

{{FirstName or 'Friends'}} --

**In my two terms in the Georgia General Assembly, this state has changed a lot.** We've seen good policy discussed and heard in arenas we never would have expected, and we've seen bad bills that would have passed easily just a few years ago blocked and killed because Georgians, through their elected representation, have been able to assert their power and their voice under the Gold Dome.



**But change sometimes doesn't come as quickly as some would like,** and for others, change can be difficult to accept. The final two weeks of the 2024 legislative session were tumultuous, as many of the bills I'd been working on for

years fell short of passage, while others we'd been vigorously fighting against made it through.

**Georgia is on the cusp of proving, yet again, that it is a state capable of incredible progress.** But in order to truly realize that progress, we need to flip more state legislative seats, and we need to protect those who continue the fight so we can be ready to step up when we win.

## DONATE

From gun safety legislation to abortion access, from protecting our access to the ballot to building diverse coalitions, **never has work at the state legislative level been more important.** As always, thank you for your support so I can continue to work on behalf of Georgia's 50th House District, one of the very few swing districts left in this state.

**Thank you for fighting the good fight with us** and [donating](#) to what promises to be a grueling and expensive campaign.

***Now, as always, let's talk about the work behind us, and the work ahead.***

## SINE DIE HIGHLIGHTS

First, let's talk about what it's like to be a state legislator serving on Sine Die, the last day of the legislative session for the year.



**On Sine Die, the legislature usually does not gavel out until midnight**, as lawmakers scramble for their last chance to pass their favored bills before we adjourn for the year. **Often, these bills no longer look the same way they did when we started the session in January.** Many bills have had amendments added—some aiming to have precisely the opposite effect of the original legislation—and some bills are stripped wholesale, with completely new language substituted in, often from bills that failed to pass procedurally.

The final few days of session **it's not unusual to get a new bill substitute, amendment, conference committee report, or policy paper on our desks every 45 seconds**, with a new vote every minute. In the final few hours, it can be a real challenge to keep on top of what bills we're even voting on, let alone have enough time to read the latest version before the Speaker calls the vote. I tried to have a paper management system to ensure I was keeping on top of my incoming as much as possible, while also keeping an eye on the proceedings of the state Senate across the hall, while keeping a copy of the handbook on House Rules, Ethics and Decorum handy to be able to challenge some of the many procedural shenanigans we've seen in years past.





## REPUBLICAN MAJORITY STATE SENATE KILLS FIREARM SAFE STORAGE LEGISLATION

After successfully getting [HB 971](#) (our bill which would offer up to a \$300 tax credit for purchase of safe storage equipment) through the House on a near-unanimous floor vote, **the bill hit a buzzsaw in the form of Georgia's conservative state Senate.**

While with a lot of work with some of our allies in the chamber, **the Senate Finance committee did pass out HB 971 in the final weeks of session**, the Senate GOP delayed and delayed putting HV 971 on the calendar, and when it made it all the way up to a floor vote the last week of session, they simply **refused to call it up for a vote**, which would have been the final step before reaching the Governor's desk.

Obviously, time is a tight commodity on Sine Die, and this is not the only bill that didn't pass because we simply ran out of time. But it was galling to see **the first substantive gun safety bill in modern memory up for a final vote in the state of Georgia**, on a measure to address the #1 cause of death and children and



teenagers, and feel that its failure to make the cut was simply about time, especially given that the state Senate had *plenty* of time to waste on their own culture war priority legislation and japery.

