

RAIN, FEW STORMS

High: 67  
Low: 58  
70% chance of rain



Tue.: Rain, storms, 71/62  
Wed.: Rain likely, 72/62  
Thu.: Morning rain, 67/58

Complete weather: B6

# The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Credible. