;</u> 31 <u>(5) Properties on which telecommunications facilities are located;</u> 32 <u>(6) Properties on which pharmaceuticals are produced;</u> 33 <u>(7) Properties on which personal protective equipment is produced;</u> 34 <u>(8) Multiple tenant properties and developments;</u> 35 <u>(9) Properties on which more than one single-family home is located;</u> 36 <u>(10) Property on which water delivery facilities are located;</u> 37 <u>(11) Property on which fuel delivery or production facilities are located; or</u> 38 <u>(12) Any property located within 50 miles of any facility or installation of the United</u> 39 <u>States military.</u> 40 <u>(c) This Code section shall apply to purchases or other acquisitions of title to real property</u> 41 <u>made on or after September 1, 2023.*</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">H. B. 246 - 2 -</p>
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Broadly speaking this bill prohibits "governmental entities" or companies with significant government ties to China, Iran, North Korea, or Russia from purchasing certain types of property in the U.S. in the interest of national security. **Let me be clear: *I do not oppose this.***

The part that I find deeply problematic is that **the bill also makes it illegal for individuals who are citizens of these countries from buying many types of property in the state of Georgia.** Not only is this troubling, I suspect it may also be unconstitutional.



My worry is that bills like this address a reasonable concern, yet offer **overly broad, xenophobic "solutions"** casting suspicion on many law-abiding legal residents now presumed a threat to national security just by dint of their country of origin. Unfortunately in the imperfect history of our country **we've seen this before** (see: California's 1913 [Alien Land Law](#)), and there are currently [similar bills to HB 246](#) that have been [filed in Texas](#) and Virginia.

The California Alien Land Law was eventually overturned by the Supreme Court in 1952 for violating the 14th Amendment. The notion, however, that those from certain countries of origin will be forever foreign, suspect, and essentially traitorous to our country, clearly lives on for many.

ASIAN AMERICA

Chinese citizens in Texas are incensed over a proposal to ban them from buying property in the state

“I have never seen the Chinese community this active and this motivated in my entire adult life. The community is inflamed right now. They are enraged.”



Protesters in Houston last week rally against a proposed state Senate bill that would restrict citizens of China and three other countries from buying property in Texas. Asian Americans Leadership Council

National security is very important, and as a legislator who looks like me, I'm mindful that I need to make this clear. I'm also aware that no amount of parsing this nuance will prevent the suspicion I get for being...a legislator who looks like me discussing this issue.



I urge my colleagues to read the part of **HB 246** targeting *individuals* rather than governments, and consider our role, and the Georgia we're trying to build together. Consider the goals. Consider the effects. **And consider all those you represent, who are listening.**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We had lots of visitors in the office and at the Capitol this week!

House District 50 has a large and thriving Muslim community, and as such I was delighted to have Asim Javed from the [Georgia Muslim Voter Project](#) come to visit our office and discuss some shared priorities. These included public safety, voter outreach, and continued engagement of our Muslim community to ensure all Georgians feel welcome and empowered at the Capitol!



Thursday I was proud to present [HR 299](#) to recognize **CPR Day at the Capitol**, where we highlighted the efforts of the [American Heart Association](#) in training bystanders to administer basic life support until EMS can arrive on the scene.



Access to **high-quality CPR and rapid defibrillation** is the [most critical factor for surviving a sudden cardiac arrest in the field](#). As such, I was especially honored to be able to recognize **school nurse Dawn Wales and the staff of [Gainesville High School](#)**, who saved the lives of two students suffering cardiac arrest using the basic life support skill training the AHA provides.

Learn the skills, save a life. [Learn how to administer CPR and use an AED.](#)



I was also **honored to meet with Pediatrics residents and med students** from the [Morehouse School of Medicine](#) (in partnership with the [Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics](#)) as part of their legislative advocacy rotation. Top of mind issues for these young doctors included gun safety, raising the state tobacco tax, and a humanistic approach to medicine and patient care.



This week I was proud to welcome my constituent **Christopher Nolan**, a junior at [Chattahoochee High School](#), as a **page in the House Chamber**. The House Page Program is an exclusive opportunity offering Georgia's students between 12 and 18 years of age to visit the State Capitol and serve the members of the House of Representatives. A number of current and former legislators fondly remember their own experience as a legislative page, and it's a wonderful chance to watch the workings of the Georgia General Assembly up close!



Interested in signing up for the House Page Program? [More information can be found here.](#)

TEAM AU BILL TRACKER

It may not come as a surprise that **as a member of the minority party in a state with a Republican trifecta**, it is quite difficult to advance any legislation, no matter the subject matter, no matter the goals, and regardless of how popular they are with voters.



