



CASA Day at the Capitol - 2026

Overview

- Legislative Advocacy 101
 - Legislative Process
 - Budget Cycle
 - Communications with Legislators
- Under the Gold Dome
 - Current Session
 - GA CASA Advocacy Strategy & Messaging
- CASA Day at the Capitol Details



Legislative Advocacy 101

General Assembly

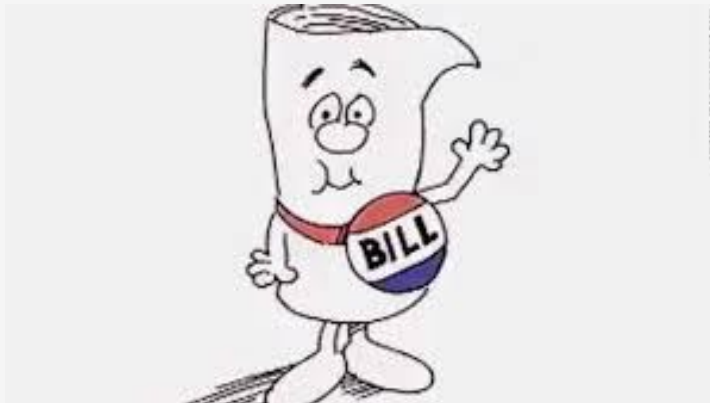


General Assembly

- Biennial Session
- Bicameral
 - 56 Senators and 180 Representatives
 - Lt. Gov. presides over Senate
 - Speaker presides over House
- Citizen Legislators
- Meets for 40 Days, beginning 2nd Monday in January
 - Day 28 is Crossover Day
- Only legislation required to pass each year is the state budget
 - Governor-strong state

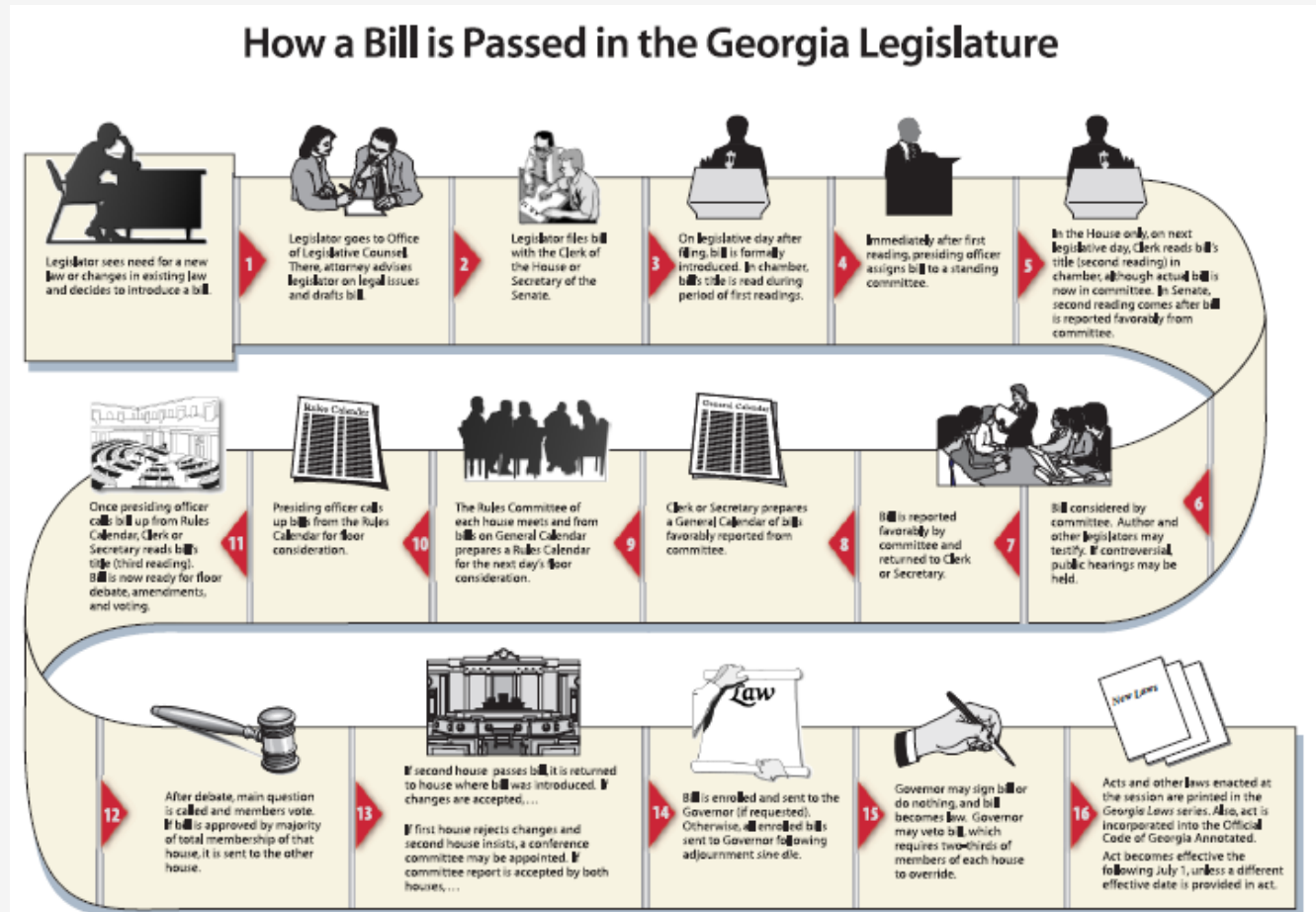


How a Bill Becomes a Law



© 2007 CAI VINSON INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT

[The Life of a Law | Georgia.gov](http://Georgia.gov)

