

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE

Advocacy 101

- Big picture: be involved
 - Political leaders need to be informed about how legislation affects their areas- you can be that resource for them
- Part-time legislators mean they aren't experts, so don't expect them to be and do them a solid: fill in their knowledge gaps

Advocacy 101

Big picture: know what the legislator values

Political leaders need to know how policy affects their constituents. If you are not one, do the research for how your idea affects their area

- ⑥ Know how your idea will play in their district- give examples if you can of areas similar to theirs in political stripe to emphasize their constituents will embrace it
- ⑥ Research on what policy areas each leader focuses. Everyone has their pet projects, so show how your idea fits into their interests

Advocacy 101

- ▶ Better communities are shaped by involved citizens
- ▶ You can inform and educate your lawmakers, which makes you valuable to them
- ▶ Be an informed voter, vote regularly, and courteously inform your elected officials on your stances
- ▶ Know how your legislator votes and if they represent your views (more on this later)

Who are your legislators?

- ▶ In Georgia, finding your legislators (city, county, state, federal) is easy, just go to the My Voter Page at the Secretary of State's website
- ▶ <http://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/>
- ▶ The next few slides will show you how to find your state and local legislators, complete with web addresses and district maps

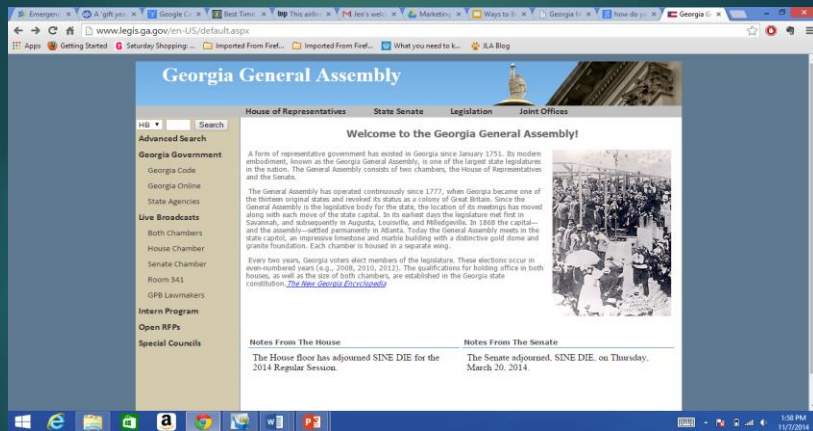
Secretary of State's My Voter Page

The screenshot shows the Georgia My Voter Page (MVP) website. The browser address bar displays www.mvp.sos.ga.gov. The page header includes the MVP logo and the text "MY VOTER PAGE" and "GEORGIA SECRETARY OF STATE BRIAN P. KEMP". A navigation bar contains links to Corporations, Elections, News Room, Professional Licensing Boards, Securities, and Capitol. The main content area is divided into several sections:

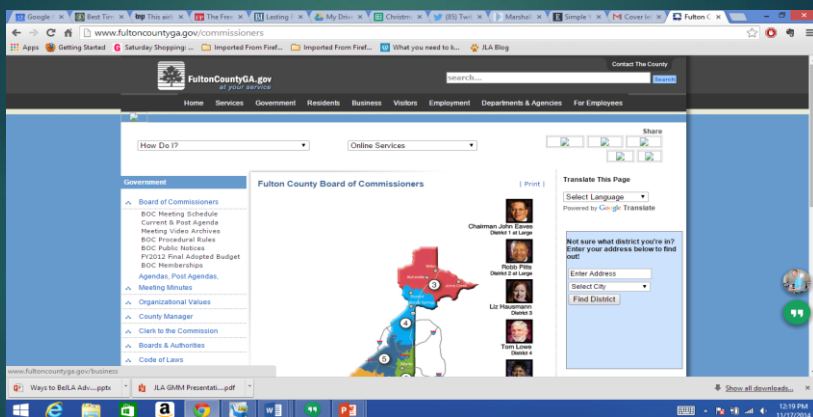
- Welcome to MVP:** Features a "vote for success" logo and the text "with the Secretary of State Elections Division".
- Use the MVP Log in to check your:** A list of services including Voter registration status, Mail-in application and ballot status, Poll location, Early voting locations, Elected Officials, Registration information on file with the county office, Sample ballot for the upcoming election, and Provisional Ballot status.
- MVP Login:** A form with fields for "Your Name and County" (First Initial, Last Name, County), "Date of Birth" (mm/dd/yyyy), and buttons for "Submit" and "Clear".
- Not Registered to Vote?:** A section with a "Register" button.

The footer contains links to Georgia Voter ID, Stop Voter Fraud, Elections Division, Elections Advisory Council, and Georgia VoteSafe. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the date and time as 11/7/2014 1:39 PM.

Legis.ga.gov: your resource for the Georgia General Assembly



Fulton County Commission Website



Atlanta City Council



County Commission/ City Council

- <http://www.fultoncountyga.gov/commissioners>
- Find the address search bar on the right hand side, enter your address, find your commission district and commissioner
- <http://citycouncil.atlantaga.gov/>
- Click on “Other” at the top of the page
- Click on “My Neighborhood”
- Enter your address

Overview of Georgia General Assembly

- ▶ The next few slides will cover the offices and the process of legislative session, which is the period in which the state of Georgia enacts laws.

