

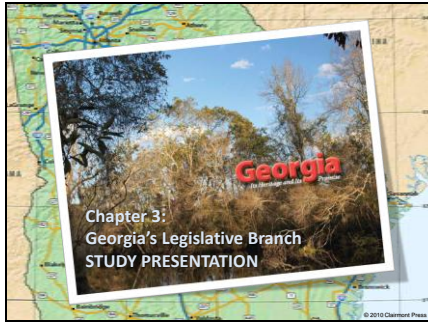
Georgia: Its Heritage and Its Promise

Chapter 3: Georgia's Legislative Branch

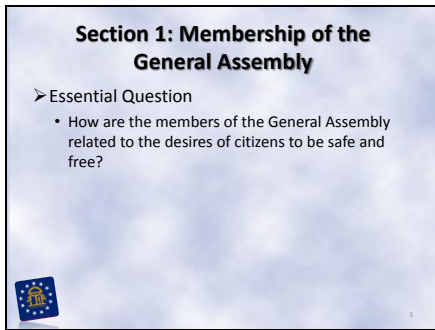
QUICK NOTES

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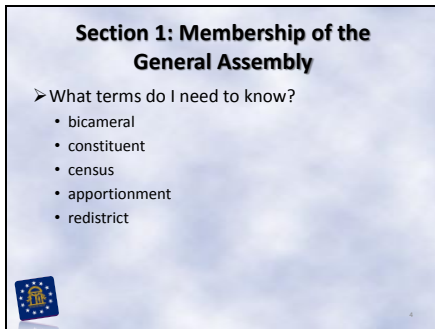
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Section 1: Membership of the General Assembly

- Essential Question
 - How are the members of the General Assembly related to the desires of citizens to be safe and free?

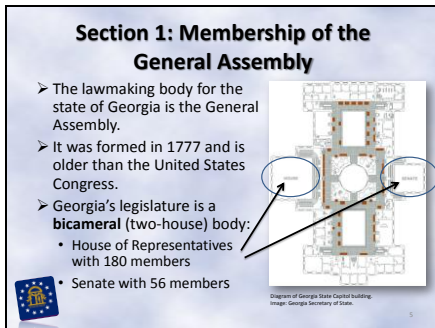
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Section 1: Membership of the General Assembly

- What terms do I need to know?
 - bicameral
 - constituent
 - census
 - apportionment
 - redistrict

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Section 1: Membership of the General Assembly

- The lawmaking body for the state of Georgia is the General Assembly.
- It was formed in 1777 and is older than the United States Congress.
- Georgia's legislature is a **bicameral** (two-house) body:
 - House of Representatives with 180 members
 - Senate with 56 members

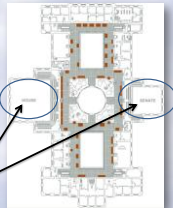


Diagram of Georgia State Capitol building
Image: Georgia Secretary of State



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Qualifications for Legislators

- A legislator must be 25 years of age at the time of the election to serve in Georgia's Senate.
- A person running for Georgia's House of Representatives must be at least 21.
- Legislators must be U.S. citizens and a citizen of Georgia for a minimum of two years.
- Each must have been a legal resident in the district he or she represents for at least one year.
- Georgia legislators serve two-year terms, but there are no term limits.



Link: [Georgia General Assembly](#)

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Equal Representation and Apportionment

- In the Georgia House and Senate, each seat represents approximately the same number of **constituents** (citizens).
- Election districts cannot always be determined by county or city boundaries.
- Representation in each district is handled through a mathematical step called **apportionment**.
- Georgia's population is determined every 10 years by the **census** of the United States.
- After the census, the Georgia legislature reapportions the election districts and voting districts change.



Legislators working in the Georgia House of Representatives during the 2010 census. Photo: Georgia House of Representatives.




