



NEW LEADERSHIP – CHANGES AT THE CAPITOL

Issue Overview

No Georgia resident could steer clear of the 2018 midterm elections. On the national stage, political pundits kept their eyes on Georgia and its hotly contested governor's race. In the end, Republican Brian Kemp won the closest governor's race in Georgia since 1966, as well as the most expensive race in the state's history. In an election that set records for voter turnout, he defeated Democrat Stacey Abrams by roughly 55,000 votes.

As this publication goes to press, the newly elected governor is assembling transition teams, identifying advisors, and preparing to take the helm of Georgia in 2019. What will these new leaders mean for our state? What have our new leaders promised to do in office, and what will it mean for our public education system?

Significance for Georgia

In Georgia, the governor plays a powerful and critical role in the governance of public education. Georgia's governance structure affords a substantial amount of authority to the governor, who holds appointment powers over multiple education agencies, . As the new head of state, Kemp has the power to make key appointments across multiple education agencies from early learning through post-secondary education. How the new governor uses his powers and the extent to which he makes education a priority for his office are yet to be seen. Near the end of the campaign, Brian Kemp provided more details about his policy platform for early learning and K-12 education, which include:

1. Improved literacy through early learning,
2. Increased school safety, and
3. Increased pay for teachers.

A hallmark of Kemp's campaign and gubernatorial platform was a focus on rural Georgia. He has developed a comprehensive plan for "A New Day in Rural Georgia" that empowers the private sector to offer high-speed Internet, supports the agriculture industry, and improves access to quality health care and high-paying jobs through economic development and investments. These types of strategies can only help strengthen local school systems, which, in turn, will support the economic activities of the region through increased high school graduation rates and the successful completion of post-secondary education for rural residents.

Action Steps

Moving forward into 2019, Georgia not only has a new governor but also has new chairs of both education committees in the House and Senate. The leaders of both legislative chambers can have tremendous influence. They decide which legislators will sit on which committees (including education and higher education) and whether bills approved by that committee will be voted on by the entire chamber. As Republicans still control both the House and Senate, it is likely we will see more legislation around vouchers, student scholarship organizations, and education savings accounts.

Georgians deserve a clear vision for public education that empowers state and local leaders as well as parents and students to make decisions that best support the educational needs of all of the state's citizens. That's why the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education created a framework to ensure that the same policies that enable and accelerate strong public education nationally and globally are in place in Georgia. This framework, called EdQuest Georgia, is built on seven core policy areas that ensure local districts are sustained by strong families, employ quality teachers and leaders, provide supportive learning environments to their students, are engaged with advanced instructional systems that provide clear pathways to post-secondary success, and have equitable access to resources to be able to innovate, customize, and meet the needs of their students.