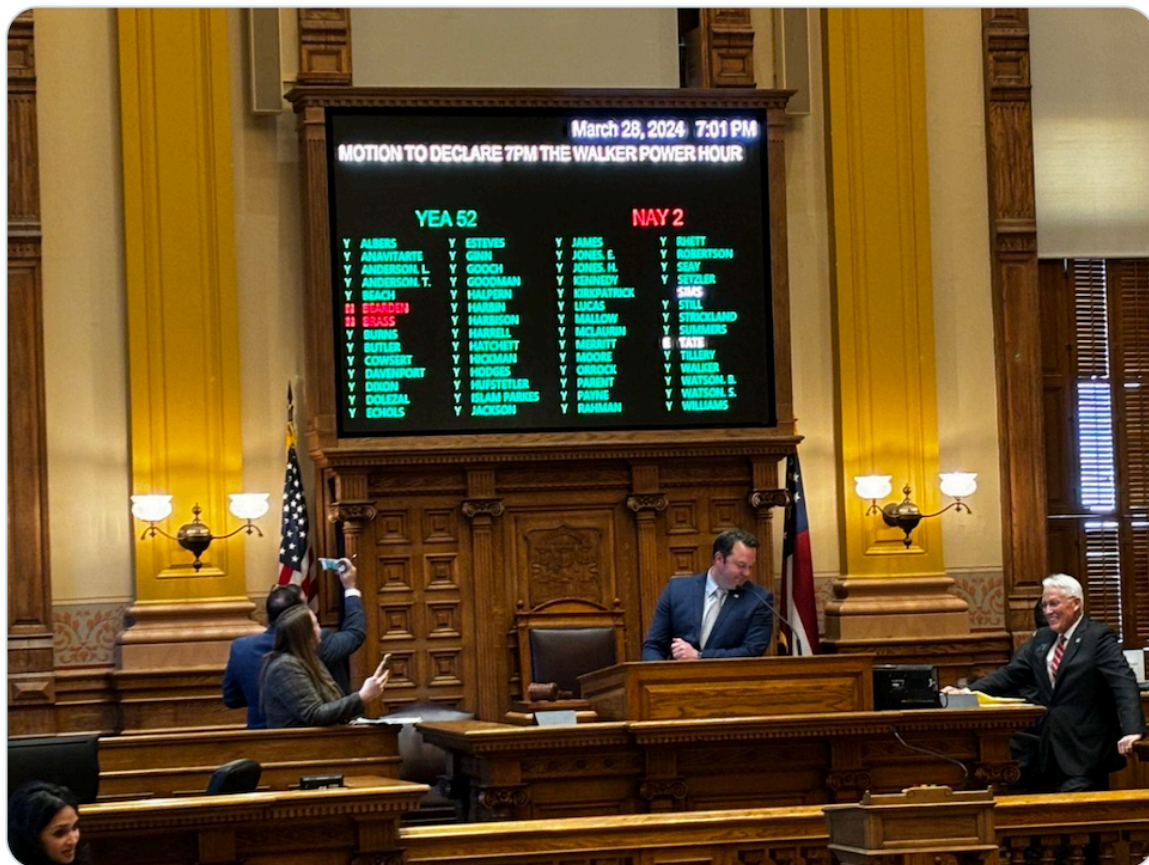


**Greg Bluestein**  
@bluestein



The Georgia Senate has just voted overwhelmingly to declare 7p the “Walker Power Hour” in honor of Republican Sen. Larry Walker.

