



DEEP CENTER - LEGISLATIVE ACTION 2021

WHO WE ARE

Deep Center uses writing, art, and culture to fuel the creative fires of Savannah's young people, helping them connect their learning to their lives, their lives to their communities, and their actions to transformational change. We also work with adults in their village to make sure youth are seen in their full humanity, and to identify and advocate for administrative and legislative policies that make Savannah a safe place for all young people and their families.

WHY AND HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

We offer this toolkit as part of our ongoing efforts to provide our communities with the basic know-how and resources needed to have a say in the policies that affect our communities, schools, children, and members of our village.

This toolkit focuses on Georgia State legislation, proposed by our Georgia State legislators, and provides an overview of how to advocate for policies for a safer, more equitable Savannah and Georgia. The kit includes organizing tools and action steps that you can take to advocate for effective policy change while building community power.

We want you and your village to have more power to say what your community looks like and how your government responds to your needs. We built this toolkit in order to do just that, by helping you amplify your voice and strengthening the work of existing organizing efforts in Savannah.

People are not the problem, the problem is the problem. Only together, can we find solutions for the problem.

Overview

This toolkit is an important part of Deep Center's work to create a more just and equitable Savannah—a Savannah that recognizes and accounts for the historical and contemporary structural inequities that harm some members of our community and benefit others. A just and equitable Savannah meets all young people and families where they are, removes barriers, and invests the necessary resources to ensure everyone thrives.

Since the beginning of the legislative session in Georgia we have been following bills that affect our community. While there are multiple initiatives that require our attention we have decided to take action on five specific pieces of legislation that are of the most importance to our goals in Savannah and Chatham county. These are:

Deep Center Georgia State Legislation Asks

SUPPORT

[#HB479](#): Repeals citizen's arrest

Sponsored by Representative Bert Reeves, this legislation repeals citizen's arrest, which is an arrest made by a private citizen – that is, a person who is not acting as a sworn law-enforcement official. This bill is a crucial response to the death of Ahmaud Arbery. We join in support of this bill alongside the Southern Center for Human Rights and the Georgia NAACP.

[#HB272](#): Raise the Age

Sponsored by Representative Mandi Ballinger, this legislation raises the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 17 to 18. Georgia is 1 of 3 states that tries 17 year olds as adults.

[#HR96](#): Create a textbook and curriculum for African American studies

A House resolution urging the Georgia Department of Education to create a textbook and curriculum for African American / Black studies.

OPPOSE

[#SB42](#): Discipline Data

Sponsored by Senator Jeff Mullis, this legislation gets rid of discipline data in school rating and relies on parents/teachers in a survey to think what is going on/ measure discipline efforts. There is a 32% drop in students being pushed out over the past decade and it's due to PBIS standards being applied to schools with high discipline numbers in the school climate -- if schools no longer have the data, we no longer can provide interventions like PBIS.

[#HB60](#): Georgia Educational Scholarship Act

Sponsored by Representative Wes Cantrell, this legislation targets public school systems that, through local control, have decided to offer instruction virtually in response to the pandemic and divert their funding to private schools that would reopen. The Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts found that, once fully implemented, HB 60 would cost the state \$542.6 million annually, a loss would come at the absolute worst time for public schools that are in the middle of a 19-year stretch of strict budget cuts where lawmakers have withheld \$10.2 billion cumulatively from public education. We join in opposition of this bill with groups like [Georgia Budget and Policy Institute](#), [Georgia Appleseed Center for Law & Justice](#), and Fund Georgia's Future.

#HB246: Prohibition of Police Department Cuts.

Sponsored by Houston Gaines, this legislation seeks would restrict a city or consolidated government with a police department from reducing annual appropriations for the police department by more than 5% of the previous fiscal year's appropriations. This would not apply if the city or consolidated government's overall revenues decrease by more than 5% in the same fiscal year, however, a city or consolidated government would still be prohibited from reducing the police department budget greater than the decrease in the amount of overall revenues.

Campaign Goals

By taking action with the community we seek to

- Strengthen the position of the legislators that support the legislation we favor and ensure that those who oppose it mark down in their constituent contact forms the opposition to their votes for the record.
- Recruit and engage more community members into the process
- Build relationships with the legislators we contact and their staff for future asks

HOW TO SPEAK WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

<u>STATE HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE</u>	<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>CONTACT METHOD:</u>
<u>Representative Carl Gilliard</u>	<u>District 162</u>	Chamber: Georgia House of Representatives (D) Capitol Address: Room 512-G, Coverdell Legislative Office Building Address: 18 Capitol Square, SW, Atlanta, GA, 30344 Email: carl.gilliard@house.ga.gov Capitol Phone: 404.656.7859 District Phone: 912.436.5325
<u>Representative Derek Mallow</u>	<u>District 163</u>	Chamber: Georgia House of Representatives (D) Capitol Address: 08-C Coverdell Legislative Office Bldg. Atlanta, GA 30334 Address: 18 Capitol Square, SW, Atlanta, GA, 30344 Email: derek.mallow@house.ga.gov Capitol Phone: (404) 656-0298 District Phone:
<u>Representative Bill Hitchens</u>	<u>District 161</u>	Chamber: Georgia House of Representatives (R) Capitol Address: Room 401-D, State Capitol Address: 206 Washington Street, SW, Atlanta, GA, 30344 Email: bill.hitchens@house.ga.gov Capitol Phone: 404.463.7855
<u>Representative Jesse Petrea</u>	<u>District 166</u>	Chamber: Georgia House of Representatives (R) Capitol Address: Room 408-A, Coverdell Legislative Office Building Address: 206 Washington Street, SW, Atlanta, GA, 30344

