

President Pro Tempore of the Georgia Senate Butch Miller gave a perspective on the current legislative prospects for the state of Georgia, and the current political outlook for the state. His role is the equivalent of Chuck Grassley's in the U.S. Senate. Georgia Senate Republicans hold a 31 to 21 lead over Democrats now, and are aggressively recruiting new candidates to press Democratic incumbents in tenuous districts for them. While losing some House seats in the last mid-terms, Republicans are still likely to hold a five-seat plurality in the House. And the GOP has all the constitutional officers in Georgia, which is not true in a lot of other states, so Georgia is still quite red. The Democrats, however, are making an effort to turn it purple if not blue. (Stacey Abrams came quite close last gubernatorial election.)

Fiscally the state is in excellent shape, with a targeted reserve fund of over \$2 billion. Eight years ago, it was only \$120 million.

Governor Kemp is now proposing some cuts in non-crucial spending, so the future is even brighter. Of course, that all depends on keeping the tax-and-spend Democrats from the seats of power. Republicans have quite a different view of the purpose of government: have it create an *environment* so that jobs can grow in the private sector. Do not increase the size and influence of government, which is hard to pare back.

With a successful economy and opportunity, there is a likelihood that Georgia can grow its population some four million over the next ten years. So, it is crucial that jobs continue to be encouraged from businesses moving and expanding here.

The Democrats instead push free healthcare and taking away guns. These are the policies that helped Venezuela go from the second largest economy in South America to a socialist failed state that it is today.

## Republican Priorities

Recognizing that the world's economy affects ours and that we need to compete in exports, the Port of Savannah is a primary strength of Georgia, now competing with the West Coast and with the Northeast as an export powerhouse.

Another priority is to bring broadband access to large areas of rural Georgia, spurring the chances of job creation there. Georgia already has close to full employment, with an unemployment rate of 3.6%, and last quarter at 2.9%. Virtually everyone who wants a job can find one here. For a potential four million expanded population, we need an environment that can supply the jobs that they seek when moving here.

Infrastructure improvements include not only roads and bridges, but rail and port and even expanded airport facilities, particularly in rural areas for general aviation.

As for the threats from China, one adverse one for Georgia has been the diversion of capacity to the Gulf Coast. This could provide easier access to Mexican imports from China sending raw material there to avoid the tariffs.

Almost 40 years ago the threat was from Japan beating us on trade, but Ronald Reagan made the U.S. aware of job loss to them, and caused a renewal of "buy American" sentiment that had a big effect. In fact, Japan is still suffering from that diversion towards American-made products.

## Q&A Session

At the conclusion of his very informative review of the legislative situation in Georgia, (we in the SIRC are very fortunate to have the opportunity to hear such an expansive presentation by top leadership from the State), Mr Miller took questions.

Q1. To counter the loss of state revenue from sales taxes due to internet expansion, what is the state's view of expanding the base to services, like Tennessee is planning?

A1. That is now under consideration.

Q2. What are ways to expand turnout in GOP voters, given the influx of more Democratic votes in Georgia?

A2. Two things: bring a friend to the polls. Stress that the GOP is actually a better home for what some traditional Democrats claim as loyalists, e.g. Hispanics, who actually have strong family beliefs and rely on freedom of religion.

