



Georgia Public Broadcasting
Quarterly Issues/Programs Report
1st Quarter

January * February * March 2021

Top 5 Issues Addressed:

1. Politics
2. Health
3. Racism
4. Education
5. Immigration

Representative Programs That Addressed Issues:

1. Politics

Political Rewind

GPB

Weekdays, 9am and repeated at 2pm

Following an unprecedentedly-contentious November election, Political Rewind stayed on top of all the latest fallout from the results, including a runoff Senate election in Georgia that saw two Democrats pull upsets to change the balance of power in Congress. Additionally, the fallout from the assault on the Capitol building reverberated for weeks including a second impeachment trial for former President Trump. Closer to home, a new session of the Georgia Legislature saw a number of attempts to limit the voting process following a record turnout in November and the ongoing attempt to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic and making vaccines available to state residents.

Political Rewind

GPB

January 13, 2021, 9am and repeated at 2pm.

On today's *Political Rewind*, host Bill Nigut talked to two former U.S. senators about the state of our democratic institutions. As we come to the end of the Trump era, just how fragile is the American experiment in democracy?

Former Sen. Gary Hart and former U.S. Rep. Richard "Dick" Gephardt are members of a bipartisan election integrity organization called Keep Our Republic, which seeks to strengthen democracy through targeted electoral reform. They map out the challenges that began developing before the time of President Donald Trump, and how meaningful political and communication reform can help propel us forward and protect the fundamental values upon which the United States is built.

Political Rewind

GPB

March 2, 2021, 9am and repeated at 2pm.

Today's *Political Rewind* focused on the ongoing debate over voting rights. The Georgia House yesterday passed a package of bills that critics say will likely reduce turnout in future elections. The Republican-led state senate will now add those House bills to its long list of measures to change how Georgian's vote. Protestors, including representatives from the ACLU and NAACP, gathered at the capitol building yesterday to voice their frustration with the changes.

Meanwhile in Washington, the U.S. House is voting on a sweeping measure designed to defend against state efforts to suppress voting, end gerrymandering and more.

Also, the U.S. Supreme Court today took up a case challenging two restrictive Arizona election laws. But at stake is the larger question of whether its ruling will diminish the protections of one of the final provisions of the federal Voting Rights Act. Host Bill Nigut was joined by Tamar Hallerman, senior reporter with *the Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Dr. Amy Steigerwalt, a professor of Political Science at Georgia State University, Republican strategist Julianne Thompson and Chuck Williams, a veteran reporter at WRBL-TV in Columbus.

Political Rewind

GPB

February 15, 2021, 9am and repeated at 2pm

This edition of *Political Rewind* focused on what comes next now that the second impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump is over?

Few were surprised when Trump was acquitted over the weekend, but the trial did come with last-minute drama. The Senate took an unexpected vote to allow witnesses on Saturday morning, only for Democrats to abandon that path hours later in the interest of a speedy conclusion to the trial. What motivated the shift?

Meanwhile, the 43 Senate Republicans who voted to acquit offer a glimpse onto the hold the former president continues to have on the party.

Also, Gov. Brian Kemp is making effort to reframe himself as a governor who has deftly handled the pandemic and vaccine distribution. Is that a risky proposition if supplies of vaccine continue to lag behind demand?

Guest host Tamar Hallerman, senior reporter at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, led the discussion with retired *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* political writer Jim Galloway, University of Georgia Political Science professor Dr. Audrey Haynes, Democratic political consultant Tharon Johnson and Republican political consultant Brian Robinson.

2. [Health](#)

Political Rewind

GPB

January 21, 2021. 9am and repeated at 2pm.

On today's *Political Rewind*: Georgia once again finds itself among the worst states in the nation for new COVID-19 cases and deaths, according to state data and a recent report from the White House Coronavirus Task Force. While the task force numbers indicate a slight improvement in recent weeks, 821 Georgians died from the virus in just the seven-day period ending this past Friday. The staggering toll comes even as the state faces a dwindling supply of vaccines as well as confusion about rollout.

However, with his first full day in office, President Joe Biden is kicking his COVID-19 plan into action. The administration has unveiled a new 21-page plan, which leans on executive authority to create a multifaceted national strategy to combat the pandemic. The response is organized around seven main goals, including efforts to protect workers and students, provide reliable information and communication, advance racial equity in the coronavirus response, and deal with supply shortages by ramping up the production of necessities like test kits, protective equipment and, of course, vaccines.