		Email: jesse.petrea@house.ga.gov Capitol Phone: 404.657.1803 District Phone: 912.354.3680
<u>Representative Mickey Stephens</u>	<u>District 165</u>	Chamber: Georgia House of Representatives (D) Capitol Address: Room 604-A, Coverdell Legislative Office Building Address: 18 Capitol Square, SW, Atlanta, GA, 30344 Email: mickeystephens@gmail.com Capitol Phone: 404.656.0265 District Phone: 912.661.1733
<u>Representative Ron Stephens</u>	<u>District 164</u>	Chamber: Georgia House of Representatives (R) Capitol Address: Room 226-A State Capitol Address: 206 Washington Street, SW, Atlanta, GA, 30344 Email: ron.stephens@house.ga.gov Capitol Phone: 404.656.5115 District Phone: 912.596.1998

<u>STATE SENATOR</u>	<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>CONTACT METHOD:</u>
<u>Senator Ben Watson</u>	<u>District 01</u>	Chamber: Georgia State Senate (R) Capitol Address: Room 320-B, Coverdell Legislative Office Building Address: 18 Capitol Square, SW, Atlanta, GA, 30344 Email: ben.watson@senate.ga.gov Capitol Phone: 404.656.7880 District Phone: 912.527.5100
<u>Senator Lester Jackson</u>	<u>District 02</u>	Chamber: Georgia State Senate (D) Capitol Address: Room 110-B, State Capitol Address: 206 Washington Street, SW, Atlanta, GA, 30344 Email: lester.jackson@senate.ga.gov

		Capitol Phone: 404.463.5261 District Phone: 912.233.7970
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ADVOCACY TIPS

Prepare your talking points with lawmakers

Identify and prioritize the lawmakers you would like to speak with. Plan to use 2-3 talking points that support or oppose that specific piece of legislation. Make sure they are short, sweet, and simple to understand.

Power in Simplicity

If you cannot clearly explain to your grandmother what your issue is, **you need to make it simpler and easier to understand**. Your goal is to get your legislator to answer how they will vote on the legislation. Always finish with a “Can I count on you to vote X on this bill?”

Be calm and courteous

Your goal is to get a clear answer on how the lawmaker plans to vote on the bill. Yes, you can be firm, yes you can press them, but you have to remain calm and courteous, even if the demeanor of the lawmaker you are speaking with is not.

Be Strategically Bi-partisan

Do not assume certain political ideologies will immediately say “yes” or “no” to your issue. Do not write anyone off. These issues affect all Georgians, no matter their political affiliation. However, take into consideration this when crafting messaging and your talking points.

Thank them

No matter their position, thank every lawmaker for their time and attention to the issue.

TEMPLATES & EXAMPLES

LETTER/EMAIL TO DECISION-MAKERS

Representative Name

(Their number and email)

(Their address)

Hello, my name is **(Your Name)**. I live in **(Specific district it pertains to)**, and I am **(supporting/opposing)** about **(Bill)**. I am calling on **(Representative)** to ask you to **(support/oppose Bill)**.

In 2019, Deep Center released their first policy brief that included several recommendations, including the one I am contacting you about today.

(You can include a personal story or way this bill, ordinance, or decision affects you or your family. You can also cite data, or simply state that you think it is good or bad legislation. The key is to make it short, simple, and clear.)

I appreciate you listening to your constituent on this item and look forward to your response.

Thank you,

Your Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT

Hello <**TITLE OF ELECTED OFFICIAL**>,

My name is <**FULL NAME**> and I live in <**DISTRICT**>. I am reaching out to you today to discuss [**ISSUE AS IT PERTAINS TO APPROPRIATE ELECTED BODY**]. As you may know, the [**ISSUE AT HAND**] and I am advocating for you to [**CHANGE THIS POSITION/SUPPORT POSITION ON THIS ISSUE**]

Background Information (choose the content that you are most concerned with personally):

In 2019, Deep Center released their first policy brief that included several recommendations, including the recommendation I am calling about today. ***(You can include a personal story or way this bill, ordinance, or decision affects you or your family. You can also cite data, or simply state that you think it is good or bad legislation. The key is to make it short, simple, and clear.)***

I would like to encourage you to join the growing movement of southern communities who are speaking out advocating for these types of reforms. Can I count on you to vote **(the way you want them to vote)** on this issue?

Thank you for considering this important issue. We feel your support for this is crucial issue matters now more than ever.

Your name