

Inside Democracy: Q&A with Representative Drew Ferguson

by Todd Smith, Steve Gordon, & Jesse Weathington | Mar 22, 2018 | The Forum | 0 comments



In this edition of *Inside Democracy: From the Peach State to the Potomac*, we highlight Congressman Drew Ferguson, who represents the Third Congressional District of Georgia, located southwest of Atlanta. He is serving his first term in Congress. Representative Ferguson serves on three committees – the Budget Committee, Transportation Committee, and Education and the Workforce Committee. We recently asked Congressman Ferguson to visit with us and the Inside Democracy Readers

What can Congress do to help Georgians who are trapped in the cycle of generational poverty?

At the heart of this conversation is our broken welfare system. This system perpetuates the cycle of generational poverty and tells millions of Americans that self-sufficiency will always be just out of reach.

The dignity of work is an essential part of the American experience. Our nation was built by generations of doers, but our current welfare system is robbing our fellow citizens of their ability to contribute to society. This is morally wrong. Together, I want to build a safety net that empowers people to create better lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

How has the implementation of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act helped Georgians?

Since the implementation of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, over 400 companies have announced bonuses, pay raises, and new investments in their businesses and communities that will benefit over four million Americans. I am thrilled that a number of Georgia companies are included in this list, including Columbus-based Aflac and Total System Services (TSYS), as well as Carl Black, Yancey Brothers, Sun Trust, United Parcel Service, and Home Depot.

The benefits of tax reform are not just felt by employees at major corporations. Main Street job creators in my district are also growing their businesses and reinvesting in their workers because of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Both Shred-X in Griffin and Custom Truck and Body Works in Woodbury have been able to grow their businesses because of tax reform.

I've also heard from individuals who have been able to keep more of their hard-earned money because of these changes to our tax code. One veteran wrote into my office last month to say that he had more money in his Retiree Account Statement on his military pension because of tax reform. Another woman told me that she has \$132 more in each paycheck. It has been exciting to hear so many of these stories already, and I look forward to seeing our economy continue to thrive as Georgians reap the benefits of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

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An Invitation to Atlanta Area Shoplifters



Atlanta Police Chief Erika Shields announces that her officers will no longer respond to shoplifting calls at stores in the Buckhead business section of Atlanta. Incredible. The chief believes that time can be better spent by having officers handle more serious (and rising) crimes. Shields now puts the responsibility on the merchant to report the incident and spend the money to hire an off-duty Atlanta officer who can make an arrest. Not reassuring to those businesses that lose hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to shoplifters in Georgia's capital city whose leaders tout being the

How has your work as a member of the Education and the Workforce Committee impacted Georgians?

Whether you are pursuing a traditional four-year degree or looking to pursue technical education, I want to ensure that Georgians are prepared to be competitive in a modern economy. As a result, I have continued to advocate for sensible reforms to our higher education system and funding for the many career and technical education programs that call Georgia home.

I was proud to be an original cosponsor of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, which would reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and passed the House by voice vote last year. This reauthorization legislation would increase federal support of CTE programs and make changes to existing federal law that would better enable stakeholders to develop programs that reflect local workforce needs, leveraging small dollars for large outcomes. This type of funding helps programs like the Central Education Center (CEC) in Coweta County prepare students for meaningful careers.

I have also supported legislation which would reform our higher education system and help more students successfully complete their education, move into a career, and pay down their loans. This bill also includes legislation I introduced that is specifically aimed at reforming the repayment process and helping students make active progress towards paying down their student loan debt. My bill would simplify the repayment process, offering one standard plan for borrowers to pay their loans in ten years and one income-based repayment plan that caps interest accrual at ten years.

As a member of the Budget Committee, what do you think the committee can do to best serve Georgians?

When I became a member of the House Budget Committee, I saw firsthand how the Congressional budget and spending process enables Congress to avoid the true drivers of our annual debt and deficit: mandatory spending. Because of this broken process, it is impossible to balance the federal budget in one year, and it makes it all too easy to put off our increasingly dire financial situation.

Changing the Congressional budget and spending process is fundamental to addressing the potential fiscal crisis facing America and ensuring future generations of Georgians do not bear a crushing financial burden. This is ultimately not a conversation about numbers and money, but one about Americans who are relying on the commitments we made to them. I am encouraged by the recent passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act that created a committee tasked with proposing reforms to our broken budget process. As a member of the House Budget Committee, I will continue to urge my colleagues to have the courage to address our looming financial crisis and overhaul our broken budget process.

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