



October 21, 2010

To Members of the 2010 Special Council on Tax Reform and Fairness for Georgians,

The partners of 2020 Georgia look forward to working with the 2010 Special Council on Tax Reform and Fairness for Georgians to craft policies that insure that Georgia is a great state in which to raise a family and start a business.

2020 Georgia (www.2020georgia.org) is a new, growing alliance of more than 60 organizations. Our common goal is to promote budget and revenue solutions that meet the short and long-term needs of our state and its people. 2020 Georgia advocates for reform guided by three basic principles:

- **Balanced approach.** For a faster, more sustainable recovery and future prosperity, innovative funding and revenue solutions are needed instead of relying solely on cuts to public services as available resources fall far short of need.
- **Address the immediate crisis and plan for the future.** More than ever we need long-term strategies and lasting solutions that thoughtfully invest in education, public safety, health, the environment, and our state's natural and cultural resources to ensure Georgia's prosperity.
- **Promote competitiveness.** Georgia can't meet the demands of a growing population while collecting the same amount of revenue in 2010 as 2005. We must reform our outdated revenue system to both meet current needs and position our state for further growth.

Georgians know we need public investment every time they sit in gridlocked traffic or take a child to school in an overcrowded classroom taught in a trailer. It hits home when they hear of another business lost to a neighboring state because of our aging infrastructure or unprepared workforce, ration water during drought, or read about another abused spouse waiting for a space at a shelter. They know it when they wonder how long EMT or fire department response to a 911 call will take, or meet another new college graduate who could not find a good job and had to move back home. **Georgians see every day why we need to rethink the way we meet the challenges facing our state.**

There has never been a collapse in revenues like we've seen these past couple of years due to the national recession. At the same time, the population—and the needs for services—has grown. This is not a problem that can be solved by cuts

- AARP
- Albany Advocacy Resource Center
- AADD
- American Cancer Society
- AAAFDD
- Atlanta 9to5
- Atlanta Community Food Bank
- Barton Child Law and Policy Center of Emory Law School
- Bryan County Board of Health
- Camden County Board of Health
- Chatham County Board of Health
- Children's Healthcare of Atlanta
- Easter Seals East Georgia
- Easter Seals Southern Georgia
- Effingham County Board of Health
- Energy & Environment, LLC
- Faith and the City
- Families First
- Georgia Adult Literacy Advocates
- Georgia Alliance to End Homelessness
- Georgia Appleseed
- Georgia Association of Educators
- GA Assn. of Homes & Services for Children
- GATES
- Georgia Budget & Policy Institute
- G-CAPP
- Georgia Center for Nonprofits
- GCDD
- Georgia Free Clinic Network
- GA Mental Health Consumer Network
- Georgia Microboards Association
- Georgia Municipal Association

alone. A family sitting around the table in hard times discusses what they can do without, but they also look for ways to bring in more money. Families and businesses do their best to plan for the future. States need to do the same thing; when they don't, families and businesses pay the price.

That's why we now need a **balanced approach – one that includes revenues; one that brings in enough money to pay the bills and also to invest in the future.** A balanced approach could include:

- Increasing the cigarette tax;
- Eliminating narrow, ineffective special interest tax breaks while preserving broad-based exemptions, such as the grocery exemption;
- Modernizing the sales tax to cover more services, such as pet grooming, dry cleaning, and club membership;
- Maintaining diversified revenue sources for stability and to reflect today's economy;
- Enacting a state earned income tax credit to support working families.

Delay has a price. Every year that we fail to address our problems only shifts greater costs to the future. Today's bill-you-later budgeting and hollowed-out tax system increase tomorrow's needs and mean hard-working families will have to pay someday. **We just haven't gotten the bill yet.**

A balanced approach that brings in enough money to pay the bills and invest in the future is the real solution for the challenges Georgians face every day. Balance today holds down costs tomorrow and makes Georgia an attractive place to raise a family and start a business. **We need to act now. Our future is in the balance.**

Sincerely,

2020 Georgia

Georgia Public Health Association
Georgia School Age Care Association
Georgia School Nutrition Association
Georgia State Conference NAACP
GA State Retirees Association
Georgia Women for a Change
Georgians for a Healthy Future
Glynn County Board of Health
Healthcare Georgia Foundation
Hemophilia of Georgia
Hi-Hope Service Center
Interfaith Children's Movement
Latin American Association
League of Women Voters of Georgia
Liberty County Board of Health
Literacy Action
Long County Board of Health
McIntosh County Board of Health
National Black Arts Festival
National MS Society, GA Chapter
Presbytery of Greater Atlanta,
Public Policy Advocacy Committee
PAGE
Regional Council of Churches of ATL
SPADD
SILCG
Step Up Savannah
The Barrocas Group
The Bridge
The Community Foundation for
Greater Atlanta
Unlock the Waiting Lists Campaign
Voices for Georgia's Children
Wee Wisdom Little School