Host Bill Nigut discussed the state of coronavirus in Georgia and the nation, the challenges ahead, and what Biden's pandemic plans could mean for Georgians — including those now eligible for a vaccine,

with Dr. Keren Landman, a physician and journalist, Dr. Rodney Lyn, Interim Dean at Georgia State University's School of Public Health and reporter Scott Trubey of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

Georgia Today

January 27, 2021, 6:30pm.

GPB

Today's edition of Georgia *Today* focused on COVID-19.

GPB-Savannah reporter Emily Jones told the story of how Georgia's Coastal Health District is cutting back on coronavirus testing in order to put more resources toward vaccinating people.

Starting Feb. 1, the public health department covering eight coastal counties will only offer COVID-19 testing in Chatham and Glynn Counties, home to Savannah and Brunswick. In the other six counties, they will spend the former testing days doling out vaccines.

Health director Lawton Davis said they need to vaccinate as many people as they can as quickly as possible.

Both testing and vaccination are important, he said, "but it's kind of like a value judgment. And where are you going to get the biggest bang for your buck?"

The change comes as state lawmakers consider the governor's budget proposal, which includes no new state funding for the department of public health to address the pandemic. Advocates say more state money is essential.

Also, on the program, GPB's Wayne Drash spoke with Rick Martin, Director of Communications for the Douglas County Board of Commissioners, who told about his experience suffering from COVID-19, including being intubated and spending five days on a ventilator. He spent weeks in rehab learning how to drink without choking, re-learning how to walk, and undergoing speech therapy. His message to the public: "I want to encourage anybody who's listening out there, don't wait until a near tragedy comes knocking on your door." He said he experienced fear like he never imagined before going through his recovery.

Political Rewind

March 16, 2021, 9am and repeated at 2pm.

GPB

Today's *Political Rewind* looked back on a pandemic year in review as host Bill Nigut and his panel discussed the devastating track of the coronavirus in Georgia. The pandemic dramatically shifted many lives in our state. More than 16,000 Georgian died of coronavirus-related illness, while around one million people were infected by the virus.

But are we close to the light at the end of the tunnel? Yesterday, eligibility for COVID-19 vaccine appointments expanded to include a majority of Georgia adults. Residents 55 and older are now eligible for shots, as are adults with a wide range of serious illness.

Meanwhile in rural Georgia, the demand for vaccine is muted. In response, Gov. Brian Kemp said supplies of COVID vaccinations could be shifted to larger population centers. The state's handling of COVID-19 vaccinations received criticism after the Center for Disease Control listed Georgia among the least effective states for getting shots into arms.

Our panel looked at the effectiveness of the state's vaccine rollout so far. They included Dr. Harry Heiman, physician and professor at the Georgia State University School of Public Health, physician and journalist Dr. Keren Landman, Dr. Roy Reese, a psychologist and Director of Behavioral Health at

Akoma Counseling and Consulting and Tamar Hallerman, senior reporter at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

Dr. Landman said the subdued rollout is the result of lack of investment in public health infrastructure.

"It's not bad people doing the work badly; it is an underfunded system being underfunded," Landman said. "This is what happens when you do not fund infrastructure for public health. I hope this will provoke Georgia and Georgians and to prioritize funding a good public health program throughout the state in the future."

And finally, the panel discussed the impact a year of social distancing and isolation has had on the mental health of children and adults.

3. [Racism](#)

Political Rewind

GPB

January 28, 2021, 9am and repeated at 2pm.

On today's *Political Rewind*: In his first days in office, President Joe Biden has declared a commitment to addressing systemic racism. On Tuesday, Biden signed a series of executive orders signaling that his administration will attempt to tackle inequities in housing, criminal justice, economic mobility, health care and more.

Host Bill Nigut joined panelists Tiffany Williams Roberts, Community Engagement & Movement Building Counsel with the Southern Center for Human Rights, Rev. James Woodall, President of the Georgia NAACP, Doug Shipman, founding CEO at the Center for Civil and Human Rights and Kevin Riley, editor of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* to weigh in on the president's first steps toward this lofty goal. He may have set important priorities, but how monumental is the task ahead? And can he win the support he needs to move the country past its long history of racial injustice?

Political Rewind

GPB

January 23, 2021, 9am and repeated at 2pm.