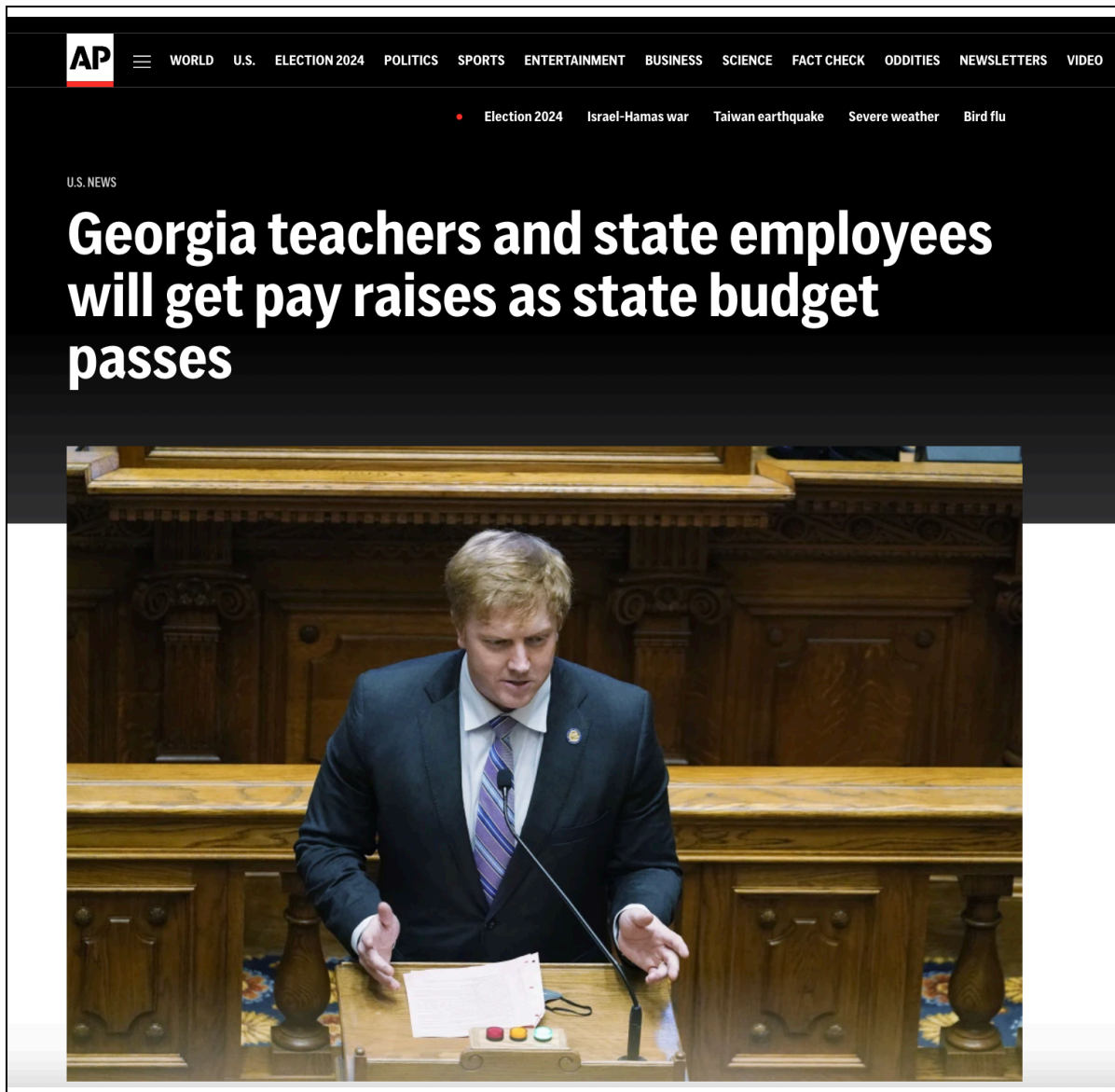
An inside joke becomes a vote in the finals hours of the legislative session ... #gapol



Legislative change is—*has to be*—about the long game. And you can bet that we plan to bring both a safe storage tax credit bill, and our flagship gun safety legislation, **HB 161**, the **Pediatric Health Safe Storage Act**, back for consideration again in 2025.

## PASSING THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 STATE BUDGET

While most of our time is spent doing...other things...**passing a balanced budget is actually the only Constitutional duty we have as a state legislature.** This year we ended up passing the state budget quite late, the night of Sine Die, as negotiations between Republican leadership in the House and the Senate held things up until the final few hours of the year.



[Click here for full article](#)

I was particularly happy that the budget included pay raises it provides for teachers and state employees, making Georgia's **the highest paid teachers in the Southeast.**



On the subject of school funding, I was also quite happy to see one budget item, which was added in the Senate, removed in the conference committee process.