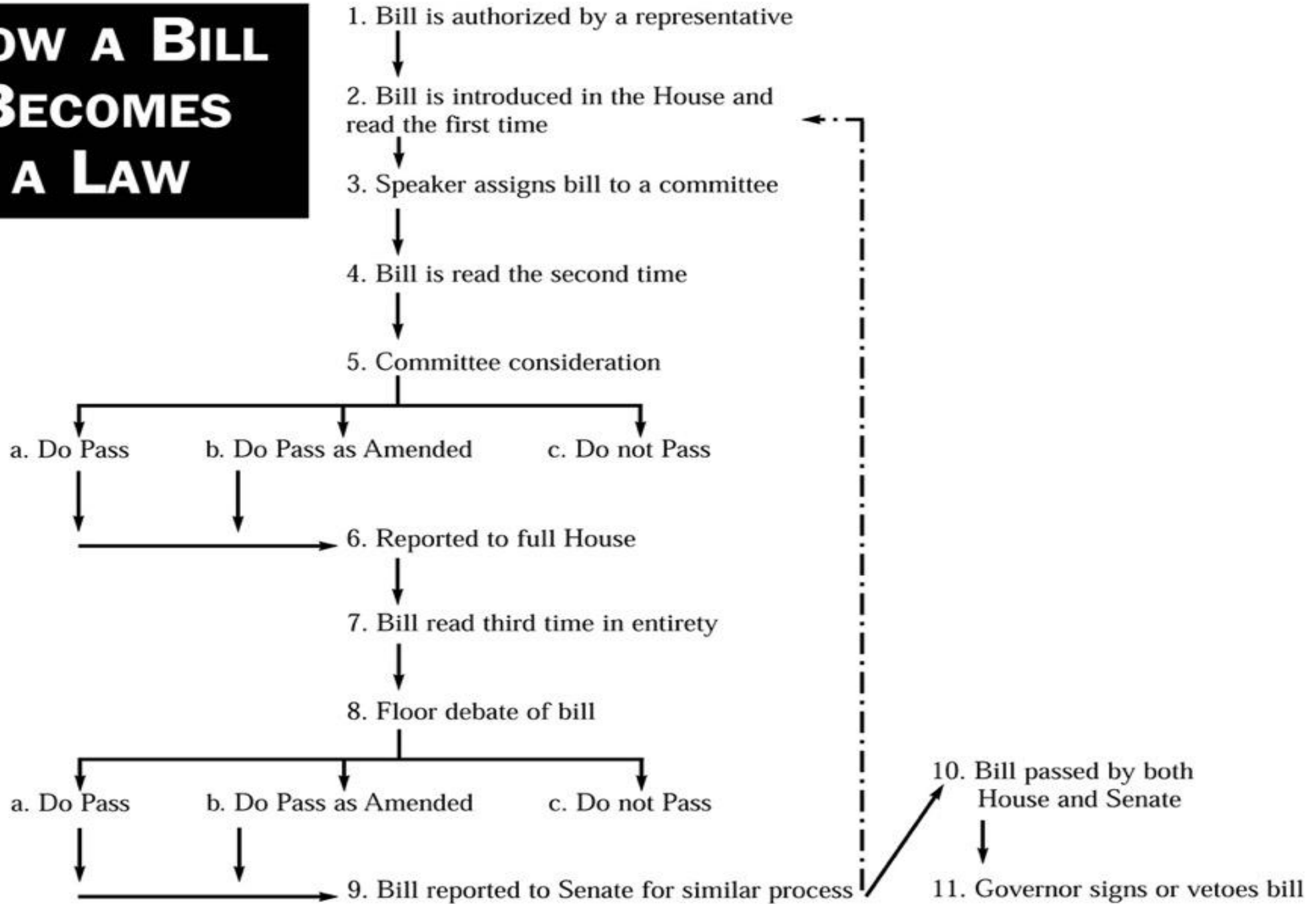


© 2007 CAI Vinson Institute of Government University of Georgia



CASA DAY
AT THE CAPITOL

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW



Relevant Committees

HOUSE

- Appropriations
- Judiciary, Juvenile
- Education
- Health & Human Services
- Civil Judiciary
- Non-Civil Judiciary
- Rules

SENATE

- Appropriations
- Children & Families
- Education & Youth
- Judiciary
- Health & Human Services
- Special Judiciary
- Rules



The Rules Committee

“The daily legislative agenda on the floor of each chamber is governed by a rules calendar prepared by each chamber’s Rules Committee.”

-Carl Vinson Institute of Government - University of Georgia, *Handbook for Georgia Legislators*



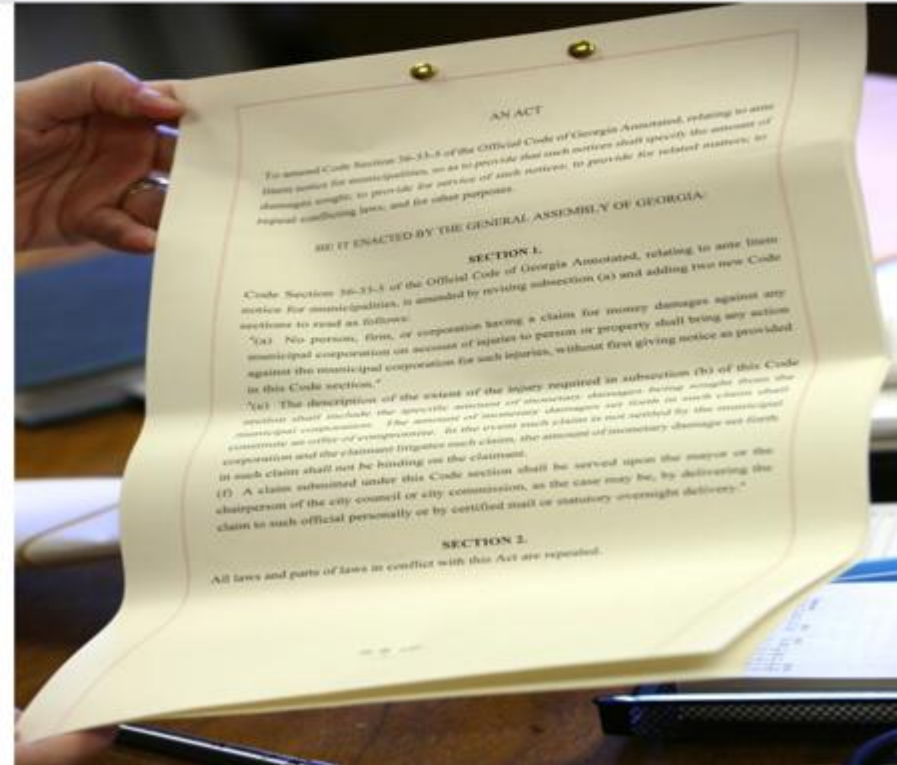
Floor Consideration



Bill Signature or Veto

Governor may...

- Sign the bill
- Do nothing
- Veto (requires two-thirds of members of each chamber to override)

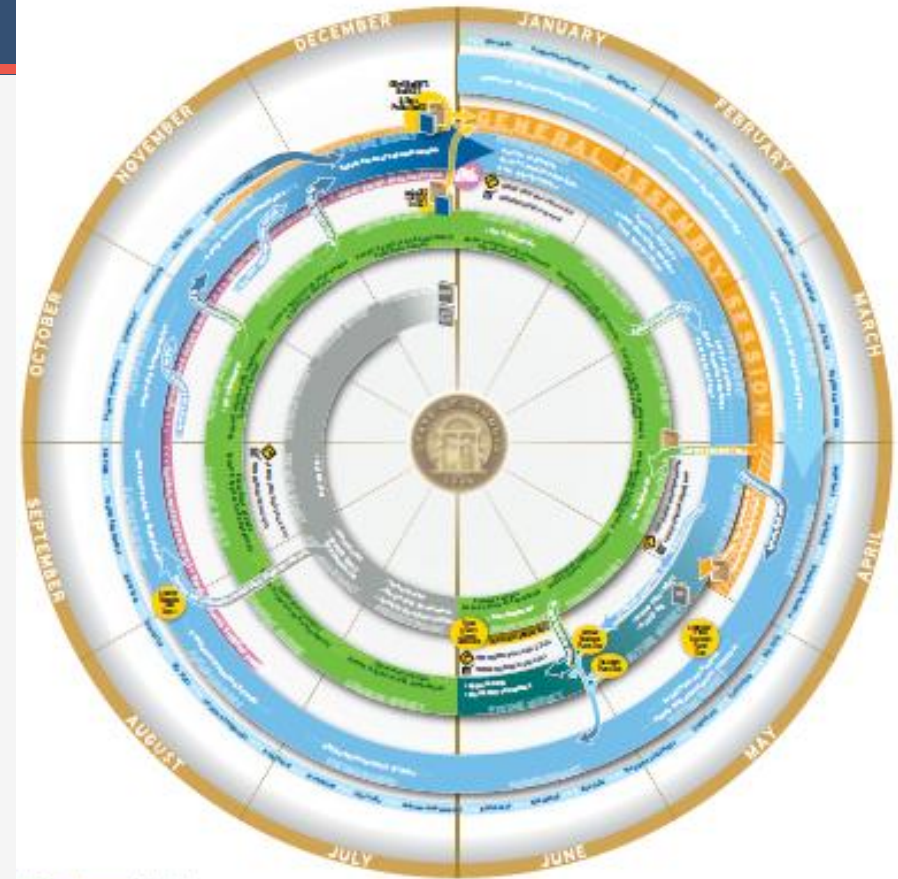


Budget Cycle

https://opb.georgia.gov/sites/opb.georgia.gov/files/imported/vgn/images/portal/cit_1210/44/31/162982494ga_budget_cycle.pdf

State of Georgia Budget Cycle

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF PLANNING & BUDGET



GLOSSARY

AGENCY BUDGET The amount of money that an agency receives from the State Treasury to fund its operations.	BUDGET CONFERENCE A meeting of the Governor, the Speaker of the House, and the Senate to discuss the budget.	BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION The process of putting the budget into effect.	BUDGET REVISION A change to the budget after it has been approved.	BUDGET YEAR The period of time for which the budget is prepared.
APPROPRIATION The amount of money that is set aside for a specific purpose.	BUDGETARY CONTROL The process of monitoring the budget to ensure that it is being spent as intended.	BUDGETARY DEFICIT The amount of money that is spent in excess of the budget.	BUDGETARY SURPLUS The amount of money that is saved in excess of the budget.	BUDGETARY YEAR The period of time for which the budget is prepared.
BUDGETARY ACCOUNTING The process of recording and reporting the budget.	BUDGETARY AUDIT The process of checking the budget to ensure that it is accurate.	BUDGETARY CONTROL SYSTEM The system used to monitor the budget.	BUDGETARY DEFICIT The amount of money that is spent in excess of the budget.	BUDGETARY SURPLUS The amount of money that is saved in excess of the budget.
BUDGETARY CONTROL SYSTEM The system used to monitor the budget.	BUDGETARY DEFICIT The amount of money that is spent in excess of the budget.	BUDGETARY SURPLUS The amount of money that is saved in excess of the budget.	BUDGETARY YEAR The period of time for which the budget is prepared.	BUDGETARY ACCOUNTING The process of recording and reporting the budget.



Steps in Georgia's Budget Process

1



2



Budget Request Instructions Sent to Agencies:
In early summer, the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) sends guidelines to agencies for budget requests.

Agencies Prepare Budget Request:
Agencies prepare requests and get board approval (if applicable).

3



4



Budget Request Submitted:
Agencies submit all requests for current and upcoming fiscal year to OPB by September 1.

Budget Request Analyzed:
The governor, OPB staff, and agency leaders review and assess current and new budget requests.

5



6

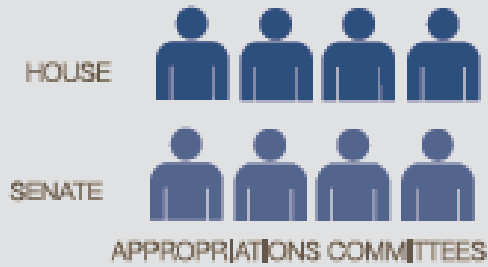


Governor Finishes Budget:
By the end of the calendar year, the governor finalizes the budget proposals.

Budget Documents Sent to the General Assembly:
In January, within the first five days of the General Assembly session, the governor presents budget proposals.



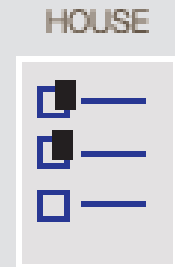
7



Legislative Appropriations Process:

The Appropriations committees in the Georgia House of Representatives and Senate hold budget hearings for the current and upcoming fiscal year.

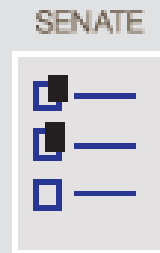
8



House Approves Its Budget

The House votes on changes to governor's budget proposals, Passes its version to the Senate.

9



Senate Approves Its Budget:

The Senate reviews the House-passed budget for the current and upcoming fiscal years, can make changes, then votes on latest versions.

10



Conference Committee Meets:

The lieutenant governor and Speaker of the House appoint a conference committee to negotiate a single version of the budget.

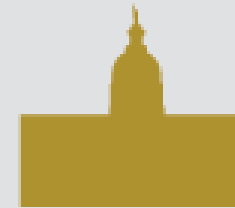
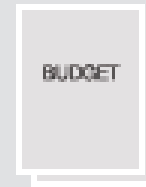


11



Final Version Approved:
The House and the Senate each vote to approve the final version.

12



Appropriations Bill Sent to Governor:
The governor has 40 days from the end of the legislative session to sign the budget bill into law and may veto specific parts of it.

Source: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute Budget Primer

<https://gbpi.org/georgiabudgetprimer/>



Effective Advocacy Strategies

- Plan ahead
- Be honest and direct, concise
- Be passionate, persistent, polite, positive
- Personalize issues
- Show appreciation
- Seize opportunity
- Work both sides of the aisle



Communicating with Legislators

- Phone Calls
 - Likely speak with an assistant, intern, or staffer who will relay your message
 - Identify yourself, organizational affiliation, and mention if you live in legislator's home district
 - Explain why you're calling and make your ask, have 1-2 concise points to support position
 - Provide any local or personal examples of why it matters
 - Thank the person for their time
- Email
 - Convenient, but may be less effective because less personal, may be preferred for some
 - Put your position in the subject line (e.g., Please support HB__)
 - Form letters won't have same weight as personalized ones
 - One issue per letter
 - State purpose in first paragraph
 - Include personal stories, highlight specific examples that support position, including local impact
 - May request a response asking whether legislator will support your position
- Face-to-face & Text



How to Stay Informed:

- Georgia General Assembly page-- www.legis.ga.gov
- Barton Child Law & Policy Center @ Emory Law Legislative Updates
- Voices for Georgia's Children
 - [2026 Bill Tracker | Georgia Voices](#)
- Legislator newsletters
- Budget
 - Gov's Office of Planning & Budget - [Budget Documents | Governor's Office of Planning and Budget \(georgia.gov\)](#)
 - Georgia Budget & Policy Institute— www.gbpi.org
- Lawmakers — [Lawmakers | Georgia Public Broadcasting](#)



Legislative Session



2026

- Today is Legislative Day 14, 2nd year of session
- Substantive legislative issues to watch
 - HB 1002-Shifting Medicaid from managed care to fee for service
 - SR 622-Study Committee to assess service delivery
 - HB 943/SB402-Autism pilot for screening and evaluations of children in care
 - HB1025-Funding, management, and accountability for CHINS program
 - Raise the Age
 - HB 256-Foster Parent Bill of Rights
 - HR 1023-Constitutional amendment to capture parents' rights to raise children
 - SB 383-Changing Child Fatality Review Committees
 - SB 434-Establish Office of Homeless Youth Prevention & Protection within Department of Community Affairs
 - SB 431-Immediate school enrollment



AFY 26 Budget-Governor's Recommendations

- **Department of Human Services**
 - \$41.5 million in additional funding to respond to the DFCS foster care budget deficit
- **Department of Juvenile Justice**
 - \$2.5 million for compensation and other position-related costs due to decreased turnover
 - \$2.8 million for facility repairs
- **Department of Community Health**
 - Budget instruction to submit a 1915(i) waiver to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide a suite of services to enrollees in the [Therapeutic Care Model program \(TCM\)](#). The TCM program aims to provide intensive, individualized care to Medicaid-eligible youth with complex behavioral to keep them in their homes and communities.



House AFY 26 Budget

- DHS receives \$8.8 million for technology projects including child support case management system maintenance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) error reduction methods.
- \$15 million for a new integrated child welfare reporting system which provides a secure platform to connect mandated reporters with government agencies, enabling early detection, faster service, and increased accountability. This program is being piloted in six counties and already has proven results. In Albany alone, the program has resulted in an 86% reduction in infant deaths and a 14% rise in service referrals from nonprofit providers.
- Provides \$82.7 million to fund the deficit in within DFCS prioritizing reunification services, assessments, and specialized service for high acuity youth. Additionally, \$1.6 million is appropriated to DHS to restore four foster care support contracts that were cut to reduce the deficit and release funds to a provider funded in FY 2026.



SFY '27 Budget – Governor's Recommendations

- **Department of Public Health**
 - \$2 million to expand the maternal [Home Visiting Program](#) to an additional 21 counties
- **Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities**
 - \$2.7 million to annualize funding for community-based facilities that provide services to child, adolescent, and forensic populations
- **Department of Human Services**
 - \$21.3 million in additional funding for increased growth and costs of foster care
 - Transfer \$6.2 million in funding that supports the Commercial Sexual Exploitation Recovery Center (known as "Grace's Place") from the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund Commission to the DHS-DFCS foster care program to allow for maximization of federal funding




Georgia CASA Legislative Strategy

- Show appreciation and request their support of CASA's budget increase request
- Tell your CASA story and engage legislators as CASA ambassadors
- Bring attention to needs of children in foster care in your community and tie into current legislative activity



Budget Messaging

- State funding supports recruitment, screening and training of CASA by providing 1 staff to supervise 30 volunteers
- CASA network's current operating budget is approximately \$19 million, including state appropriations of \$5.635 million
- CASA is an exemplary public-private partnership that demonstrates a 75 to 1 return on investment
 - State funding represents less than 30% of the annual budget in GA
- Past increases have provided significant investment in network expansion



**Georgia
CASA
FY 2027**

\$1M State Budget Request
Investment in CASA Advocacy

\$2,750,000
Total Investment Goal

Serve **75%**
of Children In Foster Care

Recruit/Train
1,000
Volunteers

Advocate
3,000
Additional Children

I. Invest in Critical High-Need, High-Impact Areas with Immediate Staffing Demands - \$600,000

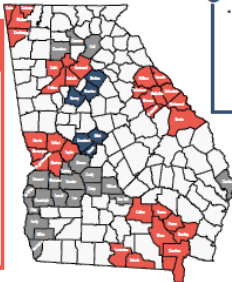
Targeted areas:

- Represent 16 affiliates serving 58 counties with more than 8400 children in care (55%)
- Need staffing to support an additional 900 volunteers
- Ready for expansion in untapped areas

Need categories:

High Need

- Experience highest rates of foster care population with 300+ children awaiting a CASA Volunteer
- Augusta area
- Cobb
- Columbus area
- DeKalb
- Fulton
- Gwinnett
- Lockout Mountain area
- Valdosta area
- Waycross area



High Potential

- Possess immediate growth potential and momentum for accelerated volunteer engagement
- Henry
- Macon area
- Newton & Walton

High Volume

- Serve more than 300 children annually
- Americus & Cordele areas
- Chatham
- Cherokee
- Hall & Dawson

II. Expand Network Growth & Sustained Service - \$400,000

- Increase affiliate service levels to address heightened demand and volunteer availability
- Continue coordinated training, statewide recruitment, screening, and quality assurance efforts

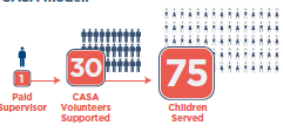
CASA Maximizes Resources:

- 250 Staff positions statewide supporting advocacy for 9000 children
- Federal, state, local funding as well as philanthropic investments. State funds comprise less than 30% of total network funding
- Community engagement in public system delivery

Serving all **159** Counties

Current Service Level **50%**

CASA model:



For more information | Jennifer King Executive Director • 404-874-2888 • jking@gacasa.org • gacasa.org



Budget Increase Request - \$ 1M

\$2.75 Million Total Investment

Goal: 3,000 Additional Children Served

1,000 Additional Volunteers

75% of Children in Foster Care

Invest in Critical High-Need, Hig-Impact Areas with Immediate Staffing Demands - \$600,000

- Target jurisdictions that experience the highest rates of foster care entries; service area exceeds 300 children without a CASA volunteer; highest volume of children served of more than 300 children per year; poised for immediate growth potential and accelerated volunteer engagement
- Areas represent 16 affiliates serving 58 counties with nearly 55% of total children in foster care

Sustain Network Growth & Expanded Service - \$400,000

- Increase affiliate service levels in response to heightened demand and volunteer availability
- Continue provision of coordinated training, statewide recruitment, screening, and quality assurance efforts



Strategy

- Ongoing commitment to continuously build relationships with legislators both in the district and in Atlanta throughout the session:
 - Thank legislators for their continuous support of CASA and share progress
 - Engage legislators in discussions around key issues in child welfare
 - Serve as a sounding board and resource on child welfare issues as session progresses
 - Provide joint opportunities to recruit and engage constituents in supporting youth in care
 - Ask legislators to become CASA ambassadors in the community by sharing local CASA information with constituents and attending local CASA events
 - Invite legislators to participate in a listening session or to observe CASA in action in court



Messaging

- CASA advocacy is essential to children who have experienced abuse or neglect
 - Every child in state's custody needs the individualized attention and sense of urgency that a CASA volunteer brings in improving their experience in care
 - CASAs provide consistency and continuity for a child involved in the system and helps connect information among DFCS staff, foster placements, providers, schools and many other stakeholders
 - CASA maximizes community resources and support by involving community volunteers in supporting juvenile courts and children/families in foster care, resulting in additional resources, expertise and connections for children, families and services
- CASAs advocate for 50% of children in foster care



Messaging

- Highlight issues that impact children and families in your area. Consider how DFCS budget reductions and resulting service authorization changes have directly impacted services and the local child welfare infrastructure. Share first-hand examples and direct-impact stories.
 - impact of fewer services (including behavior aides) on permanency, placement stability, foster parent and caregiver support, and mental health of children and youth in care and their parents
 - Impact suspended transportation service has on frequent and meaningful visitation, court participation, and service delivery
 - loss of placements (beds) and its subsequent impact on child's proximity to community, resources, and support (how distance and travel impacts reunification, placement stability, peer relationships, and connectedness) and placement suitability impact (least restrictive and most home-like option)
 - need for quality legal representation for children and parents
 - how court-ordered services influence service delivery and the impact on permanency, best interest advocacy, and needs of children and families
- Encourage legislators that we must work together to find collaborative solutions.



Preparing for Outreach

- Identify your legislators
 - Find your district number(s).
 - See [Georgia General Assembly - Find Your Legislator](#)
- Review background about all legislators in your program's service area
 - Biographical info, committees, relevant sponsored legislation
- Set an appointment, send an email, invite to an event



Messaging Outreach Opportunities

- Email message about CASA's budget request and significance of CASA's involvement in child welfare system
- Targeted outreach to House Human Resources Subcommittee of Appropriations members ****Look for Action Alerts****
- Outreach to full House Appropriations Committee members and members at large
- Mirrored outreach to Senate (Human Dev. & Public Health)
- Conference Committee member outreach as needed
- Testifying before committees
- CASA Day @ the Capitol face-to-face networking and relationship building



CASA Day at the Capitol

February 12



CASA DAY
AT THE CAPITOL

Georgia Casa | Changing Lives for Georgia's Children in Foster Care

2022 & 2023 Days at the Capitol



2026

CASA DAY AT THE CAPITOL

WHEN

Thursday, February 12
9:30 a.m.

WHERE

Floyd Room (20th Floor - West Tower)
Floyd Building
200 Piedmont Ave SW
(across from the Capitol Building)

Join advocates from the CASA network in this fast-paced opportunity to meet our legislators, bring awareness to the needs of children in foster care, and show the power of CASA advocacy.

CASA Directors: Call your Representatives and Senators to arrange a visit and invite them to the drop-in luncheon.

\$20 Registration Fee

QUESTIONS?

EMAIL
Miriam Wade at
mwade@gacasa.org

CALL
678.939.5717

JOIN THE
CASA
MOVEMENT

*Wear a pop
of red!*

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

9:30AM

Welcome Remarks &
Legislative Briefing

10:30AM

Group Photo & Capitol Visit*

11:45AM-1PM

Drop-in Luncheon

**Bring your ID to enter the Floyd Building
& the Capitol*



SAVE THE DATE

Registration opens January 7
and closes January 28

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:

www.gacasa.org/casa-day-capitol-2026/

Post snapshots on social media
using #GACASADayatCap

Website

Flyer
Schedule of Events
Legislator contact info
Sample letter to invite legislator
Registration links
Talking Points

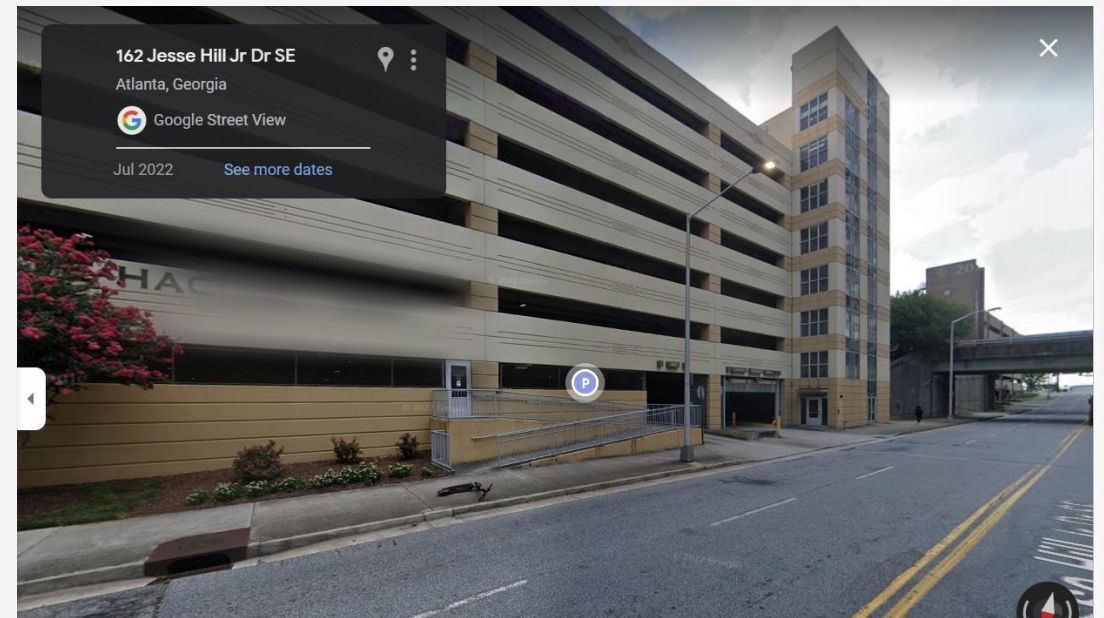
For more details, visit:

[CASA Day at the Capitol 2026 - Georgia CASA](http://www.gacasa.org/casa-day-capitol-2026/)



Parking & MARTA

- Pete Hackney Garage-convenient to Floyd Building, \$10 pay on entry
- 162 Jesse Hill Jr., Dr.
- Located at the corner of Jesse Hill Jr. Drive and Decatur Street.
- MARTA: Georgia State E-1 on the Blue Line. Trains every 15 minutes. Station at Floyd Building.
- **Allow ample time!!!**












