

WHO'S WHO? in Georgia Politics



Voting is a public way of saying, "Our families count, and all of our lives matter!"

Elections matter because politicians create laws that significantly impact our families and communities. Election season is an especially important time for us to speak up and be involved in the political process regardless of our citizenship status or whether we are eligible to vote. Voting is a public way of saying, "Our families count, and all of our lives matter!"

The purpose of this guide is to provide an easy to understand description of elected federal, state, and local positions in Georgia.

Sign up at SPARK.TURBOVOTE.ORG

to register to vote, sign up for an absentee ballot, or receive reminders about upcoming elections. Remember to vote ALL THE WAY DOWN the ballot!

NATIONAL ELECTED POSITIONS

US CONGRESS • Congress is made up of two separate bodies: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Together they form the legislative (law-making) branch of the Federal Government. There are no limits on the number of terms that a member of Congress can serve.


US REPRESENTATIVE


There are 435 members of the House of Representatives. All seats in the House are up for re-election every two years. The number of representatives from each state is based on its population. Currently Georgia has 14 representatives.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Makes and passes federal laws.
- Decides the budget for federal programs.
- Determines federal tax guidelines.
- Can propose changes to the Constitution.
- Has the power to declare war.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

 Chooses how federal programs such as Head Start, Medicaid, Cash Assistance, Social Security, relief for victims of natural disasters, military spending, child care, health care and domestic violence services are funded or cut.

 Creates federal laws including those governing immigration, healthcare, education, criminal justice, student loan interest rates, labor and environmental protections.

US SENATOR

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

There are 100 US Senators. Each state elects two senators in statewide elections for six-year terms. Senate races are staggered so that only one senator in a state is up for election at a time.

- Same as House of Representatives (see page 1).
- In addition, the Senate approves the President's appointments to important positions, including the US Supreme Court and the Cabinet (the board that advises the President and holds offices in key departments).

Same as US House of Representatives (see page 1).

GEORGIA STATEWIDE ELECTED POSITIONS


GOVERNOR

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Heads the state executive branch. Elected every four years in non-presidential election years ("mid-terms"). Can only serve two terms (eight years).

- Proposes Georgia's annual budget for approval by the legislature.
- Has the power to veto bills passed by the state legislature. A veto can prevent the bill from becoming law.
- Appoints critical positions in state agencies, boards and commissions.

 Can call a special session of the state legislature to deal with a specific urgent issue.

GA GENERAL ASSEMBLY • Georgia's legislature, its General Assembly, is made up of two chambers: the Georgia State Senate and the Georgia House of Representatives. Proposed laws must be approved by both chambers and not vetoed by the Governor, or the Governor's veto must be overridden. The legislature meets every year for forty days. Special sessions can be called by a three-fifths vote of the legislature, or by the Governor.


GEORGIA STATE REPRESENTATIVES


KEY RESPONSIBILITIES


WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The state has 180 state house districts. Each district elects one representative. All House seats are up for election every two years.

- Initiates state laws in areas such as state taxes, business regulation, education, child care and conservation of natural resources.
- Shares budget-making responsibilities with the Governor.
- Can override a veto by the Governor with a two-thirds majority vote in the legislature.

 Makes decisions about how the state budget is allocated, including how much support should go to public schools, higher education, or the CHIP program for low-income children.

 Sets scope of state Medicaid program, determining how many low-income people receive federal subsidies for health insurance.

 Can propose laws to: limit or expand access to state programs, such as health care, including reproductive health care; set the minimum wage; require equal pay for equal work; and address discrimination in the workplace.

GEORGIA STATE SENATORS

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The state is divided into 56 state senate districts and each district elects one senator. State senate seats are up for election every two years.

Same as Georgia State Representatives (see page 2).

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LOCAL ELECTED POSITIONS


CITY MAYOR

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Elected every four years by city voters. Oversees all city departments and enforcement of city policies. Can only serve two four-year terms (eight years).

- Proposes city budget.
- Responsible for day to day operations of city government.
- Serves as the city's primary representative to other cities and government agencies.

 Can provide leadership on selected public policy issues, such as diversity and inclusion in city programs and employment, economic development, public safety, and education.


CITY COUNCIL

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Create city policies and ordinances. City council is made up of 15 members. 12 members are elected from districts, and three members are elected at-large (city-wide).

- Sets city taxes and manages the city budget.
- Oversees city agencies and services like fire and police department, parks and recreation, and public works (street lights, trash pick-up, potholes, etc.)
- Works with the mayor and city staff to develop the city's yearly strategic plan.

 Determines financial support to services, such as workforce development, public transportation, and youth development programs.


COUNTY COMMISSION

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

County commissions are made of members, elected from districts.

- Oversees county provision of metropolitan services like public transportation, county health clinics, public housing, and libraries.

 Adopts a budget that provides financial support to programs and services such as adult behavioral health services, arts and culture, libraries and senior transportation.

WHAT IF I CAN'T VOTE?

You must be at least 18 years of age and a US citizen to vote. Individuals convicted of a felony may vote if they have completed their entire sentence, including any probation, parole or supervised release, and payment of any court-ordered restitution or costs. Once you have served your entire sentence, you are again eligible to vote, but must re-register. Whether you can vote or not, you can still make a difference!

- Encourage and educate people who can vote
- Share this guide with your neighbors, friends and/or family
- Write letters to your local newspaper about the issues you care about



SPARK is a reproductive justice organization based in Atlanta, GA, advocating for policies that protect and expand access to the full range of reproductive and sexual health resources for women and youth of color in the state of Georgia. Importantly, SPARK ensures the voices of women of color, young parents, and LGBTQQ youth of color living in the south are included in the reproductive rights and justice movements.

THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS ALLIANCE - ATLANTA CHAPTER is organizing for rights, respect and dignity for domestic workers in Georgia. Building the leadership and power of African-American domestic workers – including nannies, housekeepers and homecare workers – the Atlanta Chapter is also a member of Strong Families. Domestic work is the work that makes all other work possible!

SPARK Reproductive Justice Now and The National Domestic Workers Alliance are part of **STRONG FAMILIES**, a national initiative to change how we think, feel, act, and make policy about families. Strong Families is a project of Forward Together.

For more information, contact SPARK at (404) 343-6506, NDWA at 404-584-0840.



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