

# A STRATEGIC PARTNER FOR GEORGIA'S FORESTS

## POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE GOALS

Georgia's working forests have the capacity to meet increased demands for goods and services now and in the future. The Georgia Forestry Association (GFA), through its advocacy efforts, works to educate business, environmental and political leaders about Georgia's responsible forest management practices, benefits derived from forestry and landowner rights.

GFA adheres to several strategic priorities around which it focuses its government affairs and advocacy work. Each of these priorities, and the actions to achieve them, are consistent with the Association's mission statement: *To be the leading advocate for a healthy business and political climate for Georgia's forest environment, forest landowners and forest-based businesses.*

GFA focuses its policy and legislative efforts to achieve these strategic priorities:

- » Ensure that Georgia's private woodlands are sustainable
- » Ensure that Georgia's forest-based businesses are profitable
- » Ensure that decision makers and educators understand the value of Georgia's woodlands
- » Ensure that all landowners are treated equitably

## PRIORITY ISSUES

### Improve tax policy for woodland owners.

- » Improve a property tax system that often treat owners of forest land unfairly and chooses winners and losers.
- » Ensure that forestland is not taxed to subsidize other types of property that require far more service from local governments.

### Remove obstacles to the use of Georgia's private woodlands

- » Where the state or federal government, or any private organization, seeks to unfairly restrict or eliminate the use of wood in construction or other applications, GFA will work to remove the restrictions and obstacles.

### Discourage unreasonable and unwarranted environmental regulation for everyone in the wood supply chain – landowners, contractors of logging and other services, and users of wood as raw material in the manufacturing of forest products.

- » Environmental regulation must be science based.
- » Regulation should balance environmental benefits with short and long-term economic consequences.
- » Regulation and planning should recognize that the water supply is heavily dependent on a healthy, forested landscape.

### Oppose measures that erode private property rights.

- » Preserve and enhance private property rights. Landowners should not be unreasonably hindered in the management and use of their property.

### Support fairness in the application of subsidies for new wood and fiber markets.

- » The free market should determine the ultimate establishment and success of all new businesses.
- » Incentives for new or emerging businesses should not be used if the result would be a significant or adverse impact on existing business.

Support adequate funding levels for the Georgia Forestry Commission and the Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources



## FORESTS. THEY MAKE LIFE BETTER.

The Georgia Forestry Association is the leading advocate for a healthy business and political climate for Georgia's forest environment, forest landowners and forest based businesses.

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NOTE: The information contained in this publication is current as of the printing date. Please visit the Georgia General assembly website at [www.legis.ga.gov](http://www.legis.ga.gov) for an expanded reference to the Georgia legislature.

# 2015 LEGISLATIVE GUIDE

# ABOUT THE GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## HISTORY

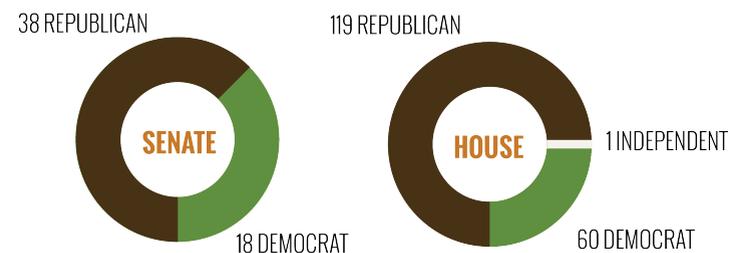
A form of representative government has existed in Georgia since January 1957. Its modern embodiment, known as the Georgia General Assembly, is one of the largest state legislatures in the nation.

The General Assembly has operated continuously since 1777, when Georgia became one of the 13 original states and revoked its status as a Colony of Great Britain. Since the General Assembly is the legislative body for the state, the location of its meetings has moved along with each move of the State Capitol. In its earliest days, the legislature met in Savannah, Augusta, Louisville, Milledgeville and before settling permanently in Atlanta. Today, the General Assembly meets in the State Capitol, an impressive limestone and marble building with a distinctive gold dome and granite foundation.