STATE GOVERNMENT COMPLEX

CAPITOL HILL Parking Map

GEORGIA BUILDING AUTHORITY

- PT** 2 Peachtree
- CT** 90 Central
- AB** Agriculture Building
- BD** Butler Deck
- HE** Health Deck
- LB** Law Building (old Judicial Building)
- JS** Nathan Deal Judicial Center
- PP** Plaza Park
- PH** Pete Hackney
- SD** South Deck
- SP** Steve Polk
- TW** Trinity Washington
-  **Underground Parking**
-  **Multi-Level Deck Parking**
-  **Surface Parking Lot**
-  **Public Parking**
-  **Accessible Loading and Unloading Zone**
-  **Electric Vehicle Charging Stations**
-  **Bicycle Racks**
- 1 MLK (Piedmont Ave)**
- 2 Peachtree Building (Inside-Main Level)**
- Butler Deck (Inside-Level 1)**
- Coverdell Legislative Office Bldg/CLOB (Capitol Sq)**
- Floyd Building/Twin Towers (Piedmont Ave)**
- Law Building (Capitol Sq)**
- South Deck (Inside-Level 2)**
- TW Building (Trinity Ave)**



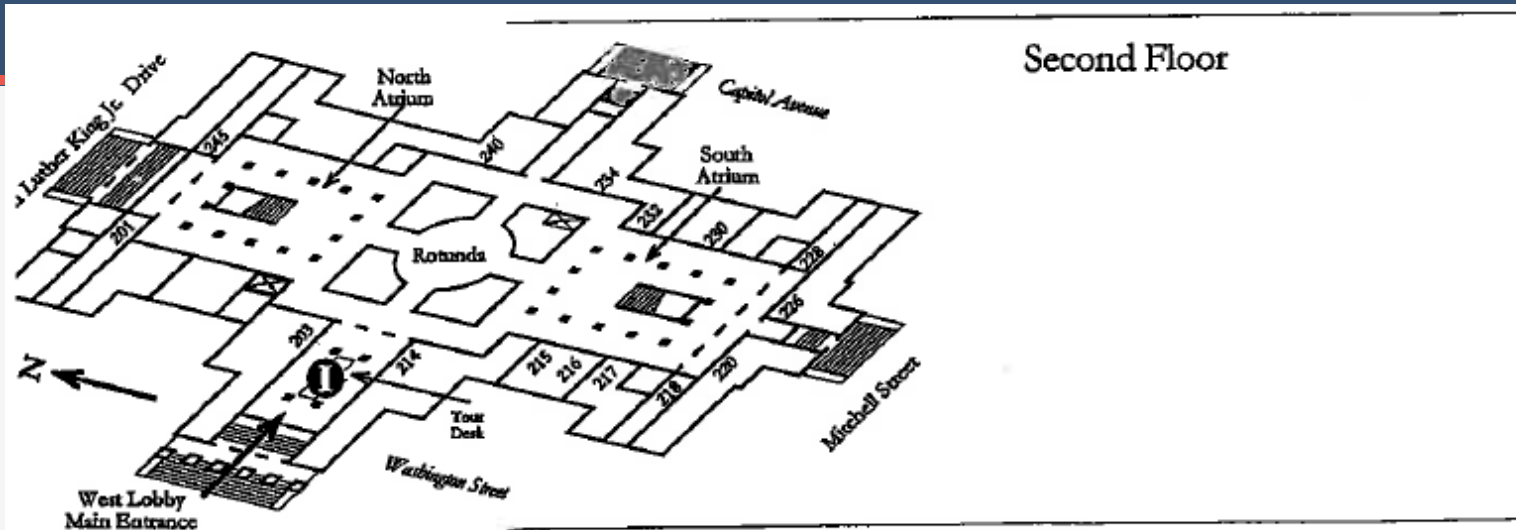
Rev 12/2020

Security

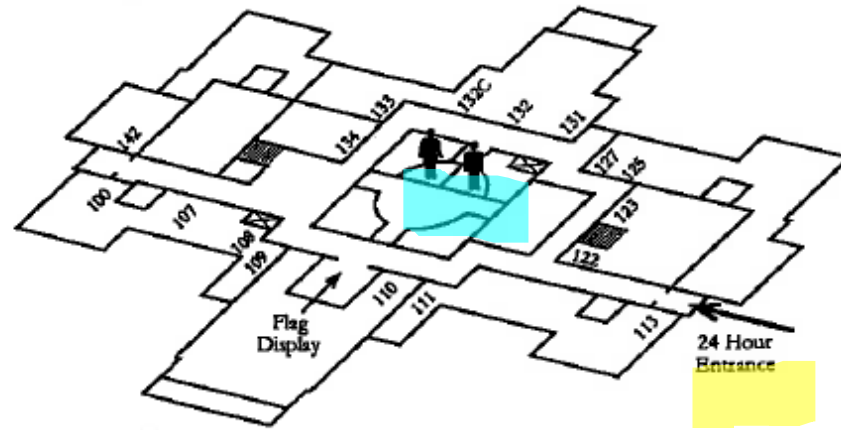
- Bring your driver's license or state-issued photo ID.
- You will be required to show it at the Twin Towers, Capitol, and Coverdell Legislative Office Building.
- Metal detectors



