

Inside Democracy: From the Peach State to the Potomac

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Q&A with Representative Tom Graves



U.S. Rep. Tom Graves

In this edition of Inside Democracy: From the Peach State to the Potomac, we highlight Congressman Tom Graves, who represents Georgia's 14th Congressional District, located in the northwest part of the state. He has served in Congress since 2010 and is the dean of Georgia's House Republicans. Below is a Q&A which he took the time to answer for us.

How do you work to advance Georgia's priorities in Congress?

Georgia is fortunate because our delegation – Democrats and Republicans – work well together and coordinate closely on issues important to our state, such as the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project and protecting Georgia's water rights. Our membership isn't as senior as it was just a few years ago, but our teamwork and success in earning important committee assignments ensure that Georgia is a force this Congress and beyond.

As dean of Georgia's House Republicans and our state's regional representative on the House Republican Steering Committee – the panel that determines Republican Members' committee assignments and selects committee chairmen – I work with Rep. Collins, who also has a vote on the Steering Committee, to ensure our members receive committee assignments in line with their interests and the state's needs. As a group, Georgia's ten House Republicans made a commitment to one another to position our members on committees that best represent our state's needs and, when necessary, set aside our personal preferences and interests to do what is best for the state. Most recently, Rep. Collins and I worked together to help Rep. Hice secure an assignment on the House Armed Services Committee – a personal interest that's also beneficial for our state.

What are some of your priorities this year?

As chairman of the House Appropriations Committee's Financial Services Subcommittee, I'm responsible for writing the annual funding bill for the Treasury Department, Judiciary, Small Business Administration, Securities and Exchange Commission, and other related agencies. A key focus this year is writing a conservative funding bill that advances the Trump administration's priorities of rolling back unnecessary regulations, streamlining outdated agency processes, and continuing to free the private sector to create jobs.

The Appropriations Committee also provides me with a powerful perch to fight for many of Georgia's priorities like supporting a growing military footprint in our state, ensuring the federal government pays its share of funding for the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project, and protecting Georgia's water rights against attacks from other states.

Additionally, I'm advancing an important cybersecurity bill, the Active Cyber Defense Certainty Act (H.R. 4036), which gives the American people and American businesses more tools to protect themselves online. It makes targeted changes to the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act – the 1986 law governing cyberspace – to allow use of limited defensive measures that exceed the boundaries of one's network in order to monitor, identify and stop attackers. The certainty the bill provides will empower individuals and companies to use new defenses against cybercriminals.

How do you expect the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to impact average Georgians?

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which President Trump signed into law on December 22, is the first overhaul of our nation's tax code in 31 years, and it's a huge win for hard-working Georgia families who have been burdened for decades by an outdated, unfair tax code. In fact, the Treasury Department estimates that 90 percent of workers will see higher take-home pay as a result of tax reform.

While many Georgians are already seeing the effects of tax reform through tax reform bonuses and benefits, many others will see the impact of lower tax rates and the increased standard deduction in February, which is when the Trump administration estimates the withholding tables, forms and other administrative systems will be updated. For a typical family of four in Georgia's 14th District earning \$67,994, this new law will cut their taxes by \$1,908. Relief is on the way!

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CDC director resigns over financial questions

Newly appointed director of the Centers for Disease Control Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald resigned on Wednesday following questions surrounding a financial conflict of interest. The former Georgia Department of Public Health commissioner, appointed just a month ago, was found to have bought shares in a tobacco company, an industry at odds with public health and an issue she (and the CDC) had long fought against. Another blow for high profile Georgians in the Trump administration, this sudden resignation has Fitzgerald's ship **SINKING**