Today's *Political Rewind* marked the one-year anniversary of the death of Ahmaud Arbery. The 25-year-old black man was shot and killed in a residential neighborhood outside of Brunswick, Ga., not far from his home. Gregory and Travis McMichael, accused of his murder, claim they believed Arbery was responsible for a string of burglaries in the area.

But on that day one year ago, the incident received little attention from the rest of the world. It was not until three months later, when video of Arbery's shooting death reached the general public, that attention was drawn to the case.

Arbery became one of the names serving as a rallying cry for change during nationwide protests demanding an end to racial inequity and police brutality.

"This is a pattern," Marissa McCall Dodson of the Southern Center for Human Rights said. "It's something that families are dealing with all across our state and all across the country. So, I just think this is the moment where we need to say, 'This is not an outlier. We continue to see Black lives taken.'"

Host Bill Nigut and panelists Dr. Andra Gillespie, professor of Political Science at Emory University, Marissa McCall Dodson, Public Policy Director at the Southern Center for Human Rights, reporter

Larry Hobbs of the *Brunswick News* and Tamar Hallerman, senior reporter at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* looked back at one year later, where do we stand in seeking justice for this young man from Georgia? How has the country grown and where is more attention needed?

Georgia Today

GPB

February 1, 2021. 6:30pm.

During the Great Migration, six million Black Americans moved from the South up north. They wanted work opportunities and a respite from the sting of racist Jim Crow laws. On today's edition of *Georgia Today*, Guest host Leah Fleming talked with *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow, who is pushing for a reversal of the Great Migration. He is written about it in his new book, *The Devil You Know: A Black Power Manifesto*.

4. Education

Political Rewind

GPB

February 25, 2021 9am and repeated at 2pm.

Today's *Political Rewind* focused on education. Few areas of our lives during the pandemic have been as fraught with anxiety and uncertainty as our schools.

As the virus rages through communities across Georgia, school systems have struggled to open classroom doors to students.

Many fear the risks they take leading in-person classes, while parents struggle to balance their hopes of getting their children back to normal school life with concerns the virus will be brought home.

Now, Gov. Brian Kemp may be preparing to include teachers and other staff in the ranks of those eligible to be vaccinated in the weeks ahead.

Are we ready for school life to resume normally? And at what cost? Host Bill Nigut led today's discussion with panelists Maureen Downey, education columnist for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Tracey Nance Pendley, a 4th grade teacher in Atlanta Public Schools and Georgia's current Teacher of the Year, Dr. Sarah Vinson, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, and Kevin Riley, editor of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

Georgia Today

GPB

February 21, 2021. 6:30pm.

With Georgia teachers still not vaccinated, when can the state's public schools fully re-open? On this edition of *Georgia Today*, GPB health care reporter Ellen Eldridge joins host Steve Fennessy to discuss the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, and its impact on teachers. Georgia's teachers are currently not included in Gov. Brian Kemp's vaccination rollout. The Governor said the state does not have the vaccine supply to open up the priority list for teachers. In one Georgia county, local officials tried to give teachers and other educators priority to getting the vaccine, but Elbert County was penalized by the state for doing so.

5. Immigration

Political Rewind

GPB

January 25, 2021, 9am and repeated at 2pm.

A flurry of executive orders marked President Joe Biden's first days in office. One of his priorities has been to introduce a major immigration reform bill, which includes plans to roll back a number of immigration orders from the previous administration. On today's *Political Rewind*, host Bill Nigut invited former Atlanta Journal-Constitution political writer Jim Galloway, immigration attorney Charles Kuck, Univision Atlanta Community Empowerment Director Mariela Romero, and Political Strategist Leo Smith to discuss how the President's plans to reform immigration will affect Georgia in the months ahead.

Political Rewind

GPB

March 17, 2021, 9am and repeated at 2pm.

A shocking string of violence in metro Atlanta has raised questions of racial hatred and bigotry. Nationwide, civil rights organizations reported an uptick in violence towards Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities in recent times. How does Tuesday night's violence fit into this concerning trend?

Also, President Joe Biden faces a crisis at the country's southern border less than 2 months into his presidency. Illegal crossings at the border have skyrocketed, with more than 100,000 detentions in February alone.

To discuss the current state of immigration as far as Georgia is concerned, host Bill Nigut invited former Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens, Immigration attorney Charles Kuck, Univision Atlanta Community Empowerment Director Mariela Romero and *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* politics reporter Greg Bluestein.