

GOVERNOR BRIAN P. KEMP
2026 SESSION OF THE GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
VETO MESSAGES AND SIGNING STATEMENTS

VETO 1

House Bill 14 would establish a Georgia Music Office under the Georgia Department of Economic Development to promote the state's music industry. The General Assembly did not appropriate funds for this purpose, nor is such an office necessary for the music industry to take advantage of the numerous economic development incentives that are presently available. While I support the continued development of Georgia's music industry, the costs this bill imposes are unnecessary, and the goals of this bill can be achieved through other means.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 14.**

VETO 2

House Bill 376 would increase tax credits for historic properties. The General Assembly failed to account for this loss of revenue in the appropriations process, instead prioritizing general taxpayer relief.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 376.**

VETO 3

House Bill 519 would create a tax credit to mirror the federal work opportunity tax credit, if one were to be passed at the federal level. This credit does not yet exist federally, and the General Assembly failed to account for this loss of revenue in the appropriations process.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 519.**

VETO 4

House Bill 1070 would increase a tax credit for Class III railroad track maintenance. The General Assembly failed to account for this loss of revenue in the appropriations process, instead prioritizing general taxpayer relief.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 1070.**

VETO 5

House Bill 1077 would extend sunseting tax exemptions for certain fine arts performances and museum exhibitions. The General Assembly failed to account for this loss of revenue in the appropriations process, instead prioritizing general taxpayer relief.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 1077.**

VETO 6

House Bill 1192 would require funds appropriated to the Department of Community Health and the Department of Human Services and designated for specific purposes to be maintained in separate accounts, not co-mingled with other funds, and used for only designated purposes. While the General Assembly can and does exercise significant oversight through the appropriations process, this requirement goes beyond such authority and interjects the General Assembly into the operational oversight of executive branch agencies.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 1192.**

VETO 7

House Bill 1409 would, among other things, require the Department of Family and Children Services (“DFCS”) to implement an online platform for receiving reports of child abuse from mandatory reporters. Undoubtedly, DFCS must improve on the present system and address the litany of complaints from mandatory reporters and other interested parties. House Bill 1409, however, would preclude DFCS from competitively procuring solutions because the operational requirements are so narrowly specified. While the General Assembly should, by statute, impose requirements on state agencies under a proper construction of the separation of powers, the implementation of those requirements is properly the domain of the executive branch.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 1409.**

VETO 8

Senate Bill 23 would allow Georgia’s large public retirement systems, excluding the Employees’ Retirement System of Georgia and the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia, to invest up to ten percent of their total fund assets in real estate. Additionally, the bill would increase the cap for eligible large retirement systems to invest in alternative investments.

The underlying bill provides well-intentioned, deliberate changes that permit certain public retirement funds to diversify their investment portfolio. But in the final days of the legislative session, the underlying bill was amended to preclude investment in “any investment vehicle investing in, acquiring, purchasing, owning, renting, managing, or holding single-family homes or residences as a material component of such investment.”

Many of the proponents of this bill have expressed justifiable outrage at the notion of public retirement systems investing based on environmental or diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations, rather than financial performance. Although the politics on this issue may be different, the principle is not. Public retirement systems have a fiduciary duty to act in the best interest of their beneficiaries and should be making investment decisions based on performance, not political talking points.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO SENATE BILL 23.**

VETO 9

Senate Bill 59 would increase the cap on the Reforestation Tax Credit by \$50 million. The original \$200 million appropriated to this credit has been fully allotted. This tax credit was created during the 2025 legislative session to help restore timber lost in the wake of Hurricane Helene. While I continue to support this tax credit and the restoration of the timber industry after the storm and proudly signed measures to stimulate the long-term growth of this critical industry this year, the General Assembly did not account for an increase and extension to this tax credit in the appropriations process.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO SENATE BILL 59.**

VETO 10

Senate Bill 204 would strengthen the existing cause of action lawful gun owners may bring against a local government that attempts to impose limits on possession, ownership, transport, or purchase of firearms beyond state and federal requirements. In addition to increasing the statutory damages available, the bill would remove the existing requirement that such a lawsuit be brought against the county or municipal corporation that enacted the offending ordinance. This would open the door to lawsuits against law enforcement officers, including in their personal capacity, who do not have a say in enacting the ordinance in question. I wholeheartedly support increasing the monetary penalties for local governments that attempt to impede the rights of lawful weapon carriers; however, such penalties should be targeted towards the leaders who enact such ordinances, not the officers who are tasked with enforcing them.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO SENATE BILL 204.**

VETO 11

Senate Bill 478 would increase the percentage of sales tax revenue from transactions involving outdoor recreation equipment that is dedicated to the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund from 40 percent to 60 percent. The General Assembly failed to account for this loss of revenue in the appropriations process, instead prioritizing general taxpayer relief.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO SENATE BILL 478.**

VETO 12

Senate Bill 569 would revise certain rules for the issuance of red emergency light permits. Vehicles must yield the right of way to a vehicle that bears such lights and has them activated. This bill would require the Department of Public Safety to issue a red emergency light permit to a towing service company that is “authorized by contract with a local government to perform towing services or clear roadways[.]” This broad language would ultimately leave local government contracts—unbridled by a requirement of uniformity—to supply most of the terms under which these permits would issue. However, at least some terms should be consistent state-wide to facilitate the judicious use of red emergency lights on Georgia’s roads.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO SENATE BILL 569.**

SIGNING STATEMENT 1

House Bill 1247 revises the statutes relating to the General Assembly’s power to void executive branch agency rules by resolution. Such resolutions are legislative acts and must follow the constitutional process like any other legislative act. However, the bill could be interpreted to provide that the General Assembly may void an agency rule by a majority but less than two-thirds vote, without the Governor’s approval. Late in the legislative process, the General Assembly made amendments to correct these defects, but some potential for confusion remains. The General Assembly cannot alter the constitutional requirements for legislative acts through statute, and any interpretation purporting to alter the constitutional requirements for legislative acts would not have any effect. *See, e.g., Premier Health Care Investments v. UHS of Anchor*, 310 Ga. 32, 48 (849 S.E.2d 441) (2020) (“Under the canon of constitutional doubt, if a statute is susceptible of more than one meaning, one of which is constitutional and the other not, [a court will] interpret the statute as being consistent with the Constitution.” (citation and punctuation omitted)). I sign this bill with the expectation and understanding that the constitutional requirements for the passage of legislation, which includes legislative overrides of agency rules and regulations, will be followed, notwithstanding any language in this bill that could be interpreted to the contrary.

SIGNING STATEMENT 2

Senate Bill 220 makes small changes to Georgia’s medical cannabis program, including modifying the list of eligible conditions and expanding the methods of consumption for patients. These changes, while meaningful to the affected patients, do not materially alter where Georgia sits in the national landscape on this issue. This bill passed with a constitutional majority in both chambers of the General Assembly. I, like many of those who expressed opposition to this bill, have reservations about the legalization of recreational cannabis. Many states that have legalized recreational cannabis have come to regret that decision. I also recognize that for some patients, medical cannabis provides significant relief to symptoms that would otherwise go untreated or would be treated with even more harmful opioids. I do not believe that a well-implemented medical cannabis program must inevitably lead to the legalization of recreational use in Georgia, nor is the question of recreational use anywhere in the bill on my desk for signature.

I therefore sign Senate Bill 220 into law.

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