COMMITTEE

Track Sheet

FY2025

		Gov's Rec		House		Senate		Conference	
		State Funds	Total Funds	State Funds	Total Funds	State Funds	Total Funds	State Funds	Total Funds
24.22	<b>School Security Grants</b>	\$1,220,026	\$1,220,026	\$1,220,026	\$1,220,026	\$1,180,026	\$1,180,026	\$1,180,026	\$1,180,026
24.22.1	Provide funds to establish school security grants for school hardening and POST certified personnel. (S:Provide funds to establish school security grants for school hardening and POST certified personnel.) (CC:Provide funds to establish school security grants for safety infrastructure and POST certified personnel.)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
24.22.2	Provide funds for safety training for teachers and the ability of local school systems to develop school safety plans. (CC:Yes; Reflect funding in school security grants.)	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$0	\$0
	<b>Program Net</b>	\$103,995,000	\$103,995,000	\$103,995,000	\$103,995,000	\$108,905,000	\$108,905,000	\$108,905,000	\$108,905,000
24.23	<b>State Charter School Commission Administration</b>	\$0	\$6,685,379	\$0	\$6,685,379	\$0	\$6,685,379	\$0	\$6,685,379
	<b>Program Net</b>	\$0	\$6,685,379	\$0	\$6,685,379	\$0	\$6,685,379	\$0	\$6,685,379
24.24	<b>State Schools</b>	\$37,543,965	\$39,802,425	\$37,543,965	\$39,802,425	\$37,543,965	\$39,802,425	\$37,543,965	\$39,802,425
24.24.1	Increase funds to provide for a 4% cost-of-living-adjustment for state employees not to exceed \$3,000.	\$625,473	\$625,473	\$625,473	\$625,473	\$625,473	\$625,473	\$625,473	\$625,473
24.24.2	Increase funds for the Teachers Retirement System to reflect an increase in the actuarially determined employer contribution rate from 19.98% to 20.78%.	\$10,274	\$10,274	\$10,274	\$10,274	\$10,274	\$10,274	\$10,274	\$10,274
24.24.3	Reflect an adjustment in telecommunications and infrastructure rates for the Georgia Technology Authority.	\$16,719	\$16,719	\$16,719	\$16,719	\$16,719	\$16,719	\$16,719	\$16,719
24.24.4	Reflect an adjustment to agency premiums for Department of Administrative Services administered insurance programs.	\$30,845	\$30,845	\$30,845	\$30,845	\$30,845	\$30,845	\$30,845	\$30,845
24.24.5	Increase funds for Georgia Building Authority rental rates to provide for additional Capitol Police security and operational expenses.	\$1,008	\$1,008	\$1,008	\$1,008	\$1,008	\$1,008	\$1,008	\$1,008
24.24.6	Increase funds for Merit System Assessment billings.	\$3,316	\$3,316	\$3,316	\$3,316	\$3,316	\$3,316	\$3,316	\$3,316
24.24.7	Increase formula funds for training and experience.	\$263,962	\$263,962	\$263,962	\$263,962	\$263,962	\$263,962	\$263,962	\$263,962
24.24.8	Utilize existing funds (\$2,000,000) for major repairs and renovations. (G:Yes)(H & S:Yes) (CC:Yes)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
24.24.9	Increase funds to adjust the state base salary schedule to increase salaries for certified teachers and certified employees by \$2,500 effective September 1, 2024.	\$304,556	\$304,556	\$304,556	\$304,556	\$304,556	\$304,556	\$304,556	\$304,556
	<b>Program Net</b>	\$1,256,153	\$1,256,153	\$1,256,153	\$1,256,153	\$1,256,153	\$1,256,153	\$1,256,153	\$1,256,153
24.25	<b>Technology/Career Education</b>	\$38,800,118	\$41,058,578	\$38,800,118	\$41,058,578	\$38,800,118	\$41,058,578	\$38,800,118	\$41,058,578
	<b>Program Net</b>	\$22,402,168	\$79,103,378	\$22,402,168	\$79,103,378	\$22,402,168	\$79,103,378	\$22,402,168	\$79,103,378

