



2020 Georgia State House & Senate Candidate Questionnaire

Michael Mack

Background Information

Education: BA from Rutgers College in Psychology/English, Masters of Social Work from Savannah State University, Master's in Finance from Harvard University.

Where is home? Savannah, GA

Do you currently hold a public office? If so, how long have you held your current office? No.

Past public offices held: N/A

Additional background information you'd like to share: Lived in Savannah since 1998, and have turned around multiple businesses.

Georgia in General

Briefly share your qualifications for the office.

I'm a small business owner (private practice in counseling, mediation, and consulting), have two boys in middle school, and have a history of identifying challenges and opportunities for growth. If I need more than a dollar to make something work, I look for ways to make that dollar stretch.

Please indicate the reasons you are seeking election and your priorities, overarching policy interests, and any solutions for district-specific challenges.

Georgia has become a national and international laughingstock, and we need a change in direction. My primary interests are education, balancing a clean environment with improving business opportunities, and improving our overall well-



being. On the 4th of July weekend, there was a water advisory for Tybee Island. It should never be okay for our oceans to be toxic.

Agriculture & Rural Georgia

What do you think are the three greatest issues facing Georgia agriculture?

The costs for farming grants have doubled, along with certification fees. For example, to be certified as an organic farm, it used to be “only” about \$700 a year. That fee has recently jumped to about \$1500. This, along with issues concerning access to water, keeping the livestock business healthy, and getting assistance for storm damage ultimately shine a light on policies that benefit large farming concerns over smaller, family owned farms. Both should be allowed to flourish without impeding on the other.

What is your position on the Conservation Use Value Assessment (CUVA) for property taxes and the Georgia Agriculture Tax Exemption (GATE) program for exemption from sales tax for input costs? Do you support these programs? Do you believe any changes to the programs are necessary? If so, what and why?

CUVA and GATE help promote agriculture, and the programs should be left mostly intact. If anything, changes could be made with a scalpel rather than a machete; changes could be made to make small, family owned farms more competitive while agreeing upon a common sense cap to prevent large, multinational corporations from using these programs in ways that were never designed for their benefit.

House Bill 545, also known as the Right to Farm Bill, was supported by all of the major agricultural organizations in the state throughout the 2019-2020 Legislative Biennium. Does traditional agriculture and our state's right to farm laws deserve protection, and what role do you think the State should play in such protections?

In the 30+ years of current Right to Farm Act, nuisance law suits have been rare, so it's a bit unusual that House Bill 545 has even been proposed. It's like trying to fix something that isn't broken. The changes only seem to benefit large, multinational agricultural companies, as their industrial farming methods create far more



pollution. Any changes at all to current policies should be geared towards helping small to medium sized Georgian-owned farms become more competitive in a global marketplace.

Animal agriculture is a significant part of Georgia's economy. Animal rights groups are enacting laws around the country to regulate animal husbandry practices. Do you support the laws being enacted, which posture animal rights equal to human rights, or do you see these laws as threats to Georgia's agriculture interests?

Healthier animals and better practices lead to healthier and better food on our families' tables. Any animal agriculture regulation would be better served to focus on improving food quality and taste, while helping farmers to remain competitive in a global market.