

Senate Bill 619

By: Senators Rahman of the 5th, Robertson of the 29th, Mullis of the 53rd, Butler of the 55th, Harrell of the 40th and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 12 of Title 45 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the
2 Governor, so as to establish the Office of Outdoors in the office of the Governor; to provide
3 legislative findings; to provide for definitions; to provide for powers and duties; to require
4 other public bodies to cooperate with the office; to provide for statutory construction; to
5 provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 Chapter 12 of Title 45 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the Governor,
9 is amended by adding a new article to read as follows:

10 "ARTICLE 7

11 45-12-210.

12 The General Assembly finds that:

13 (1) The outdoor recreation industry does more than bring joy to millions of Americans:

14 It helps drive our economy. In 2021, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) released

15 national statistics that demonstrate the economic output of outdoor recreation to
16 be \$689 billion. Prior to the pandemic, outdoor recreation was surpassing industries such
17 as mining, utilities, farming and ranching, and chemical products manufacturing;

18 (2) According to the BEA, the outdoor recreation industry was growing rapidly prior to
19 COVID-19, eclipsing the overall increase in gross domestic product;

20 (3) Outdoor recreation generates millions of high-quality, high-paying jobs from coast
21 to coast and across a wide variety of industries, ranging from manufacturing to retail to
22 tourism. These jobs play a critical role in the economic health of local and state
23 economies;

24 (4) The BEA's state-level data show that outdoor recreation in Georgia contributes
25 over \$10 billion to the state's economy and directly supports over 130,000 jobs;

26 (5) Georgia's public spaces for outdoor recreation are drivers of tourism to the state;

27 (6) Increasing access to the outdoors and participation in outdoor recreation programs
28 and services of the outdoor recreation economy are critical to improving the health and
29 wellness of all residents, maintaining residents' quality of life, and developing future
30 environmental stewards and conservationists to build on our public lands heritage;

31 (7) Promoting and enhancing the state's outdoor recreation economy will benefit all
32 residents and can particularly support rural communities that are gateways to outdoor
33 recreation locations and opportunities; and

34 (8) At least 17 states have already created offices dedicated to outdoor recreation to
35 increase investment in and support the booming outdoor recreation economy in their
36 respective states.

37 45-12-211.

38 As used in this article, the term:

39 (1) 'Director' means the director of the Office of Outdoors.

40 (2) 'Office' means the Office of Outdoors in the office of the Governor.

41 (3) 'Outdoor recreation' means a pursuit that occurs in a natural environment or physical
42 landscape, including, but not limited to, various active and passive, motorized and
43 nonmotorized, sports, education, and activities.

44 (4) 'State agency' means any department, agency, commission, or other institution of the
45 executive branch of the government of the State of Georgia.

46 45-12-212.

47 The Office of Outdoors is created in the office of the Governor.

48 45-12-213.

49 The director, at the direction of the Governor and subject to this article, shall have the
50 power and duty to:

51 (1) Increase outdoor recreation based economic development, education, tourism, and
52 ecotourism by attracting outdoor recreation industries to Georgia;

53 (2) Develop the growth of new business opportunities in Georgia and marketing,
54 advertising, and securing media opportunities that reflect the opportunities for outdoor
55 recreation in the state;

56 (3) Promote the growth of the outdoor recreation economy in Georgia by increasing and
57 promoting access to the outdoors, particularly in underrepresented urban and rural
58 communities, and providing opportunities for stewardship and conservation of natural
59 resources;

60 (4) Coordinate with any federal or state agency or authority, county or municipality,
61 school, or private entity to achieve the purposes of this article;

62 (5) Recommend to the Governor policies and initiatives to enhance outdoor recreational
63 amenities, learning programs, and experiences in the state, help implement those policies
64 and initiatives, and report on the impacts of those policies and initiatives;

65 (6) Develop and support development of data regarding the impacts of outdoor recreation
66 in Georgia while ensuring national data are utilized as a benchmark factor in agency
67 decision-making;

68 (7) Promote the health, educational, and social benefits of outdoor recreation;

69 (8) Advocate on behalf of the state for federal funding and participation in federal
70 programs;

71 (9) Create and maintain a state-wide list of lands to be conserved, enhanced, or
72 publicized for outdoor recreation;

73 (10) Develop and support development of outdoor based education programs and
74 curricula, including a grant program for schools and organizations to conduct outdoor
75 learning programs; and

76 (11) Apply for government or private grants to benefit the purposes outlined in this
77 article.

78 45-12-214.

79 The office shall be attached to the Department of Natural Resources for administrative
80 purposes only. The Department of Natural Resources shall provide technical support to the
81 office as directed by the director and approved by the Governor.

82 45-12-215.

83 All state agencies and all counties, municipalities, or other political subdivisions of the
84 state, regional commissions, and other public agencies or public authorities shall have the
85 power and authority to take all actions which may be necessary or appropriate to cooperate
86 with the office in advancing opportunities to Georgia citizens, and otherwise to take any
87 action which the Governor or the office may direct or require in carrying out their duties
88 under this article.

89 45-12-216.

90 The provisions of this article shall not be construed so as to permit an agency to initiate,
91 carry out, fail to perform, or otherwise take actions in any manner which is not authorized
92 by law applicable to such agency or the subject matter. The provisions of this article shall
93 not be construed so as to authorize an agency to locate, fail to locate, construct, or fail to
94 construct public projects or facilities in any manner which is inconsistent with the
95 directives of the General Assembly as specified in the authorization of such public projects
96 or facilities."

97

SECTION 2.

98 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.