House Budget and Research Office

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March 28, 2024

The state budget always starts in the House, but this year, **on the Senate side**, our colleagues added **\$5 million** for a vaguely worded “**school safety**” program which many would only tell me was to highlight one of the Lieutenant Governor’s priorities. You may recall, of course, one such conspicuous priority, [to offer a \\$10,000 bribe to enlist teachers to carry loaded weapons into classrooms.](#)

U.S. NEWS

# Georgia's lieutenant governor wants to pay teachers \$10,000 a year to carry guns at school



1 of 2 | Georgia Lt. Gov. Burt Jones discusses school safety proposals, Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2023, at Austin Road Elementary School in Winder, Ga. Jones says he wants to pay a \$10,000 yearly stipend to teachers who pass firearms training, allowing them to carry guns in school. (AP Photo/Jeff Amy) [Read More](#)

[Click here for full article](#)

This highlights a truly interesting dynamic in the Georgia General Assembly, which is the cultural differences between the Senate and the House. **The vast majority of extreme right-wing bills emanated from the Senate chamber this year**, as many of its members seek to burnish their “conservative” bona fides and eye a run at higher office. I am proud to see that our House colleagues, though from the same party nominally, were having none of it.





**Patricia Murphy**  
@MurphyAJC



In a swipe at the state Senate, state Rep. Matt Hatchett details school security funding in budget, but adds, “Just so we are clear, this budget does not include funds for teachers to carry guns in schools.” The Lt. Gov. held a conference announcing the idea last year. [#gapol](#)



9:47 PM · Mar 28, 2024 · 3,318 Views

That was the bad and the good. ***Now onto the ugly.***

## GEORGIA REPUBLICANS TURN THEIR BACK ON MEDICAID EXPANSION. (AGAIN. STILL.)

Since last fall, the biggest buzz around the Capitol had been the Republican majority's seeming willingness to re-examine the possibility of Medicaid Expansion under the Affordable Care Act, as a means to **narrow the coverage gap and ensure nearly half a million uninsured Georgians.**

A Medicaid Expansion bill was allowed to be presented in the [Senate Regulated Industries](#) Committee this Thursday, with an understanding that it would be voted through and allowed to come to a full floor vote. The bill passed 7-6, with **the Chairman then weighing in (despite it not being a tie vote) to bring the vote 7-7.** Finally another Senator, who was not a sitting member of the committee, was pulled in to vote no, thus defeating the bill.



## POLITICS

# A surprise bill to expand Medicaid in Georgia narrowly fails



[Click here for full article](#)

The reason ultimately given for failing to address the critical coverage gap in a state with one of the highest uninsurance rates in the nation, was **political obstinance**.

Governor Kemp's [clearly under-performing Pathways to Coverage program](#), a tepid, meager partial broadening of Medicaid conditioned on an 80 hour per month work requirement, continues to demonstrate that it is not the solution Georgians need. Yet to save face, and to turn away from the solutions right in front of us, **our Republican Majority continues to prop up this failing program** at the expense of their responsibility to those they ostensibly serve.

Metro Atlanta Georgia News Legislature National & World

HEALTH NEWS

# Georgia's Medicaid work requirements costs millions, despite low enrollment

Georgia Pathways to Coverage program has had a rocky start, but state Republican leaders have put off considering a full Medicaid expansion.

[Click here to read full article](#)

Per the [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#):

"Since July, when the program began, about 3,500 people have signed up, according to state officials. **That's a small fraction of the Georgians who**

**could enroll if the state expanded Medicaid without such requirements.**

**The Pathways program is 'fiscally foolish and anti-family,'** said Joan Alker, executive director and co-founder of Georgetown University's Center for Children and Families. She noted that full-time caregiving does not qualify someone for eligibility into the program. **'A lot of taxpayer money has been wasted,' she said, 'and not on health care for people who need it.'**

Generally, we should expect > 80% of costs of a public or private health insurance plan to go toward health care and services. **So far, Governor Kemp's Pathways program has spent < 10% on medical care for low-income patients and > 90% on administrative/consulting costs.**

The state Department of Community Health reported \$26.6 million in Pathways spending through Dec. 31, of which more than 80% was paid for using federal funds. Deloitte was paid \$2.4 million to prepare and submit the application to the federal government. Just \$2 million was paid to insurers to cover medical care. In the fourth quarter, administrative costs alone rose by more than \$6 million.