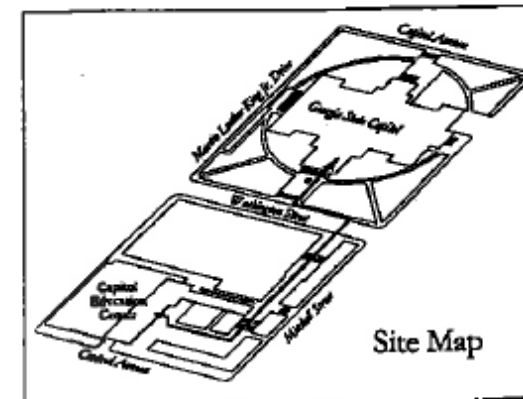
1st and 2nd Floor Maps



Second Floor



First Floor

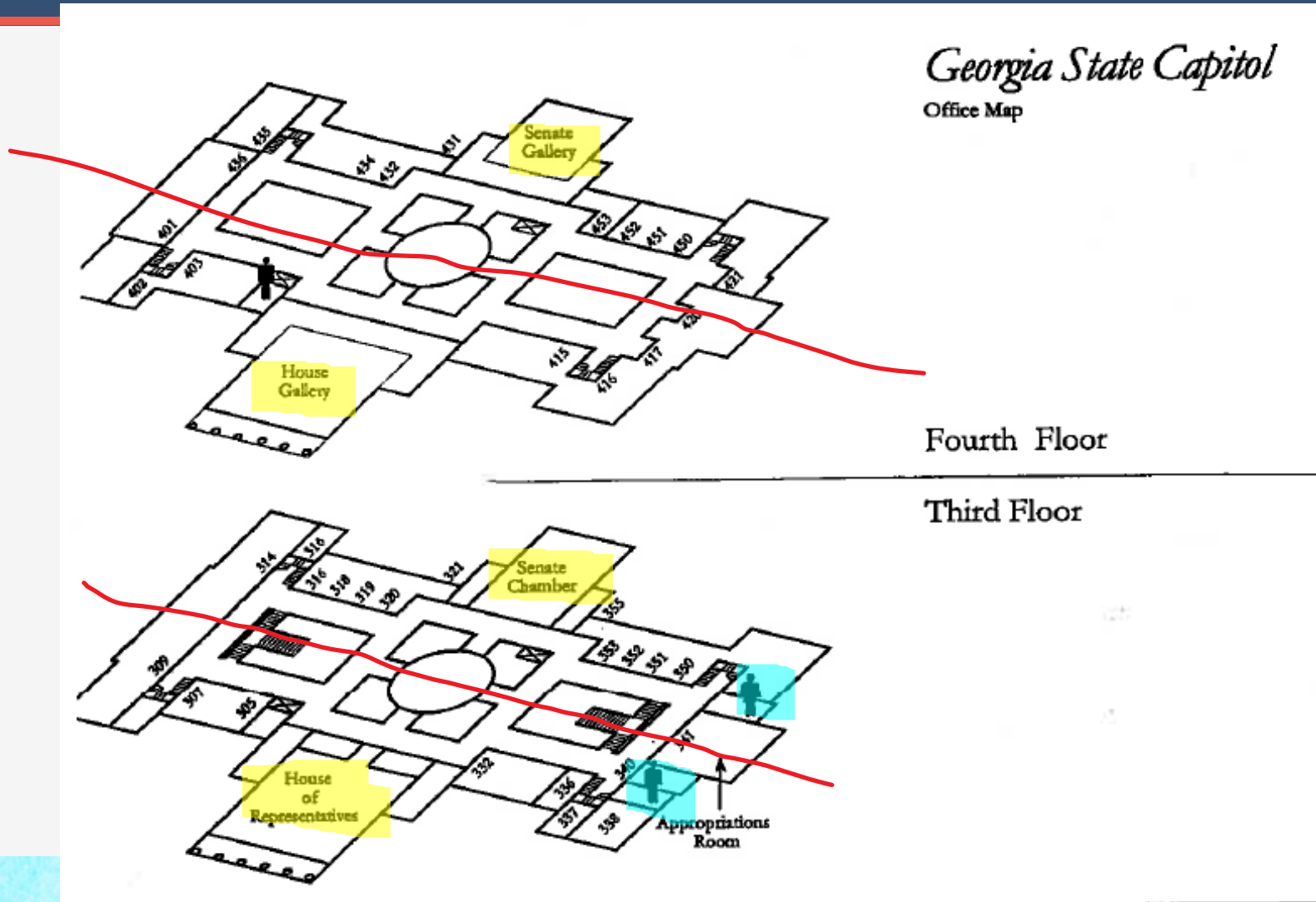


Site Map

Lord Aeck & Sargent Architecture, 1999



3rd and 4th Floor Maps



Schedule

- 8:45 – Coffee and pastries
- 9:30 – Program Begins
 - Welcome & Special Remarks
 - Legislative Briefing
 - Under the Gold Dome
 - Call to Action
- **OR Morning Orders at 10 AM**
- Capitol Visit *
 - Governor Photo @ 11
- 11:45 – Luncheon **
- 1:00 – Adjourn



*Capitol Visit

- Observe from Gallery (4th floor):
 - Have been known to be strict with the use of phones, cameras, etc.
 - No drinks.
- *Page your legislator (3rd floor)
- Stop by legislative offices in Capitol or Coverdell Legislative Office Building.
- Tour the capitol.
- Afternoon: Attend a committee hearing



Paging

- Know your legislators in advance.
- Complete the paging slips before you get to the ropes on the 3rd floor.
 - Send a note
 - Come out to speak
- Proceed to page desk.
- Remember what your Page looks like.



Luncheon

- 11:35-1, The Floyd Room
- Make sure someone is there the entire time.
 - Go through the buffet in shifts.
- Your legislator will be brought to you; make room at table.
- There will be set seating for programs situated geographically close to be near each other to accommodate shared representatives and senators.



Before You Go:

- Learn your legislators.
- Make appointments.
- Invite your legislators to lunch.
 - If you haven't already done so, do! (sample language on website)
 - If you haven't heard back, send a reminder
- Prepare your volunteers.
 - Have a mini briefing in advance for those attending
 - Provide info about all legislators in your program's service area
 - Photo, biographical info, committees, relevant sponsored legislation



See you on the 12th!

- Don't forget:
 - Wear a **pop of red!**
 - Use #GACASADayatCap
 - Learn your legislators
 - Schedule appointments
 - Leave early and remember coats, umbrellas, and IDs
 - Have fun!



Questions?

atyner@gacasa.org

