

John F. Guest, Jr.

Candidate for Georgia Senate District 39

Housing, ADUs and Local Zoning Authority

Question:

As Georgia continues to grow, state policymakers have considered ways to increase housing supply, including policies affecting accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and local zoning.

What role, if any, should the General Assembly play in local land-use and zoning decisions, including ADUs, and how should the state balance housing needs with local control and the interests of established neighborhoods?

John F. Guest, Jr.'s Response:

Conservative Republican Perspective ✓

The General Assembly should have a limited but meaningful role in local land-use decisions. Local governments understand their communities best, and established neighborhoods deserve a voice in protecting property values, infrastructure, traffic patterns, and community character. At the same time, local control should not become an excuse for unnecessary barriers that prevent families, seniors, veterans, and young people from finding affordable housing.

I would support a balanced approach: preserve local authority over reasonable design, safety, setbacks, and infrastructure standards while establishing clear statewide standards for housing options such as ADUs. ADUs can provide an opportunity for families to house aging parents, adult children, or caregivers while allowing homeowners to make productive use of their property.

The state should intervene when local regulations are unnecessarily restrictive or when communities consistently prevent reasonable housing development. However, state policy should avoid a one-size-fits-all mandate that ignores differences between urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Ultimately, the goal should be more housing and lower costs without sacrificing private property rights or the character of established neighborhoods. A conservative approach should emphasize limited government, local decision-making, respect for property owners, streamlined permitting, and letting supply and demand—not excessive regulation—play a greater role in determining what gets built. State involvement should focus on removing unnecessary barriers while allowing communities to retain reasonable standards that reflect their unique needs. This balance can expand housing opportunities without undermining local accountability, neighborhood stability, or the rights of property owners.

Public Safety and the Criminal Justice System

Question:

Public safety depends on law enforcement as well as an effective judicial and corrections system.

What changes, if any, should the General Assembly make to improve the enforcement of Georgia's criminal laws and the effectiveness of the state's courts, prosecution, corrections, and public-safety systems?

John F. Guest, Jr.'s Response:

Criminal Justice and Public Safety ✓

Georgia should focus on making the criminal justice system faster, tougher on violent crime, and more accountable while using taxpayer dollars responsibly. The General Assembly should ensure that prosecutors, courts, law enforcement, and corrections have the resources and personnel necessary to enforce the law effectively.

First, we should prioritize violent criminals, repeat offenders, gang members, and drug traffickers for prosecution and incarceration. Criminal penalties should be clear and consistently enforced, with appropriate consequences for repeat offenses. At the same time, prosecutors and judges need adequate staffing and resources so cases are resolved promptly rather than languishing in court.

Second, Georgia should continue investing in law enforcement and corrections. Recent state investments have increased correctional-officer pay, added positions, and funded critical prison repairs. The state should continue improving recruitment, training, retention, and prison security while holding agencies accountable for measurable results.

Third, we should expand technology that allows courts, prosecutors, law enforcement, and corrections to share accurate information quickly. Better data sharing can improve warrant enforcement, sentencing, supervision, and public safety.

Finally, accountability courts and diversion programs should remain available for appropriate nonviolent offenders, particularly when treatment and supervision can reduce repeat offenses. Georgia's accountability courts are intended to improve outcomes while reducing unnecessary incarceration costs.

A conservative approach means ****law and order, personal responsibility, support for law enforcement, efficient courts, and careful stewardship of taxpayer dollars****—while maintaining appropriate opportunities for rehabilitation for those who earn it.

Education and Local Control

Question:

Recent legislation addressing student cell phone use in public schools is one example of the General Assembly setting statewide policy on an issue that also affects the day-to-day operation of local schools.

What role should the state play in setting education policy, and which decisions do you believe are best left to local school districts and boards of education?

John F. Guest, Jr.'s Response:

The state should establish clear, high academic standards and accountability measures while allowing local school districts and boards of education flexibility in how they achieve those goals. Parents and local communities should have a strong voice in decisions about curriculum, school operations, budgeting, and how best to meet the needs of their students.

A conservative approach should emphasize parental rights, school choice, fiscal responsibility, academic achievement, and transparency. The state should ensure that every student has access to a quality education and that taxpayer dollars are being used effectively. Schools should focus on core academics, including reading, writing, mathematics, science, and civics, and American History while maintaining safe and orderly learning environments.

School choice should be offered to all parents. Special provisions for SUD and Mental health. If a school district consistently fails to educate students, meet state academic standards, maintain appropriate accountability, or responsibly manage public resources, the state should have the authority to intervene. State intervention should be targeted, transparent, and focused on correcting persistent failures rather than unnecessarily taking control of successful local schools.

Local boards should remain the primary decision-makers when schools are performing well, because parents and communities are often best positioned to understand their students' needs. But with state funding comes a responsibility to meet reasonable statewide standards.

The goal should be a partnership between the state and local communities: local control when schools are succeeding, strong state accountability when they are not, and parents empowered to demand better outcomes for their children.