

ACCA

ATHENS COMMUNITY COUNCIL ON AGING

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Legislative Education Packet

EXECUTIVE

The chief official in the executive branch is the Governor who is elected by the voters for a four-year term, with two consecutive terms allowed. The Governor proposes new programs and laws for the state, proposes a state budget for the legislature to consider, vetoes legislation and appoints members of many of the boards in state government.

In addition to the Governor, Georgia's Constitution provides for several constitutional officers (listed below) who are the heads of executive departments and are elected directly by the voters for four-year terms. The authority for the offices of these officials is established in the State Constitution.

Governor: Nathan Deal, Republican

The Governor proposes new programs and laws for the state, proposes a state budget for the legislature to consider, vetoes legislation and appoints members of many of the boards in state government.

Lieutenant Governor: Casey Cagle, Republican

Under the Georgia Constitution, the Lieutenant Governor presides over the State Senate and performs other duties assigned to him by the Governor.

Georgia Department of Agriculture: Gary Black

Attorney General: Samuel S. Olens

Georgia Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner: Ralph Hudgens

Georgia Department of Labor: Mark Butler

Public Service Commissioner: Tim Echols

Secretary of State: Brian Kemp

State School Superintendent: John D. Barge

LEGISLATIVE

The Georgia General Assembly, the formal title of the legislature, was formed in 1777 and is older than the United States Congress. At the time of its origin, the legislature consisted of a single house, but in 1789 it became a bicameral body, consisting of a House of Representatives and a Senate.

The House of Representatives and Senate operate with similar powers, except that appropriation bills must originate in the House, while confirmation of the Governor's appointments rests with the Senate. The concurrence of both bodies is necessary before any bill may become a law.

The House of Representatives has 180 members and the Senate has 56. Two-year terms of office apply to both houses, and the entire membership of each body is elected at the same time.

JUDICIAL

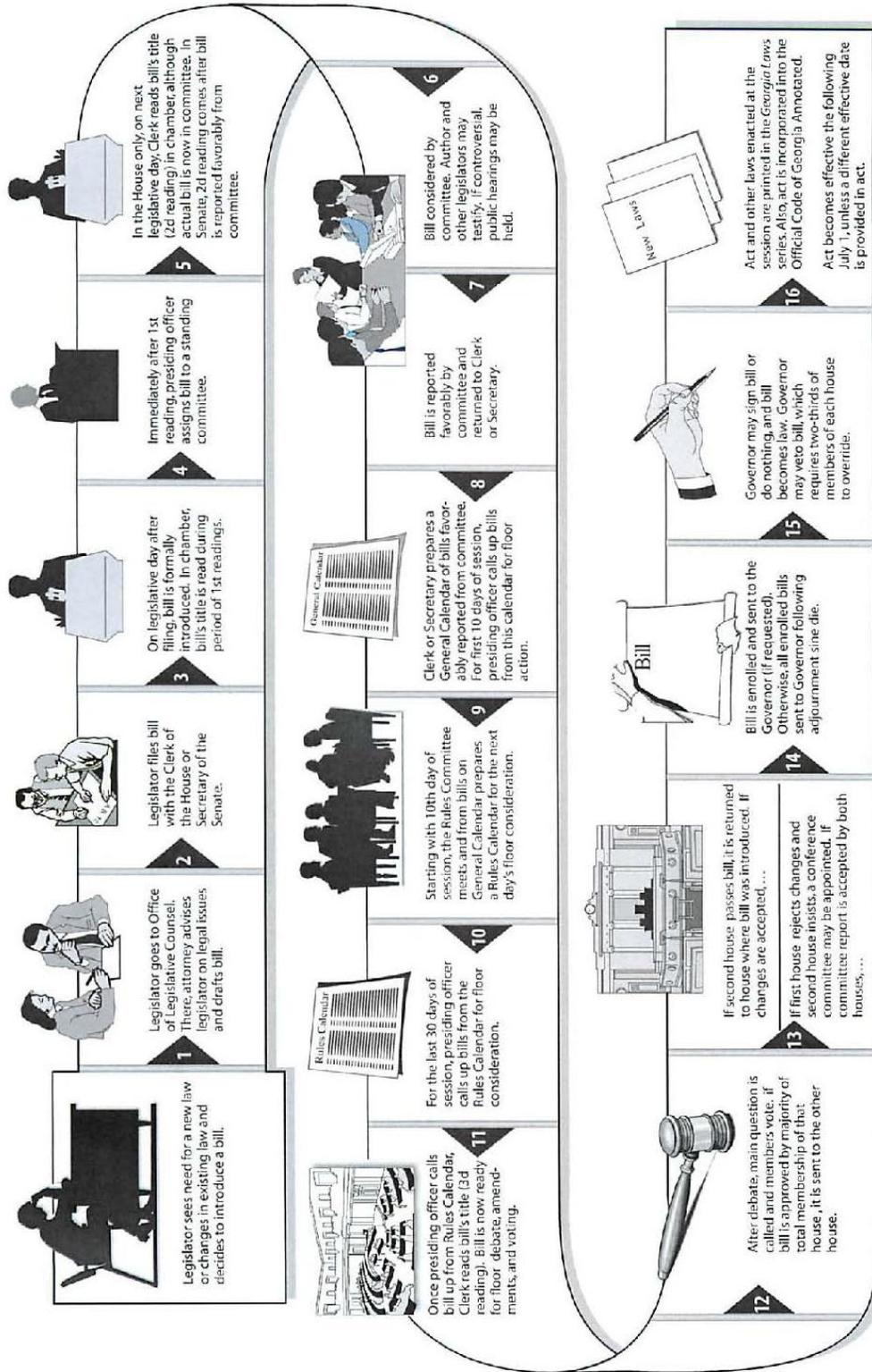
The Judicial Branch of state government consists of courts of limited, general and appellate jurisdiction.

Courts of limited jurisdiction generally hear less serious cases. In this category are: (1) magistrate courts, which issue search warrants, try violations of county ordinances and hear civil suits under \$15,000; (2) probate courts, which probate wills, administer estates and in some counties handle traffic cases; (3) state courts of counties, which hear civil cases and misdemeanor criminal cases and (4) juvenile courts, which hear cases involving youths under seventeen.

The basic trial court with general jurisdiction for hearing cases involving state law is the superior court. Here, any civil or criminal case may be tried and all felonies must be tried. The legislature has divided Georgia into forty-eight superior court circuits, with each circuit containing from one to eight counties and served by one or more judges.

Georgia's two major courts of appellate jurisdiction are the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court. These courts do not try cases, but hear appeals from lower courts.

How a Bill Is Passed in the Georgia Legislature



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For Teachers

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WORRIED ABOUT YOUR FUTURE?
War...Economy...Health Care...Education...Environment...

You Should Be!
Officials who abuse us, cannot lead us

Bring the Truth to Light
Get the facts on those who control your future:

- Biographical Info
- Voting Records
- Issue Positions
- Interest Group Ratings
- Public Statements
- Campaign Finances

What's New At Project Vote Smart

National Political Courage Test Results Reveal Scared Candidates in Every State

Only 17% of all 2010 candidates for U.S. House & Senate, governor and state legislatures are willing to tell voters their positions on key issues facing the nation. The rest are afraid of exposing themselves to their opponents. Notable findings include:

- Republican and Democratic candidates overall response rates are within two percentage points of each other, 14% & 12%, respectively.
- Only 15% of congressional incumbents answered issue questions.

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We Provide More Information About Elected Officials Than They Remember About Themselves

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[Intro to PVS](#)

This web-based tool allows you to do many different things:

- Look up your legislators
- Find background information such as
 - Biographical, voting records, issue positions, endorsements
- Contact information for all legislators

Ten Tips to Effective Advocacy

Every issue is different. Every public official is different. Yet there are a few universal principles for presenting your case to public officials. These apply to all advocacy efforts.

