

April 29, 2014

Dear Governor Deal,

We are writing to personally request your immediate attention to several matters that we believe have compromised the rights of Georgians. First, for the last five years the Georgia House of Representatives has **not** operated on principles of a representative democracy as Georgians would expect. As you know, the **officials who we elect have no voice** in determining what bills are heard in their committees and little power to select any Rules committee bill to be moved to the floor for voting. Furthermore, bills can be gutted, supplemented, modified or restructured to limit debate without a floor vote or permission from the author. Bill decisions are now made in secrecy under control of one person, House Speaker David Ralston. These House procedures are not representative of a democratic republic but more closely resemble characteristics of a **dictatorship** that is contrary to the interests of the people of Georgia.

Secondly, the Speaker of the House and some of its members have compromised Georgia elections by flooding selected House races with out of district money for their chosen candidates. **This is a conflict of interest that subverts the will of the people in those districts.** These chosen candidates outspend their opponents by astronomical margins to win their races. They are then beholden to the leadership when they join the House, thus further expanding this dictatorial empire. For example, **in 2012 Speaker Ralston and certain House members contributed more than \$27,000 in out of district donations to prevent a minister from being elected** to the Georgia House. Their candidate raised 93% of his total funds from legislators, corporations and PACs including an early \$5,000 from Speaker Ralston. This allowed him to outspend by a 5:1 margin, the minister who raised 96% of his funds from individuals.

Third, the election manipulation tactics reached a new low on February 21, with a public attack on a Rep. Sam Moore and a bill he introduced. It included advance notice of an event to the media, pre-arranged ridicule by the leadership in the morning session and a subsequent media tirade where Speaker Ralston and a few others attempted to destroy the reelection chances of the Representative. The Representative had **previously** defeated a candidate that **the Speaker and other House members had flooded with over \$17,000 of out of district money.** Their candidate raised only a few hundred dollars from in district individuals out of \$30,000 in total funds. Rep. Moore has refused to take cash donations from corporations, PACs, lobbyists or legislators and accepts them only from individual voters.

The politically motivated attempt to ruin a sitting House member could be **unprecedented in Georgia House history** and was obviously orchestrated with the approval of the speaker. While we may not agree with all of the content of the bill in question, the attack was based on a **provably false, legal premise.** As a former criminal defense attorney, the Speaker had to know that the claim he and some others made to the media about that bill was false. That demonstrates a serious lack of ethics.

In conclusion, the conditions and tactics we have outlined above are unacceptable. The Center for Public Integrity has already ranked **Georgia as the most politically corrupt state in the country.** Our state received grades of "F" in Legislative Accountability, Political Financing and Ethics Enforcement Agencies, which scored a "0". We have no recourse with the Ethics Commission given that its ethics were recently found lacking after a \$700,000 judgment in the first of several wrongful termination lawsuits filed by

former key employees. As Chief Executive Officer of the state and head of the majority party that controls the legislature, you have the top position of authority and power to protect Georgians from further corruption. Therefore, we personally call upon you to:

1. Demand that the Speaker of the House resign his seat as a result of the ethics lapses cited above
2. Establish procedures to ensure that all legislators can vote to determine the bills that will be heard in their committees
3. Establish procedures to ensure that all legislators in Rules Committees can vote to select any bill in the Committee to be moved to the floor
4. Require recorded votes for all bills and amendments in committees and on the floor
5. Ensure that a bill cannot be modified while it is in a Rules committee
6. Ensure that a bill can only be limited for floor debate by the author or a floor vote
7. Allow legislators 24 hours to review any legislation prior to voting on that legislation
8. Stop the practice of pressuring key legislators to make donations to other campaigns
9. Evaluate further legal or procedural changes to avoid conflict of interest funding situations that compromise elections and the voice of the people such as those described above

We thank you for your consideration and await your efforts to restore the integrity of our Georgia state government.

Sincerely,

Chris Owen, President, Eagle Forum

Garland Favorito, Founder, VoterGA

Jack Staver, Chairman, N.W. GA. 912 Project

Sue Stanton, Conservative Leadership Coalition

Margaret Williamson, founder, Gilmer County Tea Party

Barbara Hartman, President, Chattahoochee Republican Women

Angela Bean, Republican State Committee Member

Conrad Quagliaroli, Chairman, Cherokee County Tea Party

Field Searcy, Director, Repeal Regionalism

Dr. Bill Hudson, co-founder, Transportation Leadership Coalition

Julia & Karl Heidbrink, co-leaders, Middle Georgia Tea Party

John Fortuin, co-founder, Defenders of Democracy

CONCERNED CITIZENS