

Remarks by Speaker David Ralston

Thank you very much Chairman O'Neal and to the members of the council that are here today.

When we talked about putting together this council back during the session we wondered if anyone would come to a meeting, if we had one. So I want to thank all of you for being here today and for showing an interest in the future of our state – that's demonstrated by your presence here.

I want to begin by expressing gratitude to some individuals that I think it's important to recognize. First of all, my good friend, the Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle and his Senate leadership team who worked with us as we crafted together this council back during the past legislative session. They were a true partner in envisioning this process, the goals we have in mind, and what we wanted to do.

I also really want to give a shout out to the members of the House leadership who are here today. Chairman Larry O'Neal is one of the top experts on tax policy, not only in Georgia, but anywhere around. He took a real leadership role on formulating this idea and in crafting the specific provisions that were in the resolution that was adopted by both chambers.

Much of the credit also has to go to our Majority Leader, Jerry Keen, who spoke passionately about this idea on many, many occasions and really had a vision for this council. He took a great leadership role in the House, and in the General Assembly as a whole, in moving it forward, with the help of the Speaker Pro Temp, Jan Jones, and the other committee chairs that are here today. I want to thank all of them, because without their hard work, their vision, we wouldn't be here.

We're here because a lot of us in the General Assembly believe that the way to get out of the economic downturn that this country has found itself in, and our state has found itself in, is by growing jobs. I've said both during session and after session that the best stimulus is a job, not more government money. And so, it was with that idea in mind that we decided that Georgia should take a real leadership role in developing a tax policy that was job friendly and that was small business friendly. That's what really drove us in this process, and I want to thank all of those who have worked hard to make that a reality, because we were inspired by that notion, we were driven by that notion, and we continue to be driven by that notion.

I believe that this is a very exciting project. This is one of the more significant things that we have done in state government in a long, long time. I truly am excited by the prospects that this group of people – outstanding men and women that have come together to look at our tax code from top to bottom – is working to answer the question of what can we do to make our tax code more consistent, more fair, more stable, more flat, and more job friendly. That is the ultimate goal that we're asking them to look at.

I'm excited that we do this, in this time. You know it's easy when times are good, we all tend to get a little complacent. So, I think the appropriate time for us to take on this job and this mission is now, when times are not so good and we can ask ourselves, how can we do it better?

I'm excited about where we go from here and I look forward to reviewing the findings and the recommendations of this group come early January. I believe that the people of Georgia are going to be well served. Ultimately that's our obligation – to think about those Georgians who today are out of work, those Georgians who are worried about their job futures, and the future generations of Georgians. Those are the people that we are really here about. We are trying to make economic opportunity for them.

I am very honored to be apart of this process, and I look forward to seeing the answers it brings.

It's my great honor at this time to introduce to you my colleague, the Lt. Gov., the President of the Georgia State Senate, the Honorable Casey Cagle. Thank you.