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resident Teddy Roosevelt once declared: “Far better it is to dare mighty things . . . even though checkered with failure, than to . . . live in the grey twilight that knows not victory or defeat.” So it is with politicians and attorneys. They well know the ups and downs of victories and defeats. That’s a main reason why we publish our Political/Legal issue of James. Its aim is to chronicle many of Georgia’s political and legal movers-and-shakers who have made a significant mark, or are making a mark, in their arena. They don’t live “in the grey twilight that knows not victory or defeat.” They have “win-loss” records!

James further thought it interesting to discover where politicos relax and hold court at metro Atlanta “political restaurant” hangouts. So we conducted an online reader vote on insideradvantage.com— and the response was over 1,000 votes and a flood of comments. Ace staff writer Walter Jones compiled it all into a fascinating four-page feature listing “the top 20” hangouts and specifically focusing on “the top five.”

Our staff also believes that the greatest political, economic and educational milestone for this state in the latter part of the 20th century is establishment of the state lottery. One of Georgia’s great politicians—Zell Miller—dared to establish a “mighty thing.” He succeeded in getting laws passed that restricted lottery proceeds to fund pre-kindergarten programs, capital and technology enhancements for schools and, most innovative of all, the HOPE Scholarship program. We commend to readers Walter Jones’ piece on the “populist” from Young Harris and how his dream became a reality that has benefitted so many Georgians.

And don’t think we’ve forgotten about presidential politics. For instance, check out how our own Matt Towery defines what’s “Trumplicated” about the fascinating Republican presidential campaign. And read Mac McGrew’s sure-to-be controversial piece on presidential campaign years and their impact on the markets.

Of course, our “Floating Boats” is a must read—in fact, it appears to be readers’ all-time favorite feature. We can attest to the fact that over the years a “sinking,” “drifting” or “rising” boat can have a substantial impact on a politician, business leader or policy issue.

A MEA CULPA: Imagine our horror when the last “Influential Georgians” issue mistakenly omitted from our original copy two truly influential Georgians: Billy Payne, chairman of the Augusta National Golf Club, and Randy Evans (who also is a regular James columnist!). The flub did have a somewhat humorous side, though, when Evans later revealed that he received a phone call out of the blue from Payne wondering how and why they both got omitted. Our apologies. And by the way, they ARE included in this issue’s “Influential Attorneys” feature.
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With offices around the state of Georgia, Hall Booth Smith, Government Affairs is a well-connected team of lawyers and professional lobbyists who understand your federal, state and local legislative and regulatory objectives.

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Hall Booth Smith, P.C. is a full service law firm with over 20 years of experience. At HBS, we attribute our growth and success to the hard work and allegiance of fulfilling our promise: “Serving to Achieve Excellence” in all we do.
Former University of Georgia football coach and athletic director, Vince Dooley, has been elected chairman of the Georgia Historical Society’s Board of Governors during the group’s annual meeting in Savannah. Although best known for coaching the Bulldogs to the 1980 national championship, Dooley has a master’s degree in history from Auburn University, is a life-long student of history and a strong supporter of historical preservation. With the coach at the helm, the society’s boat is... **RISING**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says over 100,000 child refugees have entered the U.S. since 2013, with nearly 4,000 coming to Georgia without parents. Metro Atlanta school districts, many of which face budget deficits and other problems (DeKalb County) are forced to take in these students, many of whom come from violent backgrounds and speak little or no English. Refugees are a problem that must be addressed, but for the burden of caring for and educating them to fall on Georgia taxpayers and their public school systems sees the ship... **SINKING**

Clarkston Mayor Ted Terry wants his city to decriminalize the usage of marijuana. That idea is shot down by Chuck Spahos, the executive director of the Prosecuting Attorneys’ Council of Georgia. “The only thing I can say about that is no municipal government has the authority to decriminalize anything that the Georgia General Assembly and federal government still say is a crime. State law and federal law will still apply to the citizens within the municipality.” That view is echoed by attorneys of all political stripes, so the permissive mayor’s proposal is... **SINKING**

Atlanta has paired with popular traffic app Waze in an effort to share information and possibly ease the traffic burden for residents and visitors. The city will give real-time infomation on construction, crashes, road closures and more to the app, which will then use it to help users as they navigate their way through the city. A technological step forward that will ease traffic concerns? Yes, please. For Mayor Kasim Reed and other city officials who helped engineer this deal, the ship is... **RISING**

Hartsfield-Jackson is preparing for a major renovation, and its tenants are going to help foot the bill. The airlines that help make the airport the busiest in the world are going to cover $3 billion of the proposed $6 billion expansion program which will rebuild parking decks, update the concourses, and add another runway. Private companies helping pay for an airport that is one of the state’s crown jewels of industry sees the state’s ship... **RISING**

An Emory University panel called into action after someone wrote pro-Donald Trump messages in chalk around campus came to the conclusion, after weeks of debate, that the messages should indeed be protected by a First Amendment free speech policy. A good decision! But the fact that the university needed protests and panels to determine whether a simple campaign slogan should be tolerated has the school’s ship... **Drifting**

An Atlanta-area woman who called for black people “to rise up and shoot a cop” later apologized for her Facebook post—after Fulton County prosecutors charged Ebony Dickens with terroristic threats and inciting a riot. She also wrote: “I condone black on white killings” and “death to all white cops nationwide.” Yet Fulton County District Attorney Paul Howard dropped the rap in exchange for her offering public remorse. (Dickens claimed she didn’t think people would take her seriously.) Wondering if Howard asked the law enforcement community about how they would feel about such a decision? Another reason why the boat of one of Georgia’s least-popular DAs is... **SINKING**
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Just because you write that a candidate will win a nomination, or your poll shows them winning a certain primary or caucus, doesn’t mean you are blindly supportive of them.

In my years of polling, providing TV analysis and writing columns I’ve had plenty of candidates who I polled as leading a race or predicted they would win with whom I personally had issues.

In the case of Donald Trump all of that is more “Trumplicated.”

In December of 2014 when still writing a national column for Creators, I wrote about the reasons why the New York businessman would be a much stronger candidate for the GOP nomination than most thought. Trump saw the column and, unbeknownst to me, tweeted it out. Now he has real live famous writers to tweet about and, after 15 years, I have given up my national column as I continue my march to the sea (make that the Bay of Tampa-St. Petersburg).

But I have way too many friends and colleagues here in Georgia who were torn (and in some cases still are) over a Trump movement. Many of my Democratic friends have decided that Trump is a racist, xenophobic, crazy man. And some of my Republican friends think he is all of that and a liberal hiding behind conservative rhetoric to boot.

Then there are the Trump supporters. They are the folks who gave “The Donald” a win in virtually every county in the state the night Georgia primary votes were counted. To be clear, they are voters—but not, for the most part, Republican activists.

That is where in Georgia, in many other states, and certainly at the DC beltway level, things get complicated.

For example, when Jeb Bush—who is a really good man with superlative skills—failed to take off, many longtime GOP activists moved over to Marco Rubio. I chronicled much of Rubio’s rise to power over the years for readers in Jacksonville and again believe him a really sharp and capable young leader.

But I knew Marco was in deep trouble when spending several weeks in Florida providing analysis for the Fox affiliates in Tampa and Orlando. The entire time I was there, traveling back and forth to our studios, I never saw a single Rubio sticker.

So the last stand for so many of my GOP friends was Ted Cruz. I got it. Cruz is ambitious but a true conservative. He is also, I am convinced, brilliant. And he will be back.

But none of those candidates could stop Trump. Here is why.

Most GOP primary voters are not Republican activists. They barely know who their congressman is and could not care less about the official Republican Party of Georgia or its inner workings.

They are upset about promises not kept in Washington, so they will put up with any perceived flaws in Trump. And every time they heard about rigged conventions or GOP “names” opposing Trump, their numbers grew and their resolve strengthened.

As this issue goes to print, the Bush family declined to endorse Trump. Mitt Romney—who is quickly becoming, for the “unwashed masses,” the
most despised former presidential nominee in modern GOP history—announced he would not attend the national convention. Others were making similar edicts.

That doesn’t make things complicated, but instead “Trumplicated.” “Trumplicated” means “things sound complicated but they are in reality very simple.”

Want an example? Congressman Lynn Westmoreland is as conservative and Republican as they come in Georgia. When Speaker Paul Ryan decided to announce that he could not bring himself to endorse Trump just days after Trump’s overwhelming victory in Indiana, Westmoreland told the media that he just plain couldn’t understand Ryan’s position.

What Westmoreland figured out quickly is that by November the race will be between Hillary Clinton, who he battled in the Benghazi hearings and who would be pushed to the far left, and Trump. Westmoreland knows Georgia politics like the back of his hand. Sure Clinton might remain the favorite and beat Trump. But the savvy Congressman who may well be a leading candidate for governor in a few years knows where his voters will be by then.

For him it’s not complicated. It’s Trumplicated. And so it will be for GOP-inclined voters in Georgia by November.

Matt Towery is a nationally syndicated columnist, pollster, author and attorney. He is the author of the new book Newsvesting: Use News and Opinion to Grow Your Personal Wealth.
IT STARTS WITH THE GOVERNOR

We begin again with a familiar name: Gov. Nathan Deal. The former prosecutor, judge, state legislator and U.S. congressman is having a tremendous impact on Georgia’s judicial system. Since his 2011 inauguration, he reshaped the Court of Appeals with excellent judicial appointments. Now he’ll do so with the Supreme Court, since the General Assembly added two high court seats that he can fill.

The governor has additionally appointed dozens of conservative constitutionalists to lower court judgeships. Furthermore, Deal has initiated sweeping criminal justice reforms with the consent of the legislature.

There are obviously many fine attorneys laboring within the executive branch of government. Prominent among them is the governor’s executive counsel Ryan Teague, a major player in vetting legislation.

Also a close Deal advisor is Randy Evans, a PR-savvy member of the Dentons firm who is his personal attorney. Evans wields clout as Georgia’s Republican National Committeeman (in this role, he has gotten to know presumptive presidential nominee Donald Trump) and co-chairs the powerful Judicial Nominating Commission which advises the governor on recommending candidates for judgeships.

As for Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle, he is effectively assisted by his general counsel and policy director Irene Munn. Attorney General Sam Olens, of course, is the state’s top prosecutor. Among his band of capable prosecutors is the new solicitor general within his office, Britt Grant.

JUDGES, LEGENDS & LAWMAKERS

All the state Supreme Court justices, as well as judges serving on the Court of Appeals, must be recognized because their impact is so wide-ranging and diverse. They are listed in a separate category accompanying this article. There are also, of course, Georgians who are prominent federal judges who have incredible impact on all of our lives due to their decisions. They can only serve if they are
confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Then there are various judges scattered across Peach State counties and cities who fit into the “influential” category not just because of their rulings but also because they “make things happen.”

As James has noted before, there are at least four lawyers who could even be placed in a “Legendary Georgia attorney” category—colorful trial attorney Bobby Lee Cook (who just received a lifetime achievement award from the Southern Center for Human Rights); former U.S. senator and national defense expert Sam Nunn; 1996 Atlanta Olympics organizer and Augusta National Golf Club Chairman Billy Payne; and retired state Supreme Court Justice Conley Ingram.

Currently 42 state legislators have law degrees but the General Assembly’s most high-profile practicing attorney is House of Representatives Speaker David Ralston. The speaker’s counsel is Terry Chastain—infamous during this past legislative session for getting into a messy public shouting match with fellow attorney Sen. Josh McKoon (who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee). Retired judge John Crosby is the Senate Judiciary Committee vice chair.

Other Republican attorneys in key positions are House Judiciary Chairman Wendell Willard and Rep. Barry Fleming, a respected Judiciary subcommittee chair who does his homework well.

Prominent on the Democrat aisle in the Capitol are House Minority Leader Rep. Stacey Abrams along with longtime Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver and relative newcomer Rep. Stacey Evans (noteworthy for working with Republicans to protect and enhance the HOPE scholarship). In the Senate there’s also Republican Charlie Bethel and Democrat Curt Thompson (who was once briefly jailed for “contempt of court”).

Retired GOP state Rep. Edward Lindsey, who lost a 2014 congressional race and works in government affairs with the Thompson Victory Group, is often sought for advice by former legislative colleagues. And one-time Democrat state lawmaker Larry Walker serves on the Board of Regents, which oversees the University System of Georgia.

MORE LAWYER POLITICOs

Let’s further focus on the lawyers who move easily in the corridors of politics and law “taking care of business.” There’s the loquacious former Democrat Gov. Roy Barnes, former GOP Attorney General Mike Bowers with Balch & Bingham and one-time Democrat Attorney General Thurbert Baker with Dentons. This list also includes Robert Highsmith, former Perdue counsel and lawyer for Atlanta Mayor (and attorney) Kasim Reed along with former U.S. Attorneys Joe Whitley and Larry Thompson. Then there’s Pete Robinson of Troutman Sanders, who co-chairs the Judicial Nominating Committee.

By the way, all lawyers serving on the JNC and the Judicial Qualifications Committee naturally qualify as “influential.” The JQC chairman is Brenda Weaver, but that panel will be abolished and reconstituted. The State Bar’s influence will be diminished and the chairman will be a State Bar member appointed by the governor. The Bar’s current president is Bob Kaufman and its impressive (but outgoing) director of government affairs is Thomas Worthy.

John Hall heads Hall, Booth & Smith firm with managing partner Alex Booth. That firm includes former state lawmaker and pollster Matt Towery chairing its government relations team, along with appellate bar legend Scott Henwood. Ernest Greer, the chairman of Greenberg Traurig, is the first lawyer to chair the Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

Next comes Josh Belinfante with Robbins, Ross, Alloy, Belinfante & Littlefield, Oscar Persons of Strickland, Brockington & Lewis and Ray Smith of Smith & Liss—all connected to many GOP politicos. So, too, is Doug Chalmers who recently expanded his firm’s government relations team.

Among prominent attorneys wired into Democratic politics are former prosecutor Ken Hodges, the Machiavellian Bobby Kahn (ex-Governor Barnes’ former chief of staff) and ex-state Rep. Rob Teilhet.

Of special note: Craig Gillen has successfully developed the “political persecution” tactic in high-profile cases involving politicians.

THE LIST GOES ON...

More well-known attorneys are having an impact in specialized areas. Atlanta entertainment attorney Joel Katz of Greenberg Traurig lists a long roster of celebrity clients. Criminal defense attorney Ed Garland (also a business partner with former Atlanta Braves baseball home run king Hank Aaron) and his partner Don Samuel have successfully handled high-profile cases. Tex McIver of Fisher & Phillips has distinguished himself in the field of labor law, as has David Worley and workers’ comp guru David Moskowitz.

Scott Bonder of Fried & Bonder continues to make a name for himself. Lori Cohen, who heads Greenberg Traurig’s Pharmaceutical, Medical Device and Health Care Litigation, has an incredible string of court victories.
Harry MacDougald of Caldwell Watson is one of the best constitutional law gurus in the state. Darren Penn (who just stepped down as head of the state Trial Lawyers Association) and Jeff Harris are at the top of their game, as is A. Lee Parks. He scored the first successful constitutional challenges to racially gerrymandered legislative districting plans, and Parks is a “go-to” lawyer for affirmative action cases.

There are countless influential corporate attorneys, especially with Fortune 500 companies, who move easily in Georgia’s corridors of power. Space dictates that we can only single out a noteworthy few: Tom Bishop with the Southern Company, Hugh McNatt of Vidalia who is now a Balch & Bingham partner, Coca-Cola general counsel Barnhard Goepelt, John Tanzine of Columbus who represents the Georgia Crown Distributing Company, and Tye Darland of Georgia-Pacific.

Got a DUI in metro Atlanta? Prominent in this field are attorneys and their firm colleagues who especially command the respect of judges. Two high-profile metro Atlanta examples are William “Bubba” Head and Bob Chestney. There are of course countless others in Atlanta and other cities.

Lin Wood Jr. is solo again after having left the Bryan Cave firm (perhaps best known for his libel suit on behalf of 1996 Olympics security guard Richard Jewell against the Atlanta Journal-Constitution). When it comes to libel litigation, an expert is Georgia Press Association counsel David Hudson of Augusta’s Hull Barrett firm. Patrick Rice, also of that firm, has ably represented the Augusta National Golf Club. Jack Long and John Bell are other high-profile, politically-savvy Augusta trial attorneys.

In Columbus, there are Democrats Joel Wooten and Jim Butler of the Butler, Wooten & Fryhofer firm. In Rome there’s Bob Brinson of Brinson, Askew and Berry. And University of Georgia football fans would be outraged if we didn’t acknowledge famed Bulldog owner Sonny Seiler of Savannah.

It would also be remiss not to mention William “Pope” Langdale of Valdosta, the new president of the state Trial Lawyers Association. He succeeded Linley Jones. Before her was female trailblazer Robin Frazier Clark.

The constitutionalist Federalist Society is often used as a resource by Republican governors (and presidents) when choosing members to work in their administrations or to be judges. (Donald Trump says he would turn to Federalists for advice on judges.) So it’s noteworthy that the current president of the large Atlanta Federalist chapter is Anne Lewis. Her law partner Frank Strickland is the overall chapter chairman.
PROSECUTORS

There are many fine district attorneys in judicial circuits throughout the state (and a few not so fine). But, in our view, several stand out in no particular order:

Cobb County DA Vic Reynolds has achieved prominence, in just his first term, by successfully handling difficult cases. Macon DA David Cook has instituted impressive anti-gang prosecutions, and the superlative efforts of Chatham County DA Meg Heap will lead to a second term (running unopposed). Acting U.S. Attorney John Horn of the Northern District of Georgia deserves kudos for aggressively prosecuting illegal immigrant felons, organized gangs and human/drug traffickers. (He was preceded in that office by Sally Quillian Yates, now the No. 2 official in the U.S. Justice Department.) Chuck Spahos, executive director of the Prosecuting Attorneys’ Council of Georgia, is also making a mark with the positive direction he has taken that important organization.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Georgia’s congressmen work to assist constituents on a wide variety of issues. They and their staff interact daily with all sorts of people ranging from Peach State officialdom to Washington bureaucrats. Three of Georgia’s 13 members of the U.S. House of Representatives are attorneys: Rep. Sanford Bishop, D-2nd District who resides in Albany; Rep. Hank Johnson, D-4th District who resides in Lithonia; and Rep. Rob Woodall, R-7th District who resides in Lawrenceville.

SOME FINAL RECOGNITIONS

Congratulations go to Linda Klein of Atlanta’s Baker Donelson for becoming the incoming chairwoman of the American Bar Association. Kudos also to Jonathan Hawkins of Krevolin & Horst who represented the fraternity in the Georgia Tech case that led to legislative attention regarding better due process for male college students. (He is further assisting state Rep. Earl Ehrhart in suing the federal government over onerous Title IX edicts regarding college students.)

Just about every lawyer has a favorite law professor, and there’s an array of top-notch Georgia legal educators who have a wide-ranging impact. One of these professors, however, should again be recognized for co-authoring a must-have reference book on Georgia’s evidence code which took effect in 2013. We’re referring to University of Georgia law professor Ron Carlson who— along with son Michael Carlson, a Cobb County assistant district attorney— wrote “Carlson on Evidence” that compares Georgia rules and federal rules.

Finally, as we’ve noted in the past, there’s the Institute of Continuing Legal Education executive director and University of Georgia law professor Steve Harper. He leads a staff that organizes and implements lawyer training programs. He decides what subjects will be selected and what speakers will present, steering the practice of law in this state and influencing careers.

A note to our readers: We realize we’ll be hearing from some of you saying we missed lawyers who should have been included. We’re sure we have, and we apologize. However, this article is over 2,300 words and had to end at some point! Anyhow, send an email to James magazine and let us know. They could be included in next year’s article.
GEORGIA’S MOST INFLUENTIAL JUSTICES

SUPREME COURT

Chief Justice Thompson
Presiding Justice Hines

Elected               Term expires
Robert Benham              1989            2020
Carol W. Hunstein          1992            2018
Hugh P. Thompson (Chief Justice) 1994            2018
Harris Hines (Presiding Justice)    1995            2020
Harold Melton              2005            2018
David Nahmias              2009            2016
Keith R. Blackwell        2012            2020

COURT OF APPEALS

Sara L. Doyle (Chief Judge)
Gary Blaylock Andrews (Presiding Judge)
Anne Elizabeth Barnes (Presiding Judge)
M. Yvette Miller (Presiding Judge)
John J. Ellington (Presiding Judge)
Herbert E. Phipps (Presiding Judge)
Stephen Louis A. Dillard (Vice Chief)
Christopher J. McFadden
Michael P. Boggs
William “Billy” Ray II

Elizabeth L. Branch
Carla Wong McMillian
Brian M. Rickman
Amanda H. Mercier
Nels S.D. Peterson
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. The South that I knew as a child and young man is rapidly changing. Some of the change is good and some is sad. We Southerners are losing our uniqueness—the things that made us different from Northeasters and Californians. Of course, if we were different, they were too!

If you would like to understand how the South used to be and at the same time read some really outstanding books, let me suggest these to you. Clip this article, and save it. Also, send it to your cousin who used to live in Moultrie, but is now working in one of those TBTF (too big to fail) banks in New York.

I rank these books like I felt about them, when I wrote this. My list didn’t even include Dollar Cotton by John Faulkner or anything by Lewis Grizzard. I’ll get them next time. Here they are:

10. A Childhood: The Biography of a Place by Harry Crews. I just read this book about the author, Harry Crews, growing up in destitute circumstances in Alma, Bacon County, Georgia. Find out, or be reminded, of how so many tenant farmers, black and white, used to subsist in the South. Believe me, it is still part of the warp and woof of our part of the world.

9. The Prince of Tides by Pat Conroy. My favorite Conroy book is My Losing Season (I can relate to it), but this one, The Prince of Tides, might have been Conroy’s best and you will learn or be reminded of people trying to find out about who they are and why they are.

8. A Time to Kill by John Grisham. Grisham has authored numerous best sellers that have sold over 300 million copies, but this one, his first one, might be his best. It’s rape, race and violence in the mostly white town of Clanton in Ford County, Mississippi. It’s fiction, and, then again, it’s probably not.

7. To Dance with the White Dog by Terry Kaye. I have nine of Kaye’s books and have read all of them except The King Who Made Paper Flowers which was published in 2016, and I just got. Kaye, a Georgian, does great writing but I think To Dance with the White Dog is his best. You’ll laugh and you’ll cry and you’ll understand life differently.

6. My Dog Skip by Willie Morris. A small book, but a big read, by another great Mississippi author. It’s just 118 pages, but it’s about a boy, a dog and small-town America and the South, which used to be just about entirely country and small-town. It’s about a place and the times.

5. Big Bad Love by Larry Brown. I’ve read eight of the books by that now deceased Oxford, Mississippi fireman, Larry Brown. This may or may not be his best, but it’s mighty good. The Atlanta Journal Constitution said this: “Big, bad and wonderful . . . A stunning collection of stories about real people and real life.”


3. The Nashville Sound: Bright Lights and Country Music by Paul Hemphill. I read it first about forty years ago and, then again, in 2015. If you are not a country music fan, you’ll like it. If you are a country music fan, you’ll love it!

2. All the King’s Men by Robert Penn Warren. I take this from Google books: “Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, this classic book is generally regarded as the finest novel ever written on American politics. . . .” I read this book in Fort Worth, Texas in the summer of 1963 and have never forgotten it! If you read it, you won’t forget it.

1. To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee. This book, to me, is about the soul of the South. Atticus Finch, one of my heroes, is as real as if I had practiced law with him in Perry, Georgia. Over forty million people who have read Lee’s book, would agree that Atticus was real and was an American hero.

Let’s see, authors from Georgia, South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, and Kentucky. Read these ten books and you’ll better understand our South and how it used to be—and to some extent still is.

Larry Walker is a practicing attorney in Perry. He served 32 years in the Georgia General Assembly and serves on the University System Board of Regents.
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on the market

130+ companies started
based on UGA research

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from jobs created

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This year’s presidential campaign is marked by the success of two “populist” candidates who’ve confounded political experts, but Georgia has experience with its own populist, Zell Miller— the “man who gave us HOPE.”

That, of course, is a reference to the highly-popular HOPE Scholarship tied to Georgia’s popular lottery. It was the then-governor’s biggest gamble— a state-run lottery corporation to fund education. And it illustrates the potency of a populist idea. Since 1993, it has provided more than $7 billion for education, from pre-kindergarten through college. More than 1.75 million students benefited directly from pre-k vouchers, university scholarships and technical-college grants.

In his 1992 governor’s State of the State Address, Miller presented his concept to the General Assembly to combat runaway tuition. “Other than healthcare, which largely must be addressed at the national level by Congress, this is the single-best way to help our middle-income families,” he said. “For them, it is a pocketbook issue of major proportions.”

That focus on pocketbook issues over philosophy is why Miller earned the nickname “Zig Zag Zell” and also why he managed to keep winning elections over a span of four decades that included monumental changes in Georgia’s electorate.

“He had a populist streak through and through,” says U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga.

That streak was his barometer, allowing him to accurately gauge the mood of the electorate as it bounced through the years of segregation, desegregation, women’s liberation, an influx of new residents, the rise of the Republican Party and countless other societal changes.

Interestingly, Miller once responded to a question about pari-mutuel wagering by writing “I am so philosophically opposed to gambling in all forms that I do not approve of church bingo.” Yet, “that example is just something he changed on,” says Steve Anthony, author of Witness to History, his recollections of serving multiple key positions in state government and the Democratic Party. “Zell was very complicated. He absolutely evolved in his 40 years. .... He definitely evolved in his political philosophy, his approach to problems.”

Miller was running for governor in 1990 after having served 16 years as lieutenant governor, having undergone a failed challenge to then U.S.-Sen. Herman Talmadge a decade earlier and another loss in the 1982 governor’s race. For long enough, Miller had been the bridesmaid but not the bride, and he needed an idea to spark with voters.

Education had long been an important issue for him. His father had been a professor and a politician, and so had a young Zell. So the idea of a huge infusion of cash for education appealed to him, and he knew that parents were frustrated by tuition increases which even then outpaced the overall inflation rate.

Why not create a government lottery? Economists call them a voluntary tax. Anyone opposed wouldn’t have to play.

Miller sensed that even in the so-called buckle of the Bible Belt that voters would rally to the idea. His political consultants, James Carville and Paul Begala, agreed.

It was a three-way Democratic primary that included former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young and a state senator and future governor, Roy Barnes. “At the debate, it didn’t matter the question you asked him,
the answer was always ‘I’m going to have a lottery,’” quipped University of Georgia Political Science Professor Charles Bullock.

Miller defeated Young and Barnes, two considerable politicians in their own right. Then he defeated Isakson in the general election. “I got a PhD in politics running against Zell Miller, I’ll tell you that,” Isakson said.

Ironically, the two wound up good friends. As governor, Miller even appointed Isakson to chair the state Board of Education. It’s a move the Republican credits with restarting his political career, which led to his election to the U.S. House and later to the U.S. Senate.

While Miller took the governor’s office from Isakson in ’90 by just 100,000 votes, gaining passage of the constitutional amendment to legalize a lottery— and only the lottery— was another challenge. The legislation passed through the General Assembly with comfortable margins, but preachers and evangelical voters strongly opposed any form of gambling and campaigned against the referendum.

It was helped, though, by landing on the same ballot as the presidential election in which Bill Clinton won— his closest victory in any state. That was the first time Georgia had voted Democratic for president since favorite son Jimmy Carter in 1980. (Miller actually had a hand in Clinton’s victory, by changing the date of the Peach State primary to give his fellow Southern governor the needed momentum after the Gennifer Flowers sexual allegations earlier in 1992.)

It was a double triumph when Clinton’s coattails helped pull Miller’s lottery referendum across the finish line, even if only by a whisker. The final margin was 95,666 or just 4 percent.

“Zell Miller’s vision of creating a lottery for education to expand educational opportunities for all Georgians is a legacy that will last generations. The impact Georgia’s lottery-funded HOPE scholarship and pre-k programs have had on the lives of millions of students and their families is extraordinary,” says Georgia Lottery Corporation CEO Debbie Alford.

Studies show that students are more likely to make a career in the states in which they attend college. By offering merit-based scholarships at in-state schools, HOPE became a major incentive for the state’s brightest students to stay in Georgia. The students who would have headed off to Duke, Vanderbilt and Davidson instead went to the University of Georgia, pushing the average SAT scores ever higher and making it one of the top-ranked state universities in the country. “We are keeping these students in Georgia. A lot of them will end up in Georgia for their careers, Atlanta, Augusta or Savannah,” said UGA’s Bullock.

The professor tells the story of a conversation he had with an Auburn University student attending one of his summer lectures abroad. The student said he noticed that his classmates at Auburn were making plans to land various jobs in Birmingham after graduation but that the UGA students had their sights set on conquering New York City, Washington or Los Angeles.

“Zell Miller’s HOPE scholarship is a distinctly Georgian program that serves as a point of pride for every resident of our great state,” Gov. Nathan Deal says.

In studying his career, Miller may have appeared to move from liberal to conservative but, in actuality, he was always a populist rooted in the small town of Young Harris where he grew up and made his permanent home. His values came from the humble childhood he experienced as his mother sought to provide for the family following his father’s early death, according to Joan Kirchner, who covered Miller in the statehouse as a reporter and worked for him in the U.S. Senate.

“I think it goes back to always invoking Joe Sixpack and what would be best for him, the average American,” she said. “Being from that small, tiny mountain town was always a part of him and how he looked at things.”

When he served in the U.S. Senate, party lines had no influence on how he voted— earning him a national reputation for being cantankerous. “That mattered a lot less to him than what mattered to Joe Sixpack,” Kirchner said.

That may be the best description of a populist, especially the one who gave the Peach State its great economic and educational lottery gift.
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At the conclusion of the 2016 legislative session, lawmakers and Gov. Nathan Deal agreed on the overwhelming majority of bills and the budget. The media has made much of three vetoes, that of the religious freedom legislation and two bills involving gun rights. And while the governor’s 16 vetoes fall well short of Gov. Sonny Perdue’s record 41 vetoes after a contentious 2007 session of the General Assembly, the press has already made much of the limited daylight between the governor and Legislature. This reality is running headlong into 2018 ambitions and jockeying for statewide or federal offices that may open up as a result of Deal’s inability to seek a third term.

Into this changing political dynamic comes two issues that were foreshadowed in the 2016 legislative session and provide the prologue for what could be great political theater in the coming two years.

First, the governor has indicated he will push game-changing K-12 school funding reform during his last two years. Put simply, the proposal will have state funds follow the student as opposed to being allocated based on a 1980s formula that considers projected school enrollment. The legislation will be controversial, and the reasons are clear. Education represents a majority of the state budget and, consequently, changes to funding formulas involve significant amounts of taxpayer money. Beyond this, funding reform can create winners (those school districts that will receive more money through formula changes) and losers (those that will receive less). The losers will be some legislators’ most active constituents, namely parents of children educated in public schools and public school employees.

Second, health care issues will also loom large in the coming years. The Medicaid Provider Fee, which requires hospitals (even tax exempt ones) to pay a portion of the state funds used to draw down Medicaid, is set to expire next year. The legislature will have to choose to reauthorize it or allow it to sunset. Hospitals have largely been supportive of extensions, but there is never any guarantee on that issue.

The reauthorization will inevitably raise another Medicaid issue— the question of whether to expand Medicaid as authorized by Obamacare. In 2014 the Governor and legislature agreed that any expansion would require legislative (as opposed to purely executive) approval. Since then, Democrats have made this one of their top priorities, and until recently they had few allies in this red state. Now, various chambers of commerce are studying proposals and are expected to push it in the coming years. The Georgia Hospital Association has long supported Medicaid expansion, and will likely continue to do so in the future.

These Medicaid and funding debates will likely be part of a larger health care discussion involving attempts to repeal Georgia’s restrictive Certificate of Need (“CON”) laws. During the 2015 and 2016 legislative sessions, House Judiciary Chairman Wendell Willard proposed to first reform CON (2015) and then eliminate it altogether in 2016. The latter bill is going to be studied by the House Government Affairs Committee this summer. While most tax exempt hospitals have long opposed opening up their markets to free competition, their desire for additional Medicaid dollars has the makings of a potential bargain.

As health care spending makes up the second largest portion of the state budget, the demands on state coffers presented by Medicaid funding and education reform will be tremendous. Deal is term limited and has the political freedom to make what could be unpopular decisions. Legislators are not so unrestrained, and as many are already preparing for the next (potentially statewide) office, political realities will inevitably make tackling these twin issues challenging— but certainly fun to watch.
...the James readers’ poll...

Top Metro Atlanta Political Restaurant Hangouts

1. Bada Bings
2. Hal’s
3. Blue Ridge Grill
4. Six Feet Under & OK Cafe
5. Parker’s on Ponce & Shillings on the Square
6. Bone’s
7. Ray’s on the River
8. Hammocks Trading Company
9. The Capital Grille
10. Rathbun’s
11. Canoe
12. Agave
13. Tin Lizzy’s Cantina
14. Cross Creek Cafe
15. Marlow’s Tavern
16. Chops Lobster Bar
17. Murphy’s
18. Muss & Turner’s
19. Davio’s
20. The Palm
Every profession seems to have its hangouts, like lawyers, accountants, engineers and doctors. To learn where politicos gather, we asked them— or rather we asked you, the readers of James.

Once the online tally was complete, the list included well-known watering holes like Manuel’s Tavern, the Capital Grille and Bone’s. It also included spots only the cognoscenti are aware of—some new like Bada Bings, some favored mostly by local pols like Shillings on the Square in Marietta or Parker’s on Ponce in Decatur.

As a service to our readers, we’re clueing you in.

There clearly is no “ideal” hangout. Like beauty, it depends on the eye of the beholder. “It depends on who you’re asking and what the purpose of the dinner is,” said lobbyist Maria Zack. “You may not want to be seen, and there are times when you do want to be seen.”

Some hangouts on our list offer dining privacy like Blue Ridge Grill, which has 10 intimate booths as well as private dining rooms. The situation may demand a little quiet, Zack says. “In case you are trying to get some work done, you might skip the trendy places,” she said.

Older politicians often have difficulty hearing if the dining room is too big or the bar is too noisy, notes Gold Dome veteran Jason Rooks. “I like to be able to hear the conversation, so I do not like a loud restaurant,” he said. Plus, he likes to invite a combination of senior legislators and freshmen for a maximum party of six so everyone can get to know one another. “I find that the legislators enjoy each other’s company,” he said. “It’s fellowship among the legislators.”

Many veteran lobbyists entertaining politicians often seek out upscale steakhouses— and several made the list like Hal’s or Bone’s. They know they’ll get a good meal and service, and the freshmen get a treat out of eating at an institution they’ve often heard of.

“There are a few that say ‘I want such and such’ or ‘I haven’t been there’ or ‘I’d like to try...’. But very few do that,” said veteran lobbyist Jay Morgan. “They are more interested in when they are going to go and who is going.”

Women officeholders often prefer seafood to steak, according to Zack. For them, our readers voted for places like Ray’s on the River and Chops Lobster Bar.

There are the lunch places without pretention, just a mile or so from the Capitol like Six Feet Under and Tin Lizzy’s Cantina. They’re a short drive, or nowadays, a quick Uber ride there and back.

Atlanta is unusual among state capitals because there are almost no places to entertain a lunch or dinner guest within walking distance of the statehouse. “That’s where we’re different from a lot of states I’ve been in,” Morgan said. “I’ve always thought that was strange that even with all the transition downtown that nothing has popped up.”

However, the newest establishment on our list— and the top vote getter—happens to be the shortest distance from the Gold Dome. Bada Bings opened in 2014 on Decatur Street in the renovated Pencil Factory, mere blocks from Capitol Hill and adjacent to Georgia State University.

Bings, as regulars call it, is truly a political hangout. It’s only open for lunch on Thursday and Friday, but evenings there are what qualifies it as a genuine hangout, complete with spicy hot wings, 20 beers on tap, a pool table and drinking games like beer pong and cornhole.

“OK, so Bada Bings has a game room that has pool, ping pong and games,” notes one reader in a comment while voting in the James poll. “We walked in and saw a ping pong match to the death between two lobbyists and state reps. It was awesome.”

For decades, Manuel’s Tavern was Atlanta’s signature political hangout—primarily for Democrats. Presidential candidates dropped by when in town. And officeholders from U.S. senators to county commissioners were often seen there.

But Georgia is now a two-party state, and Manuel’s is temporarily closed while the site is developed. There’s a whole new world of political hangouts—so check out our top five vote getters. Continued
1. Bada Bings
349 Decatur Street SE Suite A-1, Atlanta
badabingsatl.com

If you work at the Capitol, you could easily walk. If you have a security detail like some senior officials, you’ll take advantage of the free covered parking at the Pencil Factory.

One reader was a little taken aback just in the parking garage. “I walked into Bada Bings, noticed several men that looked like Secret Service types; then I walked out back into the covered parking, and three black SUVs were parked curbside by the back door,” he or she wrote. “I walked back in: those three men SS types were opening the door to let out Speaker (David) Ralston, Governor (Nathan) Deal, and some other high-profiled individuals. When I asked owner Lawrence Morrow what that was all about, he stated in typical New Jersey fashion, ‘Nobody talks; everyone walks.’ LOL. It was pretty cool.”

Morrow, or Uncle L as the regulars call him, named the establishment after his first boat. He wanted to use the name for one of his earlier restaurants, but the television show “The Sopranos” beat him to it as the moniker for their strip club. He figured by 2014, the name was safe to use, but he still gets an occasional call asking about naked dancing women.

For Southerners who never watched the show, “bada bing” is a New Jersey expression for something that looks hard but turns out to be easy.

Morrow has a close friendship with House Speaker David Ralston, who frequently dines at Bings. More than one of our readers recounted conversations with Ralston there, many not even knowing who he was at the time.

“This is the dining room to folks like Deal, (Lt. Gov. Casey) Cagle and Ralston,” Morrow said. “If they have business to discuss, they have their little sanctuary.”

Morrow scrupulously guards the privacy of customers, even the entertainers and athletes who sometimes show up. “If you’re looking for names I’ve seen and stories I’ve heard, you’re not going to get that,” he said.

When relaxing is all that’s on the agenda, he’s been known to introduce GSU law students to Ralston and his office counsel to debate legal fine points or even sing along with the speaker in celebration of legislative milestones like Crossover Day and Sine Die.

Bada Bings is truly a one-of-a-kind spot. You get to visit with Capitol folks, GSU students and great people in the Grant Park community. There is no political agenda. Lawrence and his team are always at the top of their game. Consistently great comfort food in a totally relaxing atmosphere. Around my office the rallying cry is “meet me at the Bing.” The Bing may also have the single best burger in the free world. It’s called the Speaker Burger. I have no idea why.

House Speaker David Ralston

2. Hal’s
30 Old Ivy Road, NE, Atlanta
hals.net

For more than two decades, Hal’s has been a popular Buckhead restaurant featuring steaks and New Orleans cuisine. A classy atmosphere, live entertainment and a large wine selection add to the attraction.

“Hal’s offers the kind of relaxed, easy elegance rarely found these days from a knowledgeable wait staff that immediately lets you know you’re in good hands,” the restaurant
website declares. “It’s why Hal’s is the place where locals go to eat and play, where Atlanta’s power dinners happen and why Hal’s boasts such a large number of repeat clientele.”

Over the years James has witnessed countless politicians and their entourages enjoying “power dinners” or holding court in the bar areas—no doubt why our readers’ landed Hal’s in the No. 2 listing. By the way, the Fulton County Health Department sent a supervisor over in May which resulted in a grade of 98 in the downstairs kitchen and a grade of 100 in the upstairs one. Owner Hal Nowak is proud.

The Facebook post explaining the inspection received hundreds of “likes”—including from many well-known legislators and lobbyists. As the company points out, it could have never achieved its standing as one of the most popular restaurants over such a long period if quality weren’t consistently high.

Sen. Josh McKoon, R-Columbus, says: “Hal’s is a great venue for any occasion. What makes it great for a political meeting would be the relaxed atmosphere, the sheer length of the meal (dinner at Hal’s is an event) which gives you a lot of opportunity to discuss the matter at hand. So to sum up, great food plus a relaxed environment lead to significant conversations.”

Our readers’ votes underscore that Hal’s is beloved by politicians— and many others.

3. Blue Ridge Grill
1261 West Paces Ferry Road, NW, Atlanta blueridgegrill.com

If you’re looking for an elegant mountain lodge minutes from the Capitol, the Blue Ridge Grill is ideal. The exposed timbers, log walls and stone fireplace make the perfect setting for its signature grilled Georgia trout, iron-skillet-seared mussels or rib-eye steaks grilled over a hickory fire.

Owners Susan DeRose and Richard Lewis of Liberty House Restaurant Corporation aimed for the feel of the Blue Ridge Mountains, rustic but elegant. The red-leather booths are casual and private, notes General Manager Gordon Leigh. “You can have a private conservation. ... You go to some restaurants, and you’re almost in a conversation with your neighbor,” he said.

Not in the mood for tablecloth service? Hang out on the patio where light fare is served and the conversations are more communal. In fact, during a James fact-finding mission, several lobbyists, two prominent lawyers, a Superior Court judge and two former state House speakers were seen networking during “happy hour” on the porch and by the bar.

“We’ve just been so very fortunate,” Leigh said. “We’ve built up such a clientele over 21 years. Folks know we treat you right.”

4. OK Café (tie)
1284 West Paces Ferry Road, Atlanta okcafe.com

Across the street from Blue Ridge Grill—and a few miles down the street from the Governor’s Mansion, the OK Café is a longtime political hangout. And it’s centered around sweet tea, not cocktails.

Since 1987, the Buckhead political establishment—mostly Republican—have met at the café for breakfasts. Even the restaurant’s own website homepage opens with a photo featuring three well-known conservative lobbyists. But former Democrat Gov. Roy Barnes and his allies also have been frequently spotted over the years.

Also owned by Liberty House, the café focuses on Southern comfort food, like buttermilk pancakes, scrambled eggs with cheese, onions and peppers, and cheddar cheese grits. It also features pimento cheese burgers, chicken pot pie and power shakes.

When Mayor Rudy Giuliani wanted to downplay his New York roots during a presidential campaign stop in
Hungry Yet?

From that big, juicy, cut-it-with-a-butter-knife, fit-for-a-king filet mignon that you can only get at the swankiest steakhouse in Buckhead to that discovered-by-the-roadside southern-fried comfort food that'd make your grandma question her cooking skills, Atlanta Eats has the dish on what can't be missed in and around Atlanta.

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atlanta-eats.com
Atlanta, he invited the political press to meet him at the OK Café. Its popularity also was evident when customers donated nearly $60,000 for employees when a fire in December, 2014 closed it for nearly a year. This hangout also made news when state Sen. Vincent Fort demanded that a local tourism agency stop promoting it until owners removed a wall carving of Georgia’s 1954 state flag that includes the Confederate battle emblem. DeRose was quoted in the Atlanta Journal Constitution refusing to scrap it as part of her history—“and my history has absolutely nothing to do with prejudice against anyone.”

Incidentally, DeRose and Lewis also own Bone’s, the Buckhead steakhouse that came in at No. 6 in our readers’ voting.

4. Six Feet Under Pub & Fish House (tie)
437 Memorial Drive, SE, #A1, Atlanta
685 11th Street, NW, Atlanta
sixfeetunderatlanta.com

Eating in a restaurant named for undertaking, on a rooftop overlooking Atlanta's iconic Oakland Cemetery might sound unappetizing at first, but the dark humor of it seems to appeal to political operatives, politicians and lobbyists. Eating in a restaurant named for undertaking, on a rooftop overlooking Atlanta's iconic Oakland Cemetery might sound unappetizing at first, but the dark humor of it seems to appeal to political operatives, politicians and lobbyists. That's the fish-house vibe. Popular items include the fish tacos with catfish, shrimp or calamari, the oyster po’ boys, and fish stew.

Leah Grossmann, the chain's vice president of operations, said the goal is “upbeat, laid-back.”

“We cater to everyone, even politicians and lobbyists. We have one TV that is dedicated to CNN during lunch hours, unless something political is on that demands more coverage,” she said in an email.

The political business is important enough to bend the restaurants’ rule against deliveries, taking party-tray orders for key customers.

5. Parker’s on Ponce (tie)
116 East Ponce de Leon Ave., Decatur
parkersonponce.com

Brothers Christopher and John-Thomas Scott feel at home with a political clientele. Their sister Susannah Scott is running for DeKalb County tax commissioner, a post their father Tom Scott held for 14 years. And their mother was County Commissioner Jacqueline Scott.

The restaurant is located near the DeKalb Courthouse, so it’s convenient for local officials, their employees and many in the legal community.

“They really gravitate around the bar,” said Manager Tara Mada. “They just hop on over, have a glass of wine,
eat some steak.” Besides steak, the menu includes fresh seafood and local produce.

The dark wood, quiet, classy atmosphere is conducive for plotting or reminiscing about old campaign war stories. “We are chosen as a location for a lot of their political events and fundraisers,” Madar said.

5. Shillings on the Square (tie)
19 North Park Square, Marietta
shillingsonthesquare.net

Named for the legendary hardware store that occupied the same site for decades, Shillings on the Square is among the oldest operating restaurants in metro Atlanta, according to owner David Reardon.

For 38 years, its location near the Cobb County Courthouse has made it a convenient watering hole for trial lawyers, prosecutors and judges— even those who wind up in elected office.

“We've got some of the same customers that have come in since I've been open,” Reardon said. Frequent diners include a bipartisan mixture like former Governor Barnes, lobbyist and former state Sen. Chuck Clay and former Congressman Bob Barr. Our J-Iames publisher earlier this year also saw Cobb County Sheriff Neil Warren and Cobb District Attorney Vic Reynolds hanging out with friends.

“Anything political that's going on, a lot of it goes on in the square. A big part of it is just location,” Reardon said. Besides the location, the attraction includes the interior design which is like a Northern pub— you know the one on "Cheers," says Reardon, who grew up in Massachusetts. Among the amenities are stained-glass windows out of a Savannah church, dark wood, loads of antique brass and live piano music.

Like the fictional Boston pub of Sam Malone, the bar at Shillings is downstairs, and the dining room is one flight up, overlooking the picturesque Marietta Square.

I've been a customer of David Reardon’s for many, many years. I remember when he brought Shillings to the square in Marietta back in the days everything shut down at dusk. It was a bright spot on the square and also the starting point of many shining political careers. We all have memories of meeting there over a meal to work out campaign strategies and lining up endorsements. Shillings has been a significant part of the county's political history as well as present-day politics across the state.

Cobb County Sheriff Neil Warren

Manuel’s Tavern
Its own institution
602 North Highland Avenue, Atlanta
manuelstavern.com

For generations, Manuel’s Tavern was a gathering place for the Democrats that ran Atlanta, DeKalb County and the state. Much of that is because of the force of personality of Manuel Maloof, the gruff barkeep-turned-politician who owned it much of that time.

Established in 1956, Manuel’s was where reporters always knew they could find a politician to share a Pabst or a meatloaf sandwich and gather some background on the latest government doings. If a second or third beer was involved, a journalist who could hold his alcohol could come away from the evening with a handful of tips for stories.

The dark, noisy, smoky hodgepodge of buildings jammed together with the uneven floors and quirky political memorabilia on the walls was the king of the political hangouts for nearly its entire six decades until it closed temporarily in December while a real estate developer who bought the property renovates the buildings that house it. No definite date has been announced for the reopening.

So integral to the Democratic Party is the bar that one operative quipped that its hiatus could be the blame for any Democratic defeats in this year’s elections.

Even the Atlanta Press Club hosted a farewell party in one of Manuel’s back rooms to mourn the closing— and about 100 journalists showed up to toast the bar’s memories.
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Teacher of the Year Calls Attention to Teacher Challenges

Bill Maddox

When Georgia’s 2016 Teacher of the Year was entrenched in his private Savannah law practice in 2007, he never imagined that in just three short years he would be teaching in a local high school. Ernie Lee has never regretted his decision to leave the legal profession for the classroom. Today, Lee says, "I have never had such passion for my work as I have found when I am in a classroom with students."

Taking a few minutes from his busy schedule, he candidly answered some questions about Georgia’s teachers.

What have you learned from teachers and the opportunities to meet with administrators and government leaders?

I have learned teachers are incredibly frustrated and many people do not fully understand the nature of the 21st Century student or classroom.

For better or worse, schools have changed. It is not unusual to have a 13-year-old student with a 26-year-old parent and a 39-year-old grandparent. Our culture and society have changed and so has the ability to engage students who are used to streaming music, own or have access to smart phones, and who regularly use the internet. Teachers have had to change to meet the new challenges.

Let’s look at that frustration a little more closely. The Georgia DOE conducted a recent survey of its teacher force; it was not encouraging. Many teachers are not happy and are leaving the profession while prospective new teachers are choosing other careers. Why such results?

This is a troubling trend that is not widely known by the public. The Georgia Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) passed in 1985 was a formula to set base line funding for schools, but it has never been fully funded since its inception. Teachers have had to continually produce more each year, while funds have been continually reduced. This fact combined with a shrinking middle class and an increasing poverty rate has mostly been ignored, but now it is catching up.

Teachers often feel unappreciated and compared to fellow graduates are making much less after being in the work force after five years. Younger teachers are leaving to pay their bills. Combine this with testing issues and you can better understand the frustration.

Maybe some help is on the way? Senate Bill 364 was the key piece of education legislation coming out of the 2016 session. It primarily addressed teacher evaluations and the number of assessments students and teachers are dealing with.
Teachers heartedly endorsed it. Why?

I don’t think people realize the number of “high stakes tests” that Georgia students are required to take. As a teacher, I fully support assessments to obtain baselines to determine growth to evaluate students’ overall learning. However, the number of high stakes tests has grown exponentially.

What most people fail to understand is there are federal, state and locally (district) mandated tests. Now it is assumed that every mandated test is considered a “high stakes test.” Many tests do not count towards student grades and students do not always take them seriously. Students can quickly experience overload and overload leads to frustration, and frustration often leads to apathy. Teachers are often in a demoralizing situation.

SB 364 takes some of the pressure off by reducing how student tests are counted on teacher evaluations (50 to 30 percent), what percentage of the school year a student has to be present to count on the evaluation (65 to 90 percent) and reduces the number of state mandated tests from 32 to 24. Teachers like this. While this is a good start, more can be done.

What is your message to the business people, civic leaders, legislators, others who might be reading this? What is their role in public education? What do they stand to gain from supporting the system and its teachers?

They need to remind their legislators of the value of an educated workforce and insist that education be a priority. Georgia must have a fully funded education system. To accomplish this means to spend money on technology, provide meaningful world-class curriculum as well as to hire, train, and pay teachers. Any good business professional knows you have to spend money to make money. The bottom line: While there is no single silver bullet, we have to make a mindful commitment to invest the money on education to have a better educated work force.

Lee had more to say. Read the entire interview at www.gpee.org.

Bill Maddox is the communications director for the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. Ernie Lee serves on the Partnership Board during his tenure, delivering the all-important “teacher voice.”
It started as a virtual political zoo with every kind of politician that any voter could imagine. Republicans, fielding 17 candidates, expected a political free-for-all akin to a professional wrestling battle royal. Democrats with only four candidates expected little more than a coronation of their nominee in July on the way to the White House in November.

Out of the box, this writer predicted that the compressed schedule, combined with the large number of candidates and an angry electorate, would produce unexpected results including, possibly, the first contested or brokered convention in modern times. Indeed, this writer was so bold as to place the odds of a contested or brokered convention at one in three.

Professional political consultants and insiders scoffed because the “money” always coalesces around a single candidate in the end making it impossible for other candidates to sustain the fight all the way to the convention. Of course, they overlooked a self-funder like Donald Trump and a virtual campaign donation machine like the one created by Sen. Bernie Sanders.

Make no mistake, this has been a rough-and-tumble primary process with political machinations that defy any sense of traditional political campaigns. But, as voters in both parties demonstrated, the 2016 presidential nomination contests have been anything but conventional.

Contributing to this shakeup has been the dramatic change from the old schools of political power brokers and powerful incumbent politicians dictating to delegates, who have had little information and less connectivity, to primary-driven pledged delegates with instant access to copious amounts of data.

But an equally big part of this change has been general recognition by voters in both parties that Washington, D.C. politicians and power brokers have become more of the problem than the solution. And voters have had enough!

To show just how out of touch prognosticators had become with where the hearts and minds of voters had landed heading into this election cycle, virtually no recognized pollster, pundit, political reporter, or politician predicted that Trump would surge to lead the GOP pack or that former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would be unable to shake a socialist Democrat from Vermont. In fact, all predicted the opposite.

Traditional thinkers had one of the well-funded Super PAC-backed Republicans emerging to seize the moment and Clinton putting the Democratic Primary away early by the end of the first of March. Of course, neither materialized. Instead, the almost unthinkable happened.

Trump dominated the Republican field using social media and the newly RNC-sanctioned debates as conveniently scheduled forums to systematically swat out lesser candidates and narrow the field. And the Democratic National Committee’s strategy of fewer debates to protect the presumed nominee Clinton served only to fuel the flames of disgruntled Democratic voters who wanted to be heard.

But by “Super SEC Tuesday” on March 1, nothing was going according to plan for the insiders or the political parties. Instead, voters were increasingly taking over the process and insiders who had survived and thrived under the traditional notions of how presidential candidates got picked suddenly found themselves sitting on the sidelines as the process appeared to be spinning out of control.

Admittedly, a few commentators (like this author) took some delight as those who had pooh-poohed a brokered or contested convention were suddenly studying ways to
create one as a way to survive. Indeed, weeks of news cycles were devoted to fanning the flames of possible brokered or contested conventions and the challenges they might present.