The total costs do not include legal fees for defending the Pathways program. The state attorney general's office said that as of Feb. 7 those costs surpass \$230,000.

☰ **KFF Health News** ↗

## Georgia's Medicaid Work Requirements Costing Taxpayers Millions Despite Low Enrollment

By [Andy Miller](#) and [Renuka Rayasam](#)  
MARCH 20, 2024



Source: [KFF Health News](#)

“We can try again next year” is the response we hear over and over again from our Republican colleagues. The fact of the matter is that **some of the Georgians in need of healthcare access do not have until next year**, nor would these Republican legislators themselves tolerate being told to “wait until next year” were it their family's healthcare coverage on the line.





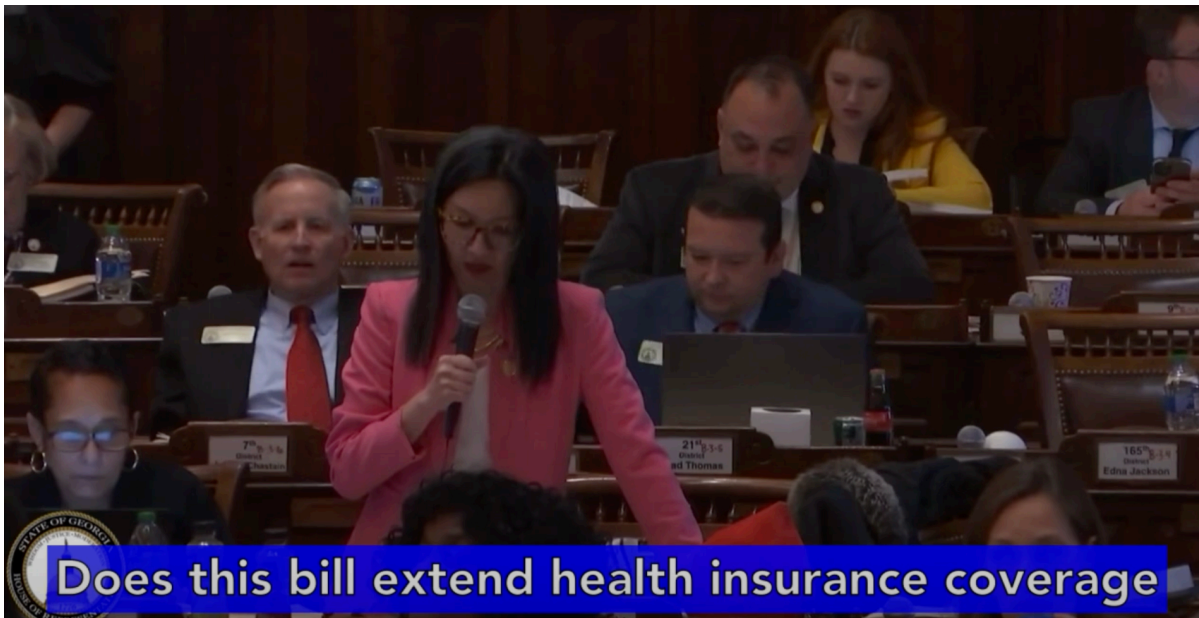
[Click here for full video](#)

Rather than expanding Medicaid, the General Assembly passed **HB 1339**, a bill containing Certificate of Need (CON) reform and the creation of a “Comprehensive Health Coverage Commission.”

As I say in my remarks linked below, I am extremely disappointed in this bill for a number of reasons. One reason is that it **more easily allows for CON exceptions for healthcare entities owned and managed by private equity companies**, [which has been shown to drive up healthcare costs and decrease quality of care](#).

It also has **extremely low requirements for entities qualifying for such exceptions to provide indigent care to under-resourced communities**, which, I heard time and time again, was the ostensible reason justifying its passage.