Link: [General Assembly Maps](#)

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Legislative Sessions


- The General Assembly was designed to be a citizen-assembly.
- It is a part-time legislature which means members hold other jobs and return home after the session ends.
- A session begins on the 2nd Monday in January and ends around the end of March.
- Due to the Georgia constitution, it is legal for a 40-day session to officially adjourn three months after beginning in January.
- The legislature can "adjourn any regular session to such later date as it may fix for reconvening."
- An adjournment during a regular session may only occur with agreement of both the House and Senate.



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Section 2: The Organization of the General Assembly

- Essential Question:
 - How is the General Assembly organized to reflect the desires of citizens to be safe and free?





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Section 2: The Organization of the General Assembly

➤ What terms do I need to know?

- quorum
- caucus
- bill



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Section 2: The Organization of the General Assembly

➤ For the House of Representatives the presiding officer is the **speaker of the House**.

- The speaker's duties are in addition to his or her role as a representative.

➤ The lieutenant governor is the leader of the Georgia Senate, but, he or she is not a voting member of the Senate.

- The Georgia constitution grants the lieutenant governor the title of **president of the Senate**.




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Responsibilities of the Presiding Officers

➤ To preside over the meetings of their chambers is the chief responsibility of speaker of the House and the president of the Senate which includes:

- requiring members to attend sessions in order to have a **quorum**
- deciding which member has the "right to the floor"
- determining the order of business
- referring proposed legislation to committees
- ruling out proposed amendments, and
- ordering a roll call vote on any issue



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Additional Leaders


➤ Each chamber elects one of its own members to serve in the absence of its presiding officer.

➤ A **president pro tempore** is selected by the Senate.

➤ In the House a **speaker pro tempore** is chosen.

➤ Members of both the Republican and the Democratic Parties establish their own internal party organization called a **caucus**.

➤ Then, each selects a party leader, a caucus chair, and a party whip.





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Legislative Committees

- As many as 1,200 **bills** (proposed laws) are introduced in the House and the Senate in a typical session of the General Assembly, but only about one-third are actually passed and signed into law.
- Workload is divided, saving time and allowing members to familiarize themselves with aspects of bills to be shared with the larger group.




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Committee Chairpersons

- Functions of the Legislative Chairpersons:
 - The committee chairpersons in the General Assembly are especially powerful.
 - They decide when committees will meet, when bills will be "taken up," and when (or if) a vote will be taken.
 - In the House of Representatives, committee chairpersons are appointed by the Speaker, and in the Senate they are appointed by the lieutenant governor.



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Types of Committees

- **Standing** [Permanent from Session to Session]
 - Appropriations Committee (budget)
 - Higher Education Committee (legislation involving the University System of Georgia and other colleges and universities)
 - Interstate Cooperation Committee (Georgia's relations with other states)
- **Temporary or ad hoc** [created for specific purpose]
Joint (includes Members of House & Senate)
- **Conference** [appointed when different versions of bills are passed by House and Senate]

Note: Senators and Representatives may serve on several committees. Subcommittees are formed from larger committees.




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Section 3: The Lawmaking Process

- Essential Question:
 - How are the actions of members of the General Assembly related to the desires of citizens to be safe and free?



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Section 3: The Lawmaking Process

- What terms do I need to know?
 - amend
 - treaty
 - monopoly
 - veto
 - appropriate
 - budget
 - revenue
 - fiscal year
 - line item veto




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Types of Legislation

- The Georgia General Assembly is permitted to pass laws on any issue not forbidden by the U.S. Constitution.
- The Georgia General Assembly can **amend** (change or make an addition to) state laws or do away with them.
- The Georgia General Assembly can pass legislation on such issues as:
 - state services, criminal matters, contracts, raising and spending money, land use and natural resources conservation, real and personal property, and the organization and operation of local government (counties, cities, and towns)
- Additional legal requirements of the Georgia Constitution:
 - It states that the subject content of a bill must be single-purpose and/or meet certain standards
 - A bill must deal with only one subject.
 - A bill to raise or spend money must first be introduced in the House of Representatives before going to the Senate.




