

# The Georgia Way

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

**EDITORS' NOTE** On November 8, 2022, Governor Brian Kemp was re-elected to serve a second term as Georgia's 83rd governor. Kemp's political career began when he served as a state senator from 2003-07. He served as Georgia Secretary of State from 2010-18. He is a business owner, entrepreneur, and investor. A native of Athens, Georgia, Kemp started his first small business over 35 years ago with a pickup truck 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. 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."



The Hon. Brian P. Kemp

form of three straight record-breaking years for economic development. We know we must prepare Georgians to step into these opportunities, which is why we're committing more to K-12 education in the FY25 budget than ever before and rolling out innovative higher education programs such as Georgia MATCH, the largest direct college admission program in the nation.

Finally, I believe it is our government's responsibility to promote the well-being of our citizens, which is

why ensuring our communities are safe and have access to quality healthcare has been a defining feature of my time as Governor. We've made Georgia a national leader in the fight against human trafficking by cracking down on traffickers and buyers while ensuring we are a safe haven for survivors. We've taken the fight to criminal street gangs and supported our brave law enforcement who work every day to keep our streets safe. In that same vein, we are taking action to support our medical workforce by opening a new dental school and investing

in healthcare workforce development. I'm especially proud that our Georgia Access and reinsurance programs have decreased premiums by 11 percent statewide, helping all Georgians prosper, regardless of their zip code.

**How is your administration working to strengthen rural Georgia?**

As I said when I ran for Governor, we are committed to bringing opportunity to all four corners of the state. We've seen great success in that mission, with the vast majority of jobs and investment we have announced since 2019 coming to communities outside of metro Atlanta. We're also strengthening rural healthcare, with 87 percent of Georgia counties now having three or more insurance carriers when in 2019 no county had more than two. With this influx of opportunity there is also a need for housing so Georgians can live where they work, which is why we've rolled out the Rural Workforce Housing Grant program. We just put another \$106 million into this program that is helping communities build much-needed homes and I'm proud to say we are already seeing the roads paved and the frames going up.

## What attracted you to public service?

My wife, Marty, and I built our first business, Kemp Development and Construction Company, from the ground up with a pickup truck and a shovel. Like so many small business owners, we felt the struggles of those Friday nights around the dinner table as we tried to figure out how we would meet the upcoming payroll. In business and in life, I grew fed up 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 – to cut red tape and streamline government.

## Will you provide an overview of the priorities for your administration?

I believe our government should work for its citizens and ensure they can be successful when they work hard, and that vision has been the driving force for my administration. To help fight the negative effects of inflation, we've returned over \$5 billion to Georgians through income tax refunds, homestead tax exemptions, and suspensions of the state motor and diesel fuel tax. This year, I also signed an acceleration of the largest personal income tax cut in state history and tied our corporate tax rate to match the cuts we are making to the personal income tax rate. We've been able to take these steps because of our responsible, fiscally conservative approach to budgeting.

Our commitment to attracting jobs and investment has yielded incredible results in the



Governor Kemp delivers opening remarks at the 1st annual Governor's Workforce Summit in Atlanta



*Governor Kemp is joined by First Lady Marty Kemp as he tours the Hyundai Metaplant America construction site in Bryan County, Georgia with the Chairman of Hyundai Motor Group*

**Will you discuss your administration's work to build transparency and integrity in government?**

One of the main reasons I felt the need to get involved in politics was because I was fed up with getting the government runaround every time I needed an answer. I tell my entire administration, from top to bottom, that whether the answer is a yes or no, we owe the people we serve a response so they can continue forward. We'll keep working to ensure our state government is responsive and trustworthy.

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

When I visit with companies in places as far away as Davos or Korea, or right here in the U.S., one of the strongest selling points we have is something I like to call "The Georgia Way." It means at both the local and state level, across the branches of government, we work with job creators, not against them, to promote mutual prosperity. Just as we did during our response to the pandemic, we are always listening to our business partners on their needs and what actions we can take to help them have the opportunity to succeed. That approach has been at the heart of what makes Georgia the #1 state for business, a title we have held for an unprecedented 10 consecutive years.

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

There are many aspects that set Georgia apart as the go-to destination for so many businesses, and we are prioritizing strengthening many of those areas. Starting with our reliable infrastructure network that connects companies to markets all across the world, we poured an additional \$1.5 billion dollars into infrastructure

improvements this year. That's in addition to the world's most efficient and utilized airport at Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson and our two deepwater ports of Savannah and Brunswick. We're also committed to growing our capable workforce, as evidenced by Georgia MATCH connecting students with the higher education option that fits their goals. Finally, we know businesses look for a stable economy, which is why staying the course and budgeting responsibly have been our top priorities. We've maintained our AAA bond rating and will continue to promote fiscal responsibility while some politicians call for uncapped spending.

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

It really comes down to a simple choice Washington DC politicians must make: are they going to do the job they were elected to do and that the American people are depending on them for, or are they going to remain bogged down with petty partisan bickering? Whether you agree or disagree with me, there is no question I have done what I told people I would do when I ran for Governor. With our partners in the legislature, we have raised teacher pay, balanced our budget, gone after criminal street gangs, and strengthened our communities in all four corners of the state. The federal government could learn a lesson from how we work in Georgia, where we put the interests of hard-working families first and take action together to fix the problems we face.

**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 certainly a lot to be proud of in Georgia. We've broken records for creating jobs, attracting investment, and trade. There are more Georgians working than ever before and our unemployment rate remains near record lows.

I'm proud to share that story of success with anyone willing to listen, and I believe in my core that we are proof that conservative governance works. At the same time, we are fully focused on the job at hand. There is always more work to be done, and I always say that we cannot rest on our laurels. 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. ●



*Governor Kemp is joined by First Lady Marty Kemp, Former Governor Nathan Deal, Georgia constitutional officers, legislative leaders, and team members from the Georgia Department of Economic Development for a celebration marking Georgia being named the #1 State for Business for an unprecedented 10th year in a row*