But, of course, one out of three chances of a brokered or contested convention means that the more likely path—two out of three—presaged no brokered or contested convention. Indeed, when it was suggested that if Trump could get to 1,100 delegates he would easily move on to lock down the nomination with 1,237 delegates, the political world went crazy.

And, notwithstanding the ridicule equal to the prediction of a brokered convention, that is exactly what happened. Once New York, the Northeast regional primary, and Indiana came and went putting him within a stone’s throw of 1,100, Trump was on cruise control toward becoming the presumptive nominee of the Republican Party just as predicted.

Meanwhile, Sanders continued to win as the FBI doggedly interviewed the former Secretary of State’s former aides. Sanders himself then embarked on a new mission—to challenge the structure of the Democratic Party itself, including the propriety of unelected super delegates and the party’s use of party funds in a contested Democratic Primary.

Not to be outdone, House Speaker Paul Ryan continued his increasingly tepid refusal to board the “Trump Train” by withholding his “support” for the presumptive Republican presidential nominee. RNC Chairman Reince Priebus stepped in to start the melding process in an effort to bring the party back together as if the voice of Republican voters was not enough to do that.

Of course, all of these machinations just begged the question: “Who decides what a political party stands for—the voters or the leaders—and what happens when there is a disconnect between the two?”

And yet the upheaval of the last few months is only the prelude. There is so much more to come. No one can seriously doubt that 2016 is, as predicted over one year ago in James, a transformative election year. All of the historical models were cast aside by voters no longer willing to allow either political party or party insiders to stick to its business-as-usual schemes, dictating the outcome from on high.

Against that backdrop, can anyone even imagine what the fall election will be like? Try here.

Randy Evans is a Dentons attorney and Georgia’s Republican National Committeeman who serves on the RNC Rules Committee.
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Election Year Economics
A Connection Between Markets and Elections?

Campaigns for the 2016 presidential election are in full swing, and we are inundated with stories about the race on a daily—and sometimes hourly—basis. One of the most common topics that we hear candidates presenting to potential voters is about the economy and how they plan to improve it if elected. This has long been the case in presidential races, particularly from those representing the party not currently holding the White House.

As a financial adviser, I’m often asked what impact a U.S. presidential election has on the markets. While it’s now a top-of-mind subject given this is an election year, the conversation has actually been taking place for many decades. Investors want to know how an election year may impact their portfolio and if a correlation between the two exists.

Despite what others may believe, markets are ultimately impacted more by the business cycle—the fluctuation in economic activity that an economy experiences over a period of time—rather than election year results. While presidents are able to influence government spending and public policy, there are many more factors at work than simply who wins the election such as overall global economic performance or major world events.

Though election results have no correlation to market performance, the same research does show several interesting trends:

- Over full presidential terms, stocks have performed better when a Democrat is in office. However, much of this has been due to timing in the business cycle, not policy changes. With the exception of 2015, the third year in each presidential term has been the best year for both parties with the S&P 500 averaging close to a 13 percent increase.

- During election years, the S&P 500 has averaged seven percent in returns since 1928 with investments in energy, financials and healthcare typically the most popular. The only times we’ve seen negative returns in election years are during those associated with recessions or wars.

- The summer months typically outperform during election years relative to nonelection years. Coming from a rough start at the beginning of this year, perhaps the summer months could give much needed relief to the markets.

- Both parties tend to run budget deficits. However, government spending as a percentage of GDP has been its lowest in more than a decade and well below the historical norm. That may soon change as a recently passed spending bill to fund the government for 2016 will increase spending levels.

- It’s important to remember that the future can be unpredictable. What these insights reflect does not mean that they will continue to be true in the future. Although it is tempting to draw a correlation between what is happening in the markets and presidential politics, the bottom line is clear: investors should pay attention to where we are in the business cycle, not who will ultimately be in the Oval Office.

As we enjoy the political banter between candidates seeking to win our votes with their stance on the economy, we can find comfort knowing that while elections may light a fire in the belly of voters, odds are that they won’t ignite the markets.

Mac McGrew is a Financial Advisor with the Global Wealth Management Division of Morgan Stanley in Atlanta. The information contained in this article is not a solicitation to purchase or sell investments.
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Augusta University is rooted in one of the oldest medical schools in the nation. And from those roots, we have developed an enduring mission to improve the health and well-being of all Georgians. Whether it is in our state-of-the-art classrooms, where you will find the next generation of health care professionals, or in our laboratories, where our groundbreaking scientists are developing new treatments for diseases like cancer and sickle cell, or in one of our more than 135 clinical sites across the state, we are advancing that mission every day. And every day at the Children’s Hospital of Georgia or at the Roosevelt Warm Springs Hospital, you can see how our work changes lives. Augusta University is a destination of choice for education, health care, discovery, creativity and innovation.
Augusta University always welcomes visitors to its campus, but President Brooks Keel recommends being a little more specific if you’d like to drop by. Is it the Augusta campus you’d like to visit? And if so, which one? The Health Sciences Campus downtown? The magnolia-shaded Summerville Campus off scenic Walton Way? The university’s sports complex off Wrightsboro Road?

Or maybe you’re more interested in visiting the university’s Medical College of Georgia partnership campus in Athens, Georgia, where aspiring physicians mingle seamlessly with University of Georgia students. Of course, if you’re in the southwestern part of the state, you’re more likely to stumble upon MCG’s Albany-based Southwest Clinical Campus. On the other hand, if the aroma of sea salt is wafting through the air, you’re probably in the vicinity of MCG’s Southeast Campus based in Savannah and Brunswick. And don’t forget MCG’s Northwest Campus in Rome, Georgia.

Whew. You’ve covered a lot of ground. But you haven’t even scratched the surface.

“Between our Augusta campuses, our partnership campus in Athens and our satellite campuses throughout the state, there’s virtually no segment of Georgia we don’t touch,” says Keel. “And that doesn’t even factor in our dozens of rotation sites, our health clinics and our myriad other educational and clinical facilities throughout the state.”

Keel is fond of noting that Augusta University is “a four-year-old university with a 188-year history”— the year the Medical College of Georgia was chartered by the state of Georgia. But its roots actually extend even further back— the liberal-arts component of the university dates back to the 1785 founding of collegiate-level courses in the institution that would become Augusta State University before being consolidated with Georgia Health Sciences University— and its footprint has grown with every passing year.

“As the home to the state’s only dental school and only public medical school, among our many other assets, we take our responsibility to Georgia citizens very, very seriously,” says Keel. Augusta University medical and dental students, for instance, complete clinical training in urban and rural areas all over the state. Such exposure not only broadens the students’ skills and perspectives, Keel notes, but enhances patient access and ideally attracts those students back to the areas where they trained— a vital initiative in light of a statewide physician shortage.

“Georgia is woefully low on physicians per capital (approximately 179.9 physicians per 100,000 citizens, the 10th-lowest ratio in the nation),” Keel says. “We’ve increased our class size here in Augusta, and our satellite campuses and partner campus in Athens are helping alleviate the shortage. And, of course, having the state’s only dental school is a big obligation. The Dental College of Georgia plays a vital role in the well-being of our university, our community and our state.”

The university’s statewide footprint is also being continually expanded as collaboration grows with its sister institutions. For instance, the dental college is working with the Georgia Institute of Technology on projects including developing a computer model to test the bond of restorative materials; studying the use of bioactive glass fibers to repair the effects of oral bone-wasting diseases; and refining technology to image oral soft tissues. Likewise, MCG’s partnership campus in Athens has opened the door to extensive research in fields including biomedical engineering, pharmacology, genomics and regenerative medicine.

“Multidisciplinary and multi-site collaboration have never been more dynamic,” Keel says. “Our university’s statewide presence is a significant shot in the arm to Georgia’s health and vitality, and the synergy of our partnerships will reap rewards for generations to come. Georgia is truly our campus.”

Christine Hurley Deriso is a freelance writer living in North Augusta.
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