



Senator John Albers

September 2022 Newsletter

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Welcome

The fall is rapidly approaching, and it is great to see Georgia continuing to thrive. Do you remember 2 years ago or even last year? Most states were closed down, kids were unable to attend school in person and economies were faltering. Shutdowns were happening almost everywhere, but not in Georgia! Governor Brian Kemp opened our state safely and effectively by trusting people and businesses. We have been abundantly blessed by Governor Kemp's bold leadership and have the lowest unemployment rate in state history at 2.8%!

After a challenging 2021, the Albers family is having a terrific 2022. Everyone is healthy, happy and doing well. I celebrated a big birthday (50) last month and am honored to have the opportunity to continue serving you in the Georgia Senate.

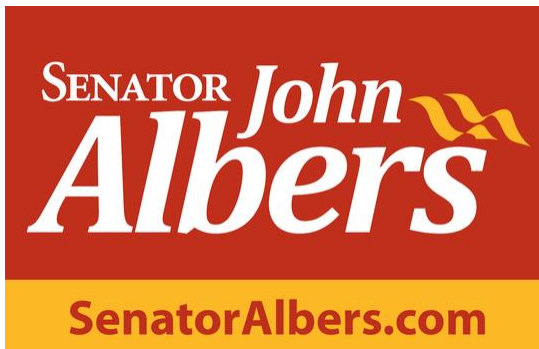
More Tax Relief

Governor Brian Kemp announced two more tax relief packages. Similar to the tax credit we passed earlier this year, the credit will be paid automatically in 2023 and will be up to \$250 for a single filer, \$375 for a single filer, head of household, \$500 for a married couple filing jointly.

The second tax credit will save homeowners in Georgia \$500 on average on their property tax bill thanks to the “Georgia Homeowner Rebate”. This rebate will be applied directly to your 2023 property tax bill. The State will reimburse the County and Board of Education directly for the amount rebated to each homeowner. . Property values and taxes have increased significantly, and I look forward to returning some of your hard earned money. You must receive a homestead exemption to be eligible for this tax relief.

The General Assembly will act quickly on both of these measures when we return to session early 2023. Our State finances are in a strong position due to conservative policies and budgeting. Governor Kemp opened our state for business and we continue to lead the way. I was also pleased to support the largest income tax cut in GA history this year!





Election Season

It is my honor to serve you in the Georgia Senate. I am working hard to ensure we stay the best place to live, work, play and raise a family. I sincerely appreciate your support.

Yard Signs & Volunteer

The War on Criminal Street Gangs

Did you know up to 90% of all violent crimes are committed by criminal street gangs? This is an epidemic and the greatest threat to our state and nation domestically. Georgia, like all too many states across the country, has witnessed a disturbing uptick in gang activity, particularly in our cities. According to the Attorney General's Office, 71,000 validated gang affiliates and over 1,500 suspected gang networks are active across Georgia. In 2021, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's Gang Task Force investigated 446 gang-related cases across 100 Georgia counties and charged more than 170 gang members. While Georgia may not be immune to our nation-wide gang problem, we are unique in that we are taking unprecedented steps to fight gang activity. Governor Brian Kemp, particularly, has led the charge and is responsible for pushing for many of the reforms that have cut down gang violence in our state over the last few years.

One of the first major steps Georgia took in recent years to take on the rise in gang violence was the launch of the Georgia Anti-Gang Network, created by Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr in 2018. This collection of relevant local, state and federal stakeholders has improved intelligence sharing capabilities, strengthened cross-agency collaboration and worked to drive down gang recruitment. To date, the Network has held seven meetings, each leading to productive legislative solutions or innovative collaboration techniques between agencies.

Another tool in the tool belt to combat gang activity was created through House Bill 1134 during the 2022 Legislative Session. Under this monumental bill, Georgia's first statewide Gang Prosecution Unit was established, under the leadership of Governor Brian Kemp and direction of Attorney General Carr, which will have concurrent authority with local prosecutors to tackle gang related crimes. Previously, local prosecutors reported difficulties in pursuing gang related cases that crossed over jurisdictional lines. With this new Unit in place, no criminal gang member will be safe from prosecution. Attorney General Carr, along with other representatives from the Attorney General's Office worked closely with the legislature to make this new unit a reality and, on July 1, 2022, the Unit officially began operations.

Prosecuting criminal gang members is only half of the battle, however. We also must ensure we are doing everything we can as a state to support and retain our law enforcement officers and first responders, as they are often the first ones on the scene of gang activity. One major victory in this effort was the passage of House Bill 286 in 2021, championed in the Senate by friend and colleague Sen. Randy Robertson (R – Cataula), a former member of law enforcement. Essentially, this bill prevents the defunding of local police departments and, specifically, requires that the annual

budgetary appropriations for these police departments during a rolling five-year period are not to decrease by more than five percent. Protection from criminal gang organizations will not be possible without fully funded public safety departments who have the resources and equipment they need to aggressively pursue gang related crimes. I also authored strong anti-gang legislation to bring these criminal enterprises to justice. In addition, we have a serious issue with progressive and activist Prosecutors and Judges not upholding the law. This is a dereliction of duty and I will be sponsoring legislation and remove them from office in next year.

Similarly, Sen. Burt Jones (R – Jackson), introduced legislation that would establish the “Back the Blue Fund,” for the purpose of increasing compensation and enhancing the benefits of law enforcement officers across Georgia. While many who enter into law enforcement do so to serve their communities and not necessarily for the pay, measures such as this will help solve the hiring and retention crisis currently impacting law enforcement statewide. In Georgia, we back the Blue!

Many of the most impactful measures to address criminal gang activity were vetted in the Senate Judiciary Committee, under the leadership of Chairman Sen. Brian Strickland (R – McDonough). Specifically, Sen. Strickland has worked closely with the Governor and First Lady to fight against one of the most detestable crimes perpetrated by gangs: human trafficking. As a credit to their work, the Attorney General’s Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit issued 54 gang and human trafficking charges during an investigation in Dougherty County last summer.

Enough praise cannot be given to Governor Kemp, Attorney General Carr and members of the General Assembly for their tireless efforts to bring safety and security to Georgia’s communities. While we have made monumental progress over the last few years to achieve this goal, we are still aware there is much work still to be done.

As Chairman of the Senate Public Safety Committee, I will continue to work with our law enforcement, first responders, prosecutors, and all other stakeholders to ensure that all who engage in criminal gang activity are brought to justice.

Champion of Public Safety



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