Additionally, **we do not need another commission or study committee on healthcare issues in our state to tell us what we already know**. The uninsured rate in our state is devastating for our health and our hospitals and expanding Medicaid is the best solution we have to address this problem.



[Click here for full video](#)

***We are all the sum of the choices we make.*** And make no mistake, in the final weeks of the legislative session, Georgia's Republican majority looked at patients in need, with an obvious solution in reach, and chose to do nothing.

## ALIEN LAND LAW PASSES

This term, many of us working together, including several members of the Asian American Pacific Islander Caucus, blocked *four* separate Alien Land Law bills in the Georgia Legislature. (For those following along, those have been **HB 246**, **HB 452**, **HB 1093**, and **SB 132**.) Every time we successfully stopped one of the discriminatory bills in its tracks, another one would “magically” appear in front of committee.



U.S. NEWS

## Land purchases by Chinese ‘agents’ would be limited under Georgia bill; Democrats say it’s racist



[Click here for full article](#)

But the Republican majority legislature has made it clear that **anti-immigrant rhetoric and hawkishness on national defense is going to be the cornerstone of their electoral messaging** this year, and I was told several times by well-positioned GOP leaders that they were going to “have to pass something” similar to the many cookie-cutter Alien Land Law bills we’ve seen pop up in Republican-held states all around the country.

And sure enough, on Legislative Day 38, Republicans passed **[SB 420](#)**.

Everyone in the Georgia General Assembly agrees **national security and defense against hostile foreign regimes is a vital goal**. However, SB 420 and all of the preceding attempts, are bad bills that do not accomplish this goal,



while **creating a discriminatory and hostile environment for Georgians in our immigrant communities** seeking to buy or lease property to realize their American Dream.

You can watch my full remarks on **SB 420** below.



[Click here for full video](#)

I know **many constituents in House District 50** were particularly **concerned** about the Alien Land Law bills and its effect on foreign-born Georgians looking to buy or lease property. If you want more details about **HB 420** and how it might affect you or your family, [please do not hesitate to contact my office](#).