Overview of Georgia General Assembly

- ▶ Consists of 2 houses - Senate and House of Representatives
 - ▶ 56 Senators and 180 House Members
- ▶ Sessions last 2 years
 - ▶ Each year, legislative session convenes on the second Monday in January and lasts 40 days

Overview of Georgia General Assembly

- ▶ The election of the Speaker of the House is the first vote the House casts. This happens on Day 1 of the legislative session.
- ▶ Speaker then appoints chairman of the committees
- ▶ Similar process happens in the Senate
- ▶ Sessions and committee meetings are broadcast live on web:
<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Streaming/en-US/Both.aspx>

Legislative Calendar

November:

- ▶ Legislators can begin pre-filing bills
- ▶ Office of Planning and Budget presents initial budget recommendations to the Governor

December:

- ▶ Final budget decisions made by the Governor
- ▶ Legislature may hold pre-legislative budget hearings

January:

- ▶ Georgia General Assembly convenes for 40 day session
- ▶ Governor's State of the State Address and Budget Address
- ▶ Committee hearings begin
- ▶ Day 15: All bills that have passed out of committee must go to Rules Committee before they can be heard on House or Senate floor

Legislative Calendar (cont'd)

February:

- ▶ Day 30: Last day for House bills to be read for the first time in the Senate and last day for Senate bills to be read for the first time in the House

March - April:

- ▶ After House and Senate have both passed any bill, conference committee must be appointed to resolve any differences (rarely are the bills passed without changes)
- ▶ Once the same version is passed by both houses, the bill goes to Governor for action
- ▶ Day 39: last day for House bills to be voted on by the Senate unless Senate votes on the 39th day to be able to table a bill and takes it off the table for consideration for a vote on the 40th day
- ▶ "Sine Die": (Day 40): final day of year's legislative session
- ▶ **July 1:** Day when most bills that have been signed by the Governor go into effect

How a Bill Becomes a Law

- ▶ Bill is written and introduced by member of the House of Representatives or Senate
- ▶ Bill is introduced in House and read for first time by title & brief description
- ▶ Bill is referred by the Speaker to a committee where it is considered
- ▶ Bill is automatically read for second time by title only on legislative day following first reading

How a Bill Becomes a Law (Cont'd)

- ▶ Public hearing on bill may be held in committee, resulting in one of the following actions:
 - ▶ Recommend bill do pass
 - ▶ Recommend bill do pass as amended
 - ▶ Recommend bill do not pass
 - ▶ Take no action
 - ▶ Report bill with no recommendation

How a Bill Becomes a Law (Cont'd)

- ▶ If committee report is favorable, bill is passed to a third reading in its entirety
- ▶ Bill is debated by the full House and passes by a majority vote of the total membership (at least 91 votes). The House may take the following actions:
 - ▶ Pass
 - ▶ Do pass as amended
 - ▶ Do not pass
- ▶ Bill goes to the Senate for "Agree" or "Disagree"
- ▶ If bill passes both House and Senate, the bill goes to the Governor, who signs or vetoes it. Vetoes bill goes back to House and Senate, and if passed by two-thirds vote of House and Senate, the bill becomes a law.

Know your issue/ Voice

- Come prepared: be timely, brief, bring information to leave
- Identify yourself as a constituent or a concerned citizen
- Identify if you are speaking on behalf of a group
- Identify why this issue is personally important to you (keep it brief)

How to talk to a lawmaker

- Come prepared: be timely, brief, bring information to leave
- Identify yourself as a constituent or a concerned citizen
- Identify if you are speaking on behalf of a group
- Identify why this issue is personally important to you (keep it brief)

Do(s)

- Always be respectful
- You are in control- they serve you 😊
- Show up early, if possible
- Thank the legislator
- Don't take up more time than what you have requested (15 minutes, typically)
- Thank the legislator again
- Follow up with a thank you note that includes more information

Don't(s)

- Be condescending/ disrespectful, even if you disagree
- Be intimidated
- Be late
- Drag your meeting out
- Give personal anecdotal stories irrelevant to the issue at hand
- Forget to thank them/ their staff

Get To Know Your Legislator

- Attend their events, townhalls, debates, public meetings
- Follow them on social media, get their newsletters, stay informed on their issues
- Know their votes (more on this later)
- Attend committee, council, commission meetings, or watch them online
- Follow the news (AJC, TV, Patches, and local websites of organizations/ independent news sources)

Know Their Votes

- House votes:
<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/VoteList.aspx>
- Senate votes:
<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/VoteList.aspx?Chamber=1>
- Commission Agenda/Minutes:
<http://mm1.co.fulton.ga.us/agendamaestro/Query.aspx>
- Council Agenda/Minutes:
<http://citycouncil.atlantaga.gov/Minutes2.htm>

Helpful Sources

- votesmart.org
- <http://www.politifact.com/georgia/SouthernIndeed.com>
- Gapundit.com
- <http://www.ajc.com/weblogs/political-insider/>
- <http://commoncausega.org/>
- <http://www.blogfordemocracy.org/>

ME

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