

Gaines seeks a new term

By [Caitlin Farmer](#) | April 10, 2024 | 0



Houston Gaines

Georgia House of Representatives District 120 Representative Houston Gaines is seeking reelection. As a Republican, he will face Democratic candidate Andrew Ferguson on the Nov. 5 General Election Ballot.

Born and raised in Athens, Gaines has served constituents in parts of Barrow, Clarke, Jackson and Oconee counties since he took office in January 2019. In Oconee County, Gaines represents the Bogart and Marswood Hall precincts.

Having just completed his sixth legislative session, Gaines has authored around 20 bills.

Gaines said his focus is on public safety while he also spends time tackling issues on education and inflation.

"I've been part of the discussion on almost every major issue that has passed in the legislature over the last number of years," he said. "And now, I'm in House leadership, serving as the vice chairman of the Georgia Republican Caucus, **and we've delivered millions of dollars for priority projects** in this area."

Gaines graduated from Athens Academy and attended the University of Georgia, where he received degrees in political science and economics in 2017. While a student at UGA, Gaines managed Athens-Clarke County Mayor Nancy Denson's re-election campaign.

After graduation, Gaines took a job with **Cannon Financial Strategists** in Athens. He now works for **Carter Engineering Consultants in Oconee County**, where he said he oversees marketing and brings in new clients.

Gaines is involved in the **Athens Rotary Club** and is a board member of several organizations, including **Boy Scouts of America** and the UGA School **of International Affairs**.

Gaines described himself as a lifelong conservative who is thoughtful about how money is brought in and spent.

“I think the conservative philosophy is the right way to go and the one that gets the job done,” Gaines said.

Gaines recently passed legislation to ensure local governments comply with federal immigration authorities. He previously passed legislation to stop local governments from defunding police. He was also one of the biggest champions of legislation creating oversight for district attorneys who aren’t fulfilling their job duties.

Gaines has also sponsored anti-human trafficking legislation and anti-domestic violence legislation that passed with bipartisan approval.

One bill provides for address confidentiality for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. It gives victims of dating violence the right to receive temporary protective orders that were previously available to only victims who were married or had children.

Gaines also passed legislation for cold cases, in which families who’ve had a loved one killed have an avenue for those cases to be reviewed. The bill created a cold case unit within the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

Gaines said he’s also been involved with securing raises for state law enforcement officers and teachers, as well **as securing the Georgia State Patrol forthcoming relocation of its Athens post to Oconee County**.

“I’m going to continue to fight against district attorneys who aren’t doing their jobs, and I’m going to continue to fight for raises for state law enforcement,” said Gaines. “We’ve made headway on that front last year. We did \$6,000 for frontline state law enforcement. This year, another \$3,000.”

Since attending UGA, Gaines has been passionate about **Inclusive Post Secondary Education** programs across Georgia, such as UGA’s Destination Dawgs, which allows students with **intellectual disabilities to attend college**.

“We secured this year \$2.6 million dollars in the budget to help these students be able to afford the opportunity to go to college,” Gaines said.

Gaines said he was also a part of passing school choice vouchers and bringing the newly announced Medical College to UGA.

One of his goals has been helping offset the 40-year high inflation.

“We’ve passed property tax relief, income tax relief, suspended the gas tax [and] this year, we increased the child tax deduction,” Gaines said. “When you add up all of those efforts, it’s over five billion dollars in direct relief for Georgia citizens and Georgia taxpayers, and so I’m really proud of that as well.”

Gaines said that while there’s more work to do on property tax relief, the 10-question November ballot referendum will provide homestead tax exemptions, and the ballot will also include proposed legislative changes to cap the rate of assessments at the rate of inflation.

“If that ballot referendum passes in November, which I expect it will, that’ll be one of the most important property tax relief measures that the state has ever passed,” Gaines said.

Gaines said his interest in public safety legislation stems from what he witnessed during ride-alongs and his grandfather’s time as a Superior Court Judge in Athens.

Gaines supported legislation to crack down on Chinese vaping products, but the proposed bill did not pass. He vowed to further study laws around bail so that people who commit crimes do not go back into the streets with no bond.

“I believe I’ve built a record of delivering for our community on areas of importance,” he said.

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