TEAM AU IN ACTION

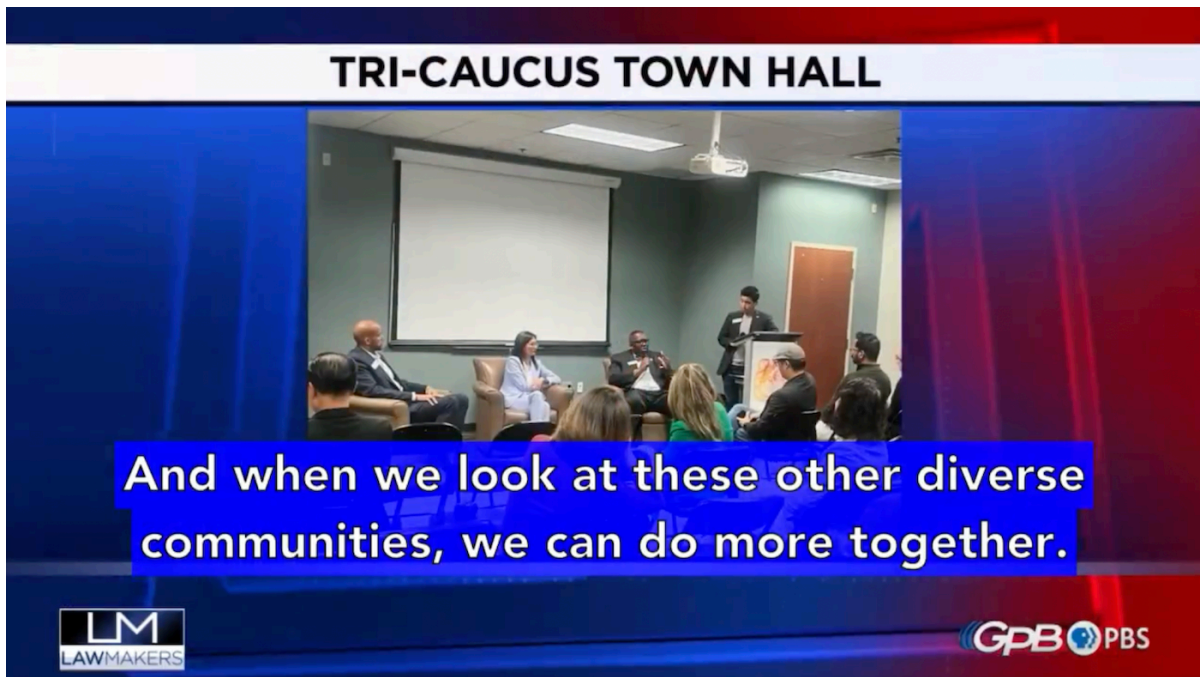


Even during difficult weeks, it is important to remember the things that give us hope. Something that has given me a lot of hope is the budding collaboration between the three minority caucuses in the state legislature.

Georgia is almost certainly now a majority minority state, and we are so much more powerful when we as minorities can work together. I was honored to represent the AAPI Caucus in the historic **first-ever Tri-Caucus Town Hall between the Legislative Black, Hispanic, and AAPI Caucuses.**

Joining me on the stage were [Representative Carl Gilliard](#), Chair of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus, and [Senator Jason Esteves](#), a founding member of the Hispanic Caucus.

We are also grateful to [Georgia Public Broadcasting](#) and “[Lawmakers](#)” host Donna Lowry for highlighting the importance of coalition building and the work we’re trying to do together.



[Click here for full video](#)

Keep an eye out for our next Tri-Caucus event. We will be continuing them after the session and hosting them throughout the state to meet communities member where they are and to show them that **everyone has a voice at the Capitol.**

\* \* \*

**We also hosted another successful Team Au blood drive thanks once again to our friends at Lifesouth**, which supplies blood to many hospitals in Georgia, including Emory, Piedmont, Wellstar, and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta!





**We are proud to that our #TeamAu blood drives have become a tradition at the Capitol, and even more proud to be able to help patients directly during one of the worst blood bank shortages in the past decade.**

**You can donate whole blood every 8 weeks!** If you're looking for a blood drive, you can check [here](#) or [here](#) for a location near you!

\* \* \*

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...

“**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

**Governor Kemp has singled out our district as one of his top targets to flip back to Republican control.** He has publicly promised that his leadership PAC—which can essentially raise unlimited amounts of dark money not subject to the reporting requirements that individual candidates like myself have to adhere to—is **donating \$250,000 right out of the gate to my Republican opponent’s campaign**, with likely much more to come.

## AJC POLITICS

[Politically Georgia](#)[Elections](#)[Trump Georgia Case](#)[Legislature](#)[Georgia By The Numbers](#)

POLITICAL INSIDER

### The Jolt: Kemp deploys political machine for 2024 legislative battle

News and analysis from the politics team at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



Credit: Arvin Temkar/AJC

Gov. Brian Kemp's political machine is pushing to protect a handful of vulnerable GOP state Legislative districts. (Arvin Temkar/The Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

[Click here for full article](#)

While my Republican opponent has been fundraising and shoring up support from his powerful friends these past few months, as a sitting Georgia lawmaker **I have been prohibited by law from fundraising during the legislative session**—a fact of which that Governor Kemp and his money-raising machinery is well aware.



**Whether you can give \$25 or \$250, each dollar goes toward reaching and informing voters in our fight to stay and keep serving families under the Gold Dome!**

Together, we will make Georgia a healthier, safer, and more inclusive state, where everyone's voices can be heard. Thank you for your continued support.

\* \* \*



**DR. MICHELLE**  
**AU**  
AUforGA.COM

**POST SINE DIE  
TOWN HALL**

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

**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. And [thank you as always for your support](#) in what promises to be a very difficult (and very expensive) re-election campaign so that we can keep doing the work.

**DONATE**

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,



Paid for by Au for Georgia Inc.

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Johns Creek, Georgia 30097  
United States

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