1. **Be informed.** Do your homework. Learn as much as you can about your issues. Be ready to explain how a law or policy affects you, your family, and your neighborhood. Know, too, what the opposition's arguments will be. Be ready for questions and have as many answers as you can. If you are in doubt, "I don't know, but I will find out," is a very good answer.
2. **Tell the truth.** You only get one shot at credibility. If you lose it, you lose forever. Don't stretch, embellish, or fudge on information. Don't fake it. You can always give the person accurate information later. If you promise someone information, get back to that person soon. This also gives you another chance for a meeting or phone conversation.
3. **Always thank people who help.** Even if you did all the work, always thank a public official who helped in any way. Everyone likes recognition. For you, getting the job done is what really matters. It does not matter who gets the credit.
4. **Know how the process works.** You can get information from the state capitol on how the legislative process works. City councils, school boards, and other decision-making bodies have guidelines on how you get information to their members.
5. **Get to know your representatives and the people who work for them.** Like anyone else, decision-makers relate best to people they know. The more often a person sees you, the more likely that person will be listening to you. The friendlier you are at each visit, the more likely that the person will be to remember your issues. Don't neglect the decision-maker's staff. Especially in the Legislature and Congress, staff are often the most informed and influential.
6. **Keep it simple.** Think your position through before you talk to an elected official. Have it down to the simplest and shortest information possible. Most decision-makers admit that they are one-page people. One page of well-put facts will do you more good than all the scientific studies on earth. Be specific about what you want. A general plea for more money or equal rights might be ignored. A specific request for achievable goal is more likely to gain attention and support.
7. **Know your bottom line.** Often you will ask for more than you can possibly get. This is good strategy but you need to know what you absolutely must have. Be ready to

compromise. When you have an agreement, get a commitment. Confirm your understanding of the agreement with a written note of thanks.

8. **Know when to quit.** Sometimes you aren't going to get any more than you have. If you "over lobby" your points, you may make an enemy that will outlast all your future efforts. Don't burn bridges! Even if you are angry, it won't do you any good to show that anger to a decision-maker.
9. **Know your supporters and your opponents.** You can work with other people or groups who share your concerns. The work will be twice as easy and twice as effective. You also need to know who opposes your point of view. Keep track of the information they are giving so you can prepare to counter it. Know which decision-makers are on your side-and which ones you will never convince. Don't waste time on the invincible.
10. **Follow up.** Lobbying is never a one-time thing. You need to revisit, call again, go to meetings, and write. Above all, never take anything for granted. Some decision-makers will be friends on one issue and then violently oppose you on another. You can't assume their support, or their knowledge, of your issues. A decision-maker that usually opposes you may suddenly decide to support you. This may happen if your issue appeals to the decision-maker or to his/her constituents.

On the next page, please see an example of a sample letter...

Return Address	Your Name Address City, State, Zip Code Phone number
Date	[insert date]
Heading	The Honorable [insert full name] Address City, State, Zip Code
Salutation	Dear Representative [or Senator] [insert last name]:
Introduce yourself and state your purpose	As a resident of Athens, and a recipient of Social Security, I am writing to ask for your support of H.R. 4653. This bill would authorize a one-time payment of \$250 to Social Security and Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries.
Explain why you are making this request.	The 2010 Census indicated that poverty rates are rising, and the group that has seen the highest increase are those who are 65 years and older.
Make a connection to his/her constituency through a personal story or any facts or figures available.	I am a 71 year old woman and Social Security is an important part of my life. Each month, I receive a check for \$856. This check is all I have to survive on, as I am on my own. Some months, I have to choose between purchasing medication or food. If passed, this legislation will affect me and many of my neighbors. Athens-Clarke County has consistently been named as one of the poorest counties in the country, and there are many others in my area who receive these important benefits.
Restate your request, and ask him/her to follow-up.	More than 19% of Athens-Clarke County residents are beneficiaries of Social Security. I urge you to support this important legislation. Investing in Social Security will keep many older people out of poverty. I would appreciate a written reply that states how you voted on this issue.
Thank the legislator for his/her time.	Thank you for your time and consideration. [Your ongoing support of positive Social Security policies is greatly appreciated!]
Sign off	Sincerely, [Your name]

YOUR LOCAL LEGISLATORS

GOVERNOR



Nathan Deal

Email: <http://www.dealinaugural.com/contact.php>
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GEORGIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



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Rep. Terry England
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Rep. Regina Quick
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Rep. Spencer Frye

Clarke County– District 118

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Rep. Chuck Williams

Clarke and Oconee counties – District 119

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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Congressman Paul Broun

10th Congressional District of Georgia (includes Clarke)

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www.broun.house.gov

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Athens, GA 30606

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IMPORTANT WEBSITES

Athens Community Council on Aging

www.accaging.org

National Academy of Social Insurance

www.nasi.org

U.S. Senate

www.senate.gov

U.S. House of Representatives

www.house.gov

Georgia General Assembly (State House of Representatives and State Senate)

www.legis.state.ga.us

Project Vote Smart

www.votesmart.org

This packet was produced by

The logo for the Athens Community Council on Aging (ACCA) features the letters 'ACCA' in a large, bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters are closely spaced and have a slight shadow effect.

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