However, please know that the **House Democratic Caucus continues to work tirelessly to file good legislation** focused on improving the health, safety, education, and opportunity of Georgia's families while ensuring no one is left behind.

This week I'd like to highlight some of the good legislation from some of our colleagues that we've been proud to cosponsor.

- **[HB 62](#): The Georgia Health and Economic Livelihood Partnership (HELP) Act.** This would essentially fully expand our state Medicaid program under the provisions of the Affordable Care Act. (Primary sponsor [Rep. Sam Park](#); this bill has been assigned to the [Health Committee](#) but not heard.)
- **[HB 177](#):** This bill would provide that **school curriculum for sex education and HIV prevention is age-appropriate and scientifically accurate.** Of note, Atlanta has [one of the highest HIV infection rates in the world](#), and some zip codes in the Atlanta area have rates of HIV/AIDS that are six- to eight-times higher than the national average, making early education essential for prevention. (Primary sponsor [Rep. Jasmine Clark](#); this bill has been assigned to the [Education Committee](#) but not heard.)

- **[HB 184](#)**: This bill would ensure that **mental health care is covered at rates no less favorably than physical health care**, including care in the case of patient self-harm. (Primary sponsor [Rep. Marvin Lim](#); this bill was heard in the [Life and Health Insurance Subcommittee](#) but without a vote.)

- **[HB 194](#)**: **The Undocumented Persons Family Violence Protection Act**. This bill protects undocumented persons who in good faith seek law enforcement assistance for being a victim of family violence, or who seeks assistance on behalf of a victim of family violence, from being arrested, charged, or prosecuted for their immigration status. (Primary sponsor [Rep. Shelly Hutchinson](#); this bill was assigned to the [Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee](#) but not heard.)

- **[HB 333](#)**: This bill would **provide driver's cards for undocumented persons**, enabling them to receive proper driving training and show proof-of-driving qualifications, therefore **allowing them to drive safely and lawfully while participating fully in society and the state workforce**. *To be clear, this driver's card would not count as acceptable identification for purposes of voting.* (Primary sponsor [Rep. Pedro Marin](#); this bill was assigned to the [Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee](#) but not heard.)

- **[HB 510](#)**: This bill would provide **state support for K-12 school breakfast and lunch programs**, ensuring that no student, regardless of income level or family circumstance, is unable to learn simply because they are hungry. (Primary Sponsor [Rep. Imani Barnes](#); this bill was assigned to the [Education Committee](#) but not yet heard.)



There are still four legislative days and one committee day left until Crossover. While our Republican colleagues have indicated they are unwilling to pass any bills primarily sponsored by Democratic legislators (because, apparently, politics trumps policy), please know **your House Democratic Caucus persists in working for you.**

UPCOMING EVENTS

HD-50 Pre-Crossover Town Hall

Sunday 3/5, 6-7pm

Six Bridges Brewing Johns Creek

**DR. MICHELLE
AU**
AU=GA.COM

**PRE-CROSSOVER
TOWN HALL**

**SUNDAY 3/5, 6:00 - 7:00P
SIX BRIDGES BREWING JC
11455 LAKEFIELD DR SUITE 300**

Update on the good, the bad, and the ugly on the eve of one of the most important days of the 2023 session. Ask questions, flag concerns, or just stop by to grab a drink with your state Rep!

We are coming up on the **2nd year commemoration of the March 16th, 2021** mass shootings, in which eight people were murdered at a series of spas in and around metro Atlanta, of whom six were Asian women.

Save the dates for some of these upcoming events providing community support, conversation, and reflection on this tragic anniversary.

Atlanta Asian Justice Rally

*Georgia Railroad Freight Depot
Thursday, March 16th, 9am-2pm*

Join a large coalition of Asian American organizers at the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot for a day full of panel discussions, movie screenings, food, and community from 9am-2pm.

March 16th Memorial Event

*The Korean American Association of Greater Atlanta Center
Thursday, March 16th, 6pm*

The evening of March 16th community members will gather at the Korean American Association of Greater Atlanta, 5900 Brook Hollow Pkwy, Norcross, GA

30071. Save the date for this evening vigil.



Rising Against Asian Hate: One Day In March

*Reception, Screening and Panel Discussion with the Director
Friday, March 17th, 6pm*

Save the Date for a special screening and discussion of the PBS Documentary “[Rising Against Asian Hate: One Day In March](#).” We’ll be joined by the director, members of the AAPI Legislative Caucus, community organizers and Georgian Asian American leaders for a panel discussion and reception to discuss the crucial question of what’s next for Asian Americans as we continue to grapple with the aftermath of the March 16th shootings. Location will be announced soon.



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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W. Michelle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paid for by Au for Georgia Inc.

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