The General Assembly consists of two chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate, each of which are housed in a separate chamber. Every two years, Georgia holds elections for the legislature. The last was held in 2014.

## COMPOSITION

Georgia's legislature is composed of a 56 member Senate and a 180 member House. The Republican party currently holds the majority in both chambers.



## HOUSE & SENATE LEADERSHIP

### Lt. Governor

Casey Cagle (R)  
Capitol Office: 404.656.5030

### Speaker of the House

Rep. David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge)  
Capitol Office: 404.656.5020

## KEY COMMITTEES FOR FORESTRY

### Senate Natural Resources

Chair: Senator Ross Tolleson (R-Perry)  
Capitol Office: 404.656.0081

### House Natural Resources

Chair: Rep. Lynn Smith (R-Newnan)  
Capitol Office: 404.656.7149

### Senate Finance

Chair: Senator Judson Hill (R-Marietta)  
Capitol Office: 404.656.0150

### Senate Judiciary

Chair: Senator Josh McKoon (R-Columbus)  
Capitol Office: 404.463.3931

### House Judiciary

Chair: Rep. Wendall Willard (R-Sandy Springs)  
Capitol Office: 404.656.5257

### Senate Agriculture

Senator John Wilkinson (R-Toccoa)  
Capitol Office: 404.656.5257

### House Agriculture

Chair: Rep. Tom McCall (R-Elberton)  
Capitol Office: 404.656.5099

## TRACKING A BILL

### Idea

Legislator sees the need for a new law or changes in existing law and decides to introduce a bill.

### Drafting

Legislator goes to the Office of Legislative Counsel. There, an attorney advises the legislator on legal issues and drafts the bill.

### Introduction and First Reading

- » Legislator files bill with the Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate. On a legislative day after filing, the bill is formally introduced.
- » In chamber, the bill's title is read during the period of first reading.
- » Immediately after reading, the presiding officer assigns the bill to a standing committee.

### Second Reading

- » In the House only, on the next legislative day, the Clerk reads the bill's title (second reading) in chamber, although the actual bill is now in committee.
- » In the Senate, the second reading comes after a bill is reported favorably from committee.

### Committee Action

The bill is considered by committee, The author and other legislators may testify. If controversial, public hearings may be held. Final committee version is reported in a written report. The committee's options are:

- » Recommend Bill or Resolution Do Pass
- » Recommend Do NOT Pass
- » Recommend Do Pass with Changes (amendments or substitutes)
- » Hold Bill

### Third Reading and Passage

The Clerk or Secretary prepares a General Calendar of bills favorably reported from the committee.

- » Legislation which was second read the day before

is placed on a calendar in numeric order for floor action prior to being sent to the Rules Committee which selects bills for consideration.

- » After a certain point, set by rule, the Rules Committee meets and prepares a Rules Calendar for the next day's floor consideration from bills on the General Calendar.

Once the presiding officer calls the bill up from the Rules Calendar, the Clerk or Secretary reads the bill's title (third reading). The Bill is now ready for floor debate, amendments and voting. After debate, the main question is called and the members vote. If the bill is approved by majority of the total membership of that chamber, it is sent to the other house.

### Transmittal to Other Chamber

The bill is passed:

- » If the second chamber passes the bill with changes, it is returned to the chamber where it was introduced.
- » If the first chamber rejects changes and the second chamber insists, a conference committee may be appointed. The Committee report is accepted by both chambers.

The bill is enrolled and sent to the Governor (if requested). Otherwise, all enrolled bills are sent to the Governor following adjournment.

### Governor's Signature/Veto

The Governor may sign the bill or do nothing, and the bill becomes law. The Governor may veto the bill, which requires a two-thirds vote of the members of each house to override.

### Act

The Act and other laws enacted at the session are printed in the Georgia Laws series. Also, the act is incorporated into the Official Code of Georgia Annotated. The Act becomes effective the following July 1, unless a different date is provided in the act.

**LEARN MORE AT [WWW.GFAGROW.ORG](http://WWW.GFAGROW.ORG)!**

Track the status of forestry bills, look up your legislator, take action on forestry issues and stay up to date on GFA's advocacy activity.