

Proven Conservative Policies

An Interview with The Honorable Brian P. Kemp, Governor of Georgia

EDITORS' NOTE On November 8, 2022, Governor Brian Kemp was re-elected to serve a second term as Georgia's 83rd governor. Governor Kemp ran on a record of success in the Peach State and a plan to help Georgia families fight through 40-year-high inflation, strengthen public safety, and ensure Georgia's children can overcome learning loss due to the pandemic and succeed in the classroom. A native of Athens, Georgia, Kemp started his first small business over 35 years ago with a pickup truck



The Hon. Brian P. Kemp

and a shovel. His experience as a small business owner has driven his mission to put hardworking Georgians first since taking office as Georgia's governor, and his leadership yielded historic results.

Throughout Governor Kemp's first term, Georgia has consistently broken economic records with jobs and investment coming to every corner of the state in communities large and small. Thanks to his decision to reopen first during the COVID-19 pandemic, Georgia's unemployment rate is at its lowest point in state history, there are more Georgians working than ever before, and Georgia has been named the Top State for Business for an unprecedented nine consecutive years.

Governor Kemp has also championed legislation to crack down on violent crimes and street gangs, end human trafficking, enact historic tax cuts for working families, give teachers a historic pay raise, and ensure Georgia's K-12 education system puts parents and students at the forefront.

Governor Kemp, First Lady Marty Kemp, and their three daughters live on their family farm in Athens and are committed to building a safer, stronger Georgia for all who call the Peach State "home."

Will you discuss your administration's focus and commitment to building a strong and growing economy for Georgia?

We recently announced our mid-year numbers which show that during the first half of fiscal year 2023, we increased both the number of locations for economic development projects and the total investment amount in comparison to the same time period in 2022. We also announced four of the largest investments in Georgia history in just a 365-day period from companies like Hyundai, SK On, Freyr, and Rivian. In partnership with the Georgia General Assembly, my administration is focused on building on these

historic successes and maintaining our status as the number one state in the country in which to do business.

Georgia continues to be well-positioned for strong, healthy economic growth, and we are looking to the future for new opportunities for development. In my inaugural address, I made the promise to the people of Georgia that by the end of my term, we would make our state the e-mobility capital of America. Taking a market-based approach to growing that sector in the Peach State will result in even further investments

and good paying jobs for hardworking Georgians.

Our economic development team is world-class and is working with our partners in the private sector to be responsive to market needs and find areas of cooperation that benefit our citizens, our economy, and our state.

What have been the keys to addressing public safety in Georgia and will you highlight the progress made in this effort?