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Types of Legislation

- The General Assembly may also pass resolutions :
 - to honor a Georgian who has accomplished something notable
 - to thank a civic volunteer for outstanding community service
 - to honor sports teams and to congratulate them on their winning records
- Issues that cannot be addressed by the General Assembly:
 - The U.S. Constitution forbids states from entering into **treaties** with other nations.
 - The General Assembly may not pass laws that limit business competition or create a **monopoly**.
 - The General Assembly cannot pass a law restricting the sale of gasoline by just one oil company or just one brand of gasoline.




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How a Bill Becomes Law

- Individual bills as introduced in the General Assembly are assigned a number.
- Bills originated in the House of Representatives begin with "HB," and in the Senate "SB."
- Each bill has a "title" which spells out the subject of the bill and briefly summarizes its purpose.





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Assignment to Committee

- When a bill arrives, the clerk of the House of Representatives assigns it a number.
- A copy of the bill is sent to each representative.
- The first "reading" by the clerk presents it aloud, and then the speaker of the House assigns the bill to a committee; and on the next legislative day, the bill has its second reading.
- Note: A bill must be read 3 times in each chamber of the General Assembly.




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Committee Action

- The chairperson decides when, or whether, to consider bills sent from the House or assign the bill to a subcommittee.
- Interested citizens and groups are allowed to speak at hearings and experts or witnesses may be invited to testify.
- Lobbyists often meet with committee members to present recommendations on the bill.
- The chairperson calls for a vote on the bill after it has been studied by the committee members and after hearing from all interested parties. The committee has several options:
 - hold the bill and take no action
 - vote the bill out due to no recommendation
 - recommend the House "do pass" with no changes or with changes or a substitute bill may be written




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House Action

- If the committee approves a bill, it is returned to the House to be placed on the general calendar.
- Next, members of the House take turns speaking in an effort to get other representatives to support or defeat a bill.
- Members may offer amendments to the bill, which must be voted upon before the actual vote on entire bill is held. Following amendments to the bill, the speaker will formerly close the debate and ask for a roll call vote which is recorded electronically.
- For minor issues a voice vote or a show of hands is all that is needed, and no individual's vote is recorded.
- Note: For a bill to pass it must receive the approval of a majority of the membership of the chamber.




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Senate Action

- The secretary of the Senate receives the bill.
- Lieutenant governor assigns bill to a Senate committee.
- Recommendations similar to those in the House may be made in reference to "do pass," "do pass" with changes, etc.
- If changes are made by the Senate, changes must be reviewed by the House.
- If House agrees to new version of the bill, it is sent to the governor.
- If House disagrees with Senate Amendments bill is assigned to a conference committee (made up of 3 House and 3 Senate members).
- Formed committee sends compromise bill to both chambers for a vote.
- Governor receives final version of bill if passed.





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Action by the Governor

- A bill becomes law if approved and signed by the governor.
- Bill receives new number and becomes part of the *Official Code of Georgia Annotated*.
- Governor can **veto** (reject) the bill.
- If bill is vetoed, $\frac{2}{3}$ of members in both House and Senate can override it, and bill becomes a law without governor's signature.
- If governor takes no action on a bill, it automatically becomes law without governor's signature.



Georgia's Governor, Sonny Perdue, signs one of many bills into law. Photo: Governor's Office.




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A Special Category of Legislation: The State Budget

- Money is needed to run state government departments and agencies, so each year the General Assembly **appropriates** that money.
- A **balanced budget** is required by the Georgia constitution. The state cannot spend more than is taken in through **revenue** (income from taxes and fees).
- The budget year (**fiscal year**) for Georgia begins July 1 and ends June 30. A financial report is submitted by the governor after the General Assembly meets in January.
- Spending priorities, revenue estimates, and a draft of a general appropriations bill is made known to legislators by the governor.
- General appropriations bill, if passed by legislators, is sent to the governor.

The Governor can sign entire bill or use **line item veto** which allows the governor to veto a particular spending proposal rather than the entire appropriations bill.



Additional Notes:

