

INTEREST GROUP POLITICS

in the Southern States

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10

GEORGIA

BUSINESS AS USUAL

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"Consensus politics" describes the recent Georgia political scene.¹ General agreement on the rules of the game and the scope of government has developed from a political history filled with contradictions: the archetypical southern demagog Eugene Talmadge; the symbolic leader of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr.; the tremendous political and social clout of the South's cultural capital, Atlanta; the state's unofficial nickname, Empire State of the South; and the rural poverty of the state's Black Belt counties. Georgia, like the images and pictures it evokes, is indeed a melange of differing political strains and interests. For many decades these differences, particularly those between urban and rural and between black and white, tended to dominate state politics. However, there has been a gradual, yet dramatic, shift from what V. O. Key described back in the late 1940s as the politics of "rustics."²

Organized interests do not operate in a vacuum. Groups seeking to influence the course of policy in Georgia are no exception. Two sets of environmental considerations are paramount: the state's sociopolitical culture; and the interactions among its political institutions.

Georgia's changing demographics and its active pursuit of modernization and economic development have spurred an alignment of interests. After years of conflict, urban and rural dwellers, blacks and whites often share the interests of the business elite. Formerly

opposing coalitions now rally around a common goal: the economic well-being of the state. The growth of the economy gave impetus to the acceptance of the breakdown of the biracial society. Consensus politics developed as the "self-interest of the business elite merge[d] with blacks and working-class whites in the broad quest for modernization and economic development."³ The business elite was quick to understand that protracted and bitter strife would hinder development. For these leaders, the "main concern . . . was neither white supremacy nor social equality, nor any other moral/ethical issue; it was economic well-being."⁴ The primacy of economic development has led to the emergence of a "public ideology that stressed the role of state government in promoting economic growth."⁵ An important correlate in the public ideology is the limited role of the state government in other areas. Although the state's role extends to creating a climate in which businesses can thrive, the scope of state government is ideally limited in other areas. Georgians "expect to get little from government and expect to pay little for what they do get. They also prefer the status quo to trying something new."⁶

We have defined the power of an individual interest group as the ability to achieve its goals as it defines them, and as perceived by the various people directly involved in and who observe the public policy-making process. Although numerous analytical strategies exist, we chose to use a variation of the traditional "power study" approach. Scholars who employ Hunter's reputational approach conduct "snow-balling" interviews with elites.⁷ "Knowledgeables" identify those who wield power. Our lists of elites include persons based on their positions within the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. We conducted in-depth interviews with these elites, who were asked, as part of the interview process, to identify whom they considered to be key lobbyists. We then interviewed twenty-seven lobbyists. Using a semistructured interview schedule, we asked all respondents to name the most powerful groups, describe the strategies and tactics of these groups, and assess why they were powerful. We were particularly curious about how interest groups worked within the executive, the legislature, the judiciary, and political campaigns. We kept separate lists of influential groups named by elites for each institution. The knowledgeables included persons from the governor's office and the offices of the leaders of the House

and the Senate as well as members of the legislative bodies. Others interviewed were from the executive departments and the judicial agencies. Many lobbyists were interviewed from a cross section of groups as well as those specifically named by others as being particularly effective.⁸

However, we did not conduct our study in the absence of specific expectations. Previous work suggests that states in which one party dominates, that have an unequal distribution of wealth, and that lack a diverse postindustrial economy give rise to strong interest groups. These characteristics place Georgia in the class of states with strong interest groups, with business groups ranking among the most powerful.⁹ In contrast, other groups do not have the same level of resources and/or visibility. Stability of interest groups is also a major trait in such states.

The Interest Group Environment

Sociopolitical Culture

Although Georgia's sociopolitical culture has changed rapidly over the past decades, geography, race, and the predominance of the Democratic party still affect politics. With the demise of the county-unit system, urban interests became increasingly prominent in Georgia politics.¹⁰ By 1990 two-thirds of Georgia's population was in metropolitan areas, and these large urban centers dominated the economy.¹¹

Two factors tend to mitigate the effect of this urban-rural disparity. First, the suburbs have grown faster than the state's urban population: for example, between 1960 and 1990 the city of Atlanta lost 21 percent of its population, while its immediate suburban counties expanded by an average of 119 percent.¹² Second, politicians have sought to minimize the rural-urban split, warning that divisiveness undermines the best interests of the state as a whole. They fear that a dichotomy between urban "haves" and rural "have nots" will upset Georgia's political and economic agendas. Gov. Joe Frank Harris characterized this split as "insidious[ly] . . . attempting to drive a wedge, to divide our people, to pit one section of our state against

another."¹³ Political leaders articulate the ethos of the Georgia of the 1980s and the 1990s as follows: The interest groups in the state have to work together to achieve the overriding goal of economic development. To this end, historical divisions in the state can no longer be encouraged or even tolerated.

The role of a second sociopolitical factor, race, has also changed in Georgia. The black vote is no longer monolithic in most Democratic primaries.¹⁴ Yet throughout Georgia the black vote and black candidates are still a powerful political force. In 1990 there were 483 black officeholders in the state, the third highest number in the nation.¹⁵ While it holds less than 10 percent of legislative seats, the Black Caucus has gained power as other legislators consult it about a wide range of issues. Moreover, candidates for public office know that they cannot campaign successfully by attacking blacks. In fact, Democrats actively seek their support, and black voters and rural whites often form a "night and day alliance."¹⁶ The politics of race—pitting whites against blacks—has "gone with the wind."¹⁷

In the 1990 primary campaign, when Andrew Young attempted to become the first black candidate for governor, there was virtually no mention of race by any of the candidates. Young's candidacy was very much in the tradition of the recent gubernatorial candidates: He ran as a consensus candidate, campaigning among rural whites as well as urban blacks. Mayor Young campaigned on economic development, promising that his business "would be to bring business to South Georgia, money to South Georgia."¹⁸

Finally, in spite of recent encroachments by the Republican party, Georgia remains a "bastion of Democratic strength."¹⁹ Republican strength, however, has emerged in contests for federal offices. Except for supporting the presidential candidacy of its native son, Jimmy Carter, in 1976 and 1980, Georgia has registered in the Republican column in every presidential election since 1964. The Republicans won their first statewide victory since Reconstruction in 1980, when Mack Mattingly was elected to the U.S. Senate; but it was short-lived. In 1986 Wyche Fowler, at the time the "liberal" incumbent congressman representing Atlanta and some of its suburbs, reunited the coalition of black, urban, and some rural white voters to win back the seat for the Democrats. Notably, Fowler was "very different from other consensus Democrats, who had rural roots and yet developed a following in the urban areas."²⁰

The Republicans are just beginning to develop a farm system of local officeholders to train and run for higher office. Although there are more than two hundred Republican officeholders in the state, they still remain a distinct minority in the General Assembly.²¹ This is particularly significant because legislative seats have become a stepping-stone to higher state office—five of the last six governors served in the state legislature. Therefore, Georgia is far from a two-party state.²² And Georgia politics is still "characterized more by the interaction of interest groups than by political parties."²³

Institutional Climate

An array of institutional powers also shapes the environment in which interest groups operate. The powers of Georgia's governor make the executive branch an appealing target for organized pressures. In particular, the governor sets the budget and has a line-item veto; and he may succeed himself to a second term. The old bifactional Democratic politics is no longer evident; and the political atmosphere is less volatile. Modern Georgia governors have generally been "adaptives."²⁴ They have supported increased public spending for public education but have avoided class politics while championing economic development.

The Assembly, too, provides an attractive target for interest groups because power is extremely centralized, resting in the hands of the speaker of the House and the lieutenant governor, who also serves as the president of the Senate. Intense rivalries exist between the House and the Senate and between the presiding officers. Lobbyists must pay attention to both chambers as well as to individual members of the Assembly who hold considerable power because of leadership positions or political skill. Because of its size, the House is more hierarchical in structure. In contrast, the Senate has a few individuals who can deliver votes on almost any issue. The complete domination by the Democrats renders party votes meaningless. Coalitions are fluid. Interest groups can wield enormous power in this setting.

The presence or absence of legal restraints conditions the activities of interest groups. Prior to the 1981 Extraordinary Session for Constitutional Revision, the Georgia Constitution (Art. I,

Sec. II, ¶xii) declared lobbying "to be a crime." Now according to Title 28-7 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, lobbying is defined as an activity by those having actual contact with legislators.²⁵ Lobbyists, or "registered agents," are required by law to register with the secretary of state.²⁶ Georgia has no reporting requirements for lobbyists, such as financial gifts, expenditures, or compensation by categories or employees. Therefore, no reviews are conducted of reports or complaints; the secretary of state merely compiles a list of registered agents (see Table 10.1 for registered interest groups and individuals by category).

Most state agencies or departments have legislative liaisons who provide assistance to legislators or legislative staff. These liaisons are particularly visible throughout the legislative session, testifying before committees and assisting in the drafting of legislation. During the interim they often help legislators with any constituent problems or assist interim study committees. The appearance and use of the agency lobbyist is a relatively new phenomenon in Georgia that has evolved with the shift in rural "good ol' boy" politics to the complex and technical nature of an evolving state government.

Major Characteristics of Interest Group Activity

Targeting the Executive and Legislative Branches

Interest groups often form client relationships with individual agencies and exert their primary influence through them. However, because of the powers of the Georgia governor, elites more often stressed the relationship between interest groups and the executive. Our respondents usually described the relationship among the interest group, the departments, and the executive as a facilitating one.

Similarly, successful legislative lobbying in Georgia depends upon visibility and credibility, with much of the work done between legislative sessions. Lobbyists warn that "if you have not made your contacts and lined up your initial support before the session, you can't walk in there and hope to win."²⁷ However, interest group representatives are ever-present during the session; lobbyists gather in the hallways, watching television monitors and sending in messages to

Table 10.1 Registered Interest Groups and Registered Agents by Category, 1990

	Number
Banks, banking, finance	29
Business, business associations	283
Medical, health industry	42
Professional associations, unions	212
Medical, health associations	38
Social issues	182
Medical, health issues	42
Utilities	30
Registered agents	186
Government	13
Total	1,059

Source: Reports on file in the Office of the Georgia Secretary of State.

legislators. Many of the groups hold receptions and dinners during the session.

Our interviews revealed that though lobbyists know some of their more visible lobbyist counterparts in other policy areas, they were far more knowledgeable about those who operated in their own sphere. Business groups are especially adept at forming coalitions. Regardless of the issue, lobbyists are emphatic that their best weapon is grass-roots organization. Many of the groups have sophisticated techniques for keeping their constituents informed and for mobilizing them. The Medical Association of Georgia, for example, has the names of three or four doctors who know each legislator personally. Georgia Power has identified not only its own employees but also local businessmen who can contact a legislator on its behalf. Such strategies, lobbyists claim, constitute the most important way to affect executive and legislative decision making. In contrast, testimony before a legislative committee is mostly a formality, having little effect on the legislative process.

The Dominance of Business Interests

Business is the most influential sector of organized group activity because every governor in the past two decades has given priority to economic development.²⁸ In light of this, no governor can (or would want to) avoid Georgia's most important businesses: the major Atlanta banks; Delta Airlines; Coca-Cola; and Georgia Power.

Georgia governors are like other "Southern governors [who] have become the de facto executive directors of the state chambers of commerce."²⁹ The relationship between such businesses and governors is largely symbiotic: Governors are likely to ask these industries to support their "red carpet" tours through the state, the purpose of which is to attract new businesses to Georgia. Moreover, all these companies contribute to the governor's expenses whether he is marketing the state to businesses or entertaining other governors at the annual meeting of the National Governors Association. Georgia Power has developed and collected sophisticated information on all the communities it serves (including descriptions of the population, the businesses, the labor force, utility services, schools, and so forth), which it shares with the Department of Industry and Trade.

This synergy is particularly well-illustrated by Georgia's educational policy. Along with economic development, governors have stressed consistently the need for improvement in the public education system. Gov. Joe Frank Harris described education as the "linchpin between Georgia's past and present. . . . Education and economic development are the cornerstones of my administration."³⁰ For years, the state has had high illiteracy rates, low teacher pay, and a high pupil-dropout rate. During the Busbee administration (1975-1983) part-time kindergarten was phased in statewide; in 1984 Governor Harris appointed a blue-ribbon Educational Review Commission, composed of educators, businessmen, and local community leaders. Some sources maintain that the governor was prodded into action by business leaders who reminded him of campaign promises. Governor Harris, whose style was to orchestrate behind the scenes before placing his prestige on the line, had the business community sell his Quality Basic Education Program throughout the state. The Business Council of Georgia enlisted its members in

the local chambers of commerce to press their local legislators to vote for the governor's program.

Business interests are an integral part of the Georgia Assembly. Legislative service is a part-time occupation.³¹ The vast majority of members are employed elsewhere: Three-fifths of the members of the General Assembly are engaged in business occupations, while only 16 percent are lawyers (the next single largest occupational group).³² Reinforcing the generally probusiness atmosphere of Georgia government, legislators often sit on committees that examine legislation in which they have an occupational interest. For example, the fourteen-member House Insurance Committee includes four insurance agents, one former agent, and an insurance company's general counsel. Some legislators argue that professionals in a certain area can often provide technical expertise that other members of the committee have yet to acquire. They also contend that the expertise of the membership gives the legislators some independence and allows them to weigh carefully the information from organized interests. Georgians, according to one expert, "assume public service may bring opportunities or advantages in private business, and to a certain extent conflicts of interest are tolerated."³³ Each body has a rule stating that members must abstain from voting on a bill if they are "immediately and particularly" interested in the legislation; yet no clear interpretation of this rule exists.

The same business interests that influence the executive branch extend their activity into the legislative branch, and the lobbyists for these individual groups and trade associations are well known. "If you have to waste time introducing yourself to a legislator during the session you've lost 90 percent of your effectiveness," observed one longtime, respected lobbyist. In addition to the previously mentioned groups, the Georgia Poultry Association is considered particularly influential, although of low profile, in the Assembly. The credit for its success is given to its lobbyist and the fact that poultry raising, in which Georgia leads the country, is the only section of agribusiness that is doing well in the state.

Most of the business lobbyists are trying to keep legislation from being passed or are practicing "defensive lobbying." If certain pieces of legislation get to the floor, they may lose. Therefore, the important work has to be done earlier with committee members and with

the leaders. Georgia Power, however, prefers to have regulatory legislation come to the General Assembly rather than be submitted to the five-member Public Service Commission (PSC).

Other Interests

Social-issue interest groups are not identified as influential forces in executive or legislative policy-making. Contract lobbyists are more numerous among social-interest groups than any other interests. There is also a large contingent of pro bono lobbyists. Although social-issue groups are visible and some are considered to be experts on their subject matter, they face severe lobbying problems because their requests usually necessitate budgetary increases. As the Georgia Constitution mandates a balanced budget, the competition for even a small increase is intense. Social-issue groups appear to be most effective with their client agencies. The only way for them to succeed is to work closely with the directors of state agencies, who negotiate their budgets with the governor before he presents his budget to the legislature, the staff of the governor's Office of Planning and Budget, and the key legislative members of the appropriations committee.

However, the general view of agency staff, legislative staff, and members of other interest groups is that many social-issue groups regularly sacrifice effectiveness because of their failure to build coalitions and their uneasy working relationships with the agencies. In addition, legislators and representatives of other groups claim that, either for lack of funding or lack of knowledge, the effectiveness of social-issue interest groups is tenuous. They appear "not to have done their homework. You have to lay the groundwork." These groups are also perceived as less willing to compromise and more likely to "threaten" a legislator with lack of support at election time.

Obviously, these indictments do not apply to all groups. Some of the social-issue lobbyists observe that lobbying for part of the budget or for certain clients is inherently more difficult. One lobbyist always tries to identify the most conservative legislator who will lend support so that the issue cannot be identified as liberal. This lobbyist stresses that "it is important to get the whole legislative

choir singing from the same hymnbook." Social-issue interest groups also appear to be more successful when they form alliances with professional groups.

The political climate for social-issue groups is improving slowly. Executive staff and legislative chairs appear to encourage consultation and cooperation. For example, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the Council on Maternal and Infant Health Care convinced the governor to include \$500,000 in his 1986 budget for several neonatal units around the state; the General Assembly concurred. Governor Harris appointed a commission to study child abuse after several legislators, members of DHR staff, and advocates for children's health met with him. In the 1990 legislature a package of bills relating to protection of children was passed. It remains to be seen if the mutually supportive relationship between the executive and the social-issue interest groups will continue to develop when the budget is tighter.

Because of their status, professional associations often sway votes. The Georgia Association of Educators (GAE) is treated with a healthy respect because teachers in the legislators' home districts are numerous and are likely to vote. GAE is continuously lobbying for pay raises as well as educational reforms. In fact, some observers criticize GAE for being more interested in teachers' perquisites than in education. Another influential professional association is the Medical Association of Georgia (MAG). MAG encourages its members to contribute to its PAC and to be involved in local politics. Often pitted against other associations of health professionals, MAG is rated as a formidable opponent, hard to defeat. As does GAE, MAG offers workshops around the state about the legislative process and issues to be dealt with in the upcoming session. However, these two organizations differ in their policy for making political endorsements: GAE has a litmus test of issues, while MAG does not.

During the 1986 legislative session the issue of tort reform was the most visible battle pitting MAG against the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association (GTLA). Much of GTLA's success was due to the fact that Speaker Tom Murphy is a practicing defense attorney. To counter this, MAG had to lobby particularly hard, going so far as to organize a march, fifteen hundred members strong, on the State Capitol, the first time it had resorted to such tactics. Another pro-

reform group, the Business Council of Georgia, urged its members to contact legislators while forming a task force on liability insurance. Lawyers, in turn, mounted a \$400,000 television, radio, and newspaper advertising campaign. Some compromises were worked out, but adjournment occurred before a final vote. Not surprisingly, business groups took the lead role and kept tort reform a major issue during the 1986 interim session. The lieutenant governor and the speaker both became involved in the drafting of separate pieces of legislation, which resulted in two separate conference committee reports being adopted in 1987 (the Tort Reform Act of 1987 and the Medical Malpractice Reform Act of 1987). Everyone claimed victory: Doctors were granted reduced liability in indigent cases, and lawyers received a cap on damages; the insurance industry remains unscathed.

Governmental Agencies as Effective Interest Groups

After the governor's budget has been presented, executive departments lobby for additional funds and program needs that were not addressed by the chief executive. The success of these efforts depends on the same factors that affect the strength of other interests: constituents' size and status; politically divisible goods; and professionalism.

Using these criteria as benchmarks, the most influential department head was Department of Transportation Commissioner Tom Moreland. His power came in part from a dedicated tax on motor fuel, which gave him great budgetary independence as well as personal control over a precious commodity that most legislators want—roads. He skilfully promoted economic development by allocating his funds to statewide projects while cultivating legislative loyalty by his allocations to local improvements.

The state's Board of Regents also has sway with the General Assembly because legislators are reluctant to be perceived as opposed to higher education. There is a tradition of removing the university system from overt political bargaining since Gov. Eugene Talmadge's actions almost cost its accreditation. Besides its great budgetary leeway (there are no budgetary line-items for the Board of Regents),

the governor's liaison with the board is a well-respected veteran who is skilled at smoothing over differences and resolving conflicts.

Traditionally, the Georgia Municipal Association and the Association of County Commissioners, representing most of the elected officials on the local level, have been influential in the General Assembly. However, with the end of federal revenue sharing, they compete for a larger part of the state budget. Moreover, their localized perceptions and demands often ignore broader statewide concerns and needs.

The Judiciary as an Interest and as a Target of Group Activity

While traditional interest group lobbying of the federal judiciary has increased over the past two decades, state judicial commissions dominate court policy-making in Georgia. Our elites agreed that external organized interests and reform groups have had "no influence whatever in the judicial process in Georgia." The only nongovernmental group deemed influential was the State Bar Association, although it was generally considered to have been "an influence for good, but weak." The other influential organizations are governmental bodies: the Council of Superior Court Judges; the Council of Judicial Administrative Districts; the Council of Juvenile Judges; the Council of State Court Judges; the Council of Probate Judges; and the Council of Magistrate Judges.

The Council of Superior Court Judges was rated by all our elites as "the most important group which affects the judicial process in the state." Georgia has always accorded superior court judges "tremendous power" in their own circuits; hence, they have become a group to which policy is not easily dictated. As one of our elites claimed, "if there is to be any change in procedural aspects of the courts, it usually requires strong support of the council." The Council of Juvenile Court Judges is also influential because of the heightened visibility of juvenile problems and increased demand for governmental solutions.

An increasingly important avenue of interest group activity, especially for groups who have met with little success in the legislative

and executive branches, is through court challenges and the filing of briefs. Our interviews revealed an outside path of influence: interest group lobbying efforts directed toward the judicial councils. Groups such as MADD, the League of Women Voters, court watchers, and others regularly meet with these councils to apprise them of their activities and request support for their agendas. Our judicial elites could not recall any recent occurrence involving business groups seeking to influence the judiciary.

Interest Groups and Campaigns

Most of the major business interests, professional associations, unions, unregulated utilities (such as the telephone and transportation industries), and social-issue groups have established PACs. One important exception is Georgia Power: As a regulated utility, it is statutorily prohibited from forming a PAC. (See Table 10.2 for a listing of PACs by interest group category.)

Table 10.2 PAC Expenditures by Category, 1986

	Amount (in Dollars)
Banks, banking, finance	509,335
Business, business associations	1,686,477
Medical, health industry	112,346
Professional associations, unions	424,082
Medical, health associations	597,367
Social issues	152,112
Medical, health issues	45,063
Utilities	0
Registered agents	1,500
Government	0
Total	3,528,282

Source: Reports on file in the Office of the Georgia Secretary of State.

Georgia law (Official Code of Georgia Annotated, 21-4 [a] [1]) provides for campaign and financial-disclosure reports. The law states that "any campaign committee which accepts contributions or makes expenditures designed to bring about the nomination or election of a candidate for any office . . . shall file with the [Ethics] commission the required campaign contribution reports."

Campaign and financial reports must disclose the individual sources of contributions or expenditures in excess of \$101. The banks, Coca-Cola, Delta, and other businesses routinely contribute to more than one candidate in closely contested races. They also encourage their executives to give individually and to take an active role in campaigning. On Table 10.3 the top twenty PACs for calendar year 1986 are listed, with their expenditures.³⁴ However, when political parties are included, as in Table 10.4, they rank higher than businesses, professional associations, and banks. Interestingly, one-fourth of the PACs that filed disclosure reports in Georgia were from out of state, evidence of the appeal of Georgia to outside business.

The GAE was the first branch of the National Education Association to form a state PAC. Over the years GAE has used sophisticated techniques to mobilize its members. However, it has been criticized for endorsing candidates too early and too easily. GAE tarnished its image in this "right-to-work" state when it moved toward collective-bargaining demands. Some officials boasted of improving their status with the voters by not giving in to the demands of teachers' special interests. Social-issue PACs, constituting a fairly large category of lobbyists, are the fourth-largest group in expenditures. Their relatively high level of contribution is inconsistent with their ineffectiveness in lobbying the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

In 1990 the General Assembly amended the Campaign and Financial Disclosure Law (Official Code of Georgia Annotated, 21-5-4-21-5-45) by placing a \$3,500 limit per election on individual, corporate, and PAC contributions to candidates for statewide office or the General Assembly. The General Assembly intended this law to become effective on the signature of the governor and to apply to any subsequent 1990 campaign contributions. Citing U.S. Justice Department review of all Georgia election laws, gubernatorial candidate Andrew Young refused to abide by the limits.³⁵ Other

candidates in the gubernatorial primary agreed to comply with the restrictions. All of the candidates had received some large contributions before the deadline, but Young thought his late entry into the race hurt his ability to raise comparable funds.³⁶

As in past years, the candidates in most of the 1990 races did not successfully make an issue of the sources of their opponents' contributions. Historically, the influence of special interests in Georgia has seldom been viewed as corrupting the political process.

Table 10.3 Top Twenty PAC Expenditures, 1986 (Excluding Political Parties)

	Amount (in Dollars)
Builders PAC of Georgia Atlanta	219,453
LAW-PAC	203,305
Georgia Medical PAC	180,280
Georgia Health Care Association	162,183
Georgia Realtors PAC	154,419
American Council of Life Insurance	118,119
Metropolitan [Insurance] Employees Political Fund	111,788
Fund for Better Government #2	104,438
Citizens & Southern Georgia Corp. Committee II	98,275
Consumer Credit People for Responsible Government	87,887
Geico	86,156
Trust Company of Georgia Good Government	85,725
Georgia Optometric PAC	68,614
Georgia Dental PAC	68,075
Builders Political Action Committee Savannah	66,262
SOPAC Non-Federal (Standard Oil)	60,435
First Atlanta Fund for Better Government	59,260
Hurt, Richardson, Garner et al.	56,510
Atlanta '88 Committee	55,000
Committee of Auto Retail Dealers of Georgia	51,378

Source: Reports on file in the Office of the Georgia Secretary of State.

Table 10.4 Top Twenty PAC Expenditures, 1986 (Including Political Parties)

	Amount (in Dollars)
Democratic Party of Dekalb County	357,709
Georgia Republican Party	346,352
Builders PAC of Georgia Atlanta	219,453
LAW-PAC	203,305
Georgia Medical PAC	180,280
Georgia Health Care Association	162,183
Georgia Realtors PAC	154,419
American Council of Life Insurance 3E	118,119
Metropolitan [Insurance] Employees Political Fund	111,788
Fund for Better Government #2	104,438
Citizens & Southern Georgia Corp. Committee II	98,275
Consumer Credit People for Responsible Government	87,887
Geico	86,156
Trust Company of Georgia Good Government	85,725
Gwinnett County Republican Party	84,155
Georgia Optometric PAC	68,614
Georgia Dental PAC	68,075
Builders Political Action Committee Savannah	66,262
Georgia House Democratic Caucus Campaign	62,071
SOPAC Non-Federal (Standard Oil)	60,435

Source: Reports on file in the Office of the Georgia Secretary of State.

Conclusion

For many years "divisiveness" over demographics and race characterized Georgia's political environment. Those old conflicts, however, have largely dissipated. Instead, consensus politics, largely built around the economic well-being of the state, rules: "Increasingly, the promotion and protection of Georgia interests came to mean the advancement of corporate capitalist interests."³⁷ The

state's traditionalistic-individualistic political culture fosters leaders' preeminent concern with economic development.

Well-organized and funded business interests, in particular, have greatly influenced the course of Georgia politics. But business groups must work with political leaders, especially the governor. Businesses, and to a lesser extent trade and professional associations, but not social-issue interest groups, wield power in Georgia. As state government becomes more complex and technical, the expertise of the legislative liaisons of the executive agencies becomes more prominent. Organizations representing the spectrum of social concerns simply have yet to exert much influence on public policy. The cause of change within Georgia politics is difficult to assess. That is, was it business that pressed elected officials to alter the political agenda? Or did politicians come to agreement over Georgia's future first, a policy agenda that would necessarily insure the power and status of business interests within the political process?

Our study indicates that a symbiotic relationship exists between business interests and governmental officials. The latter depend upon business groups to foster and even implement their policies, to provide technical assistance, to act as symbols of Georgia's prosperity, and to contribute to their campaigns. In turn, the governor and legislators avoid policies that would hinder business. Consequently, while other groups have entered the arena, they play a relatively minor role in shaping and securing public policies.