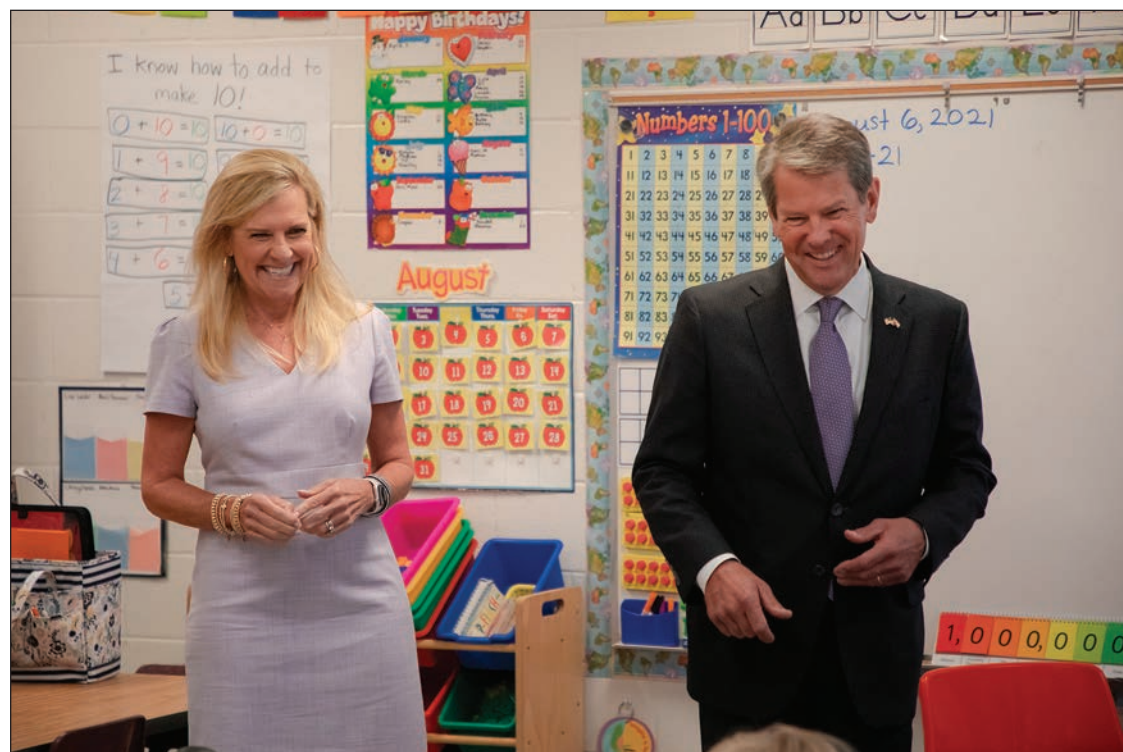
I made a promise to Georgians that I would not stand idly by and allow dangerous criminals to roam free and wreak havoc in our

state. There are some states who appear content in slapping more restraints on law enforcement officers, but only giving slaps on the wrists to violent criminals – we are not one of them.

When I came into office, my administration formed the GRACE Commission, led by First Lady Marty Kemp, to tackle human trafficking, seek justice for victims, and hold bad actors accountable. In partnership with the Georgia General Assembly, we've passed legislation that empowers law enforcement to pursue traffickers and buyers while protecting survivors.

Before it became a well-known problem that the media widely accepts today, I was also sounding the alarm on the destruction being caused by street gangs. That's why we worked with our legislative partners to form the Gang Prosecution Unit in the Attorney General's office and the Crime Suppression Unit to take the fight directly to street gangs and other violent criminals. We also formed the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's Gang Task Force, a multi-agency unit whose priority is dismantling criminal street gangs.

In Georgia, we are taking real steps to protect our communities and are witnessing concrete results.



Governor Brian P. Kemp and First Lady Marty Kemp visit a local elementary school in Ball Ground, Georgia

What steps is your administration taking to improve education in Georgia and reforming K-12 education?

Ensuring that our institutions have the resources they need to provide a safe and quality learning environment for our students and teachers is one of the highest responsibilities we hold as Georgia leaders. In order to prepare our children for the jobs and industries of tomorrow, my administration is taking numerous steps to ensure we are fully funding K-12 education and securing our schools, investing in our teachers, and providing additional help for students who were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

If we are to improve education for our students, we must invest in our teachers. My FY2024 budget proposal raises base salary pay for teachers by \$2,000, raising teacher pay by a total of \$7,000 over the past 5 years. It also



Governor Kemp attends the groundbreaking ceremony at the future site of Hyundai Motor Group's Metaplant in Savannah

includes \$15 million in grant funds to encourage paraprofessionals to pursue their teaching certification to help further build our talent pool of skilled, dedicated educators.

We are also prioritizing safety in our schools by providing \$50,000 school safety grants to every K-12 school in the state to invest in their security needs.

Improving and reforming our education system is no small task, but my administration, in partnership with the Georgia General Assembly, remains committed to getting it done.

How critical is a strong public/private partnership in Georgia and will you highlight your working relationship with the business community?

Over the years, many have spoken about their commitment to maintaining or building a healthy public/private partnership, but I believe the true test of that relationship came during the COVID-19 pandemic. Marty and I are both small business owners and know from experience that the best way to grow a business and create jobs is to get the government out of the way. We've experienced the late night worries of how we were going to meet payroll obligations to our employees. During the pandemic,



Governor Kemp speaking at a press conference at the Georgia State Capitol building highlighting the work of the state's Crime Suppression Unit

I received calls and messages from Georgians who were experiencing that same struggle through no fault of their own. That's why when other states were locking down and picking winners and losers, Georgia was the first state in the country to re-open. We placed our trust in our citizens who know their businesses and communities best, and because we made the tough decision, the Peach State was well-positioned for a strong economic recovery coming out of the pandemic.

Georgians are not interested in a top-down government approach to growing the economy. Our state's economy grows when government focuses on maintaining an environment that allows businesses to thrive, new and good paying jobs to be created, and the free market to drive the growth of new industries.

As you look to attract new industries and businesses to Georgia, how do you define the Georgia advantage?

Georgia has been the number one state in the country in which to do business for nine consecutive years. That didn't happen by chance. Such a distinction has been a direct result of proven conservative policies of less regulation and lower taxes. It is also a result of the resilience of Georgia job creators and our nation-leading workforce development efforts.

According to Area Development, the Peach State also is number one in overall cost of doing business, business incentives programs, cooperative and responsive state government, competitive labor environment, workforce development programs, and available real estate.

Our focus on workforce development and cultivating a pro-business environment is why, coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, Georgia has record low unemployment and is one of the top states in the country for job recovery and creation.

As we work to deliver on my commitment to make Georgia the e-mobility capital of America, our state's reliable and ever-expanding electrical grid and ports remains some of our top advantages. While ports across the country struggled

to move supply coming out of the pandemic, the Georgia Port Authority processed a record 6 million TEUs in 2022 and is continuing to expand to accommodate increased traffic.

In Georgia, our dedication to a market-based approach to economic growth and investing in our infrastructure and workforce has positioned our state well.

With so much gridlock and partisanship in Washington DC, what do you see as the key ingredients in getting action and achieving results?

I don't get bogged down with petty partisan bickering. I am of the belief that when you are elected to do a job, you do the job. When you keep your nose to the grindstone and remain focused on solving problems rather than creating new ones, you can get a lot of things done.

We've been doing that in Georgia. That's why I always tell people, that while Washington DC is caught in gridlock and failing to address the needs of our country, you can always look to Georgia to provide a reliable and business friendly environment. We are investing in our children, developing our workforce, expanding our infrastructure, and safeguarding our communities.

That's the job we were elected to do, and we are going to continue delivering real results for hardworking Georgia families.

What attracted you to public service?

I built my first business, Kemp Development and Construction Company, from the ground up with a pick-up truck and a shovel. I was blessed to find success as an entrepreneur, with businesses and investments in banking, farming, timber, manufacturing, and real estate. While I was working to build these businesses, I grew frustrated with government standing in the way of its citizens' success and ignoring their concerns.

That's why I ran for and served in the Georgia State Senate in the 2000s, then as Secretary of State from 2010-2018: to cut red tape and streamline government.

With the success that your administration has achieved for Georgia, are you able to enjoy the process and take moments to celebrate the wins?

There's no doubt that we have a lot to be proud of in Georgia. We've announced historic economic development projects, a historic year at our ports and record-breaking trade numbers. Not to mention, our Georgia Bulldogs football program won back-to-back National Championships.

I'm proud to share our success story with anyone willing to listen, and I believe in my core that we are proof that conservative governance works. At the same time, I also remain focused on the tasks that lie ahead. I always say that we cannot rest on our laurels. There is always more work to be done, and we cannot let our foot off the gas.

We weren't elected to pat ourselves on the back or take a victory lap. We were elected to work tirelessly to keep Georgia the best place to live, work, and raise a family – and that's what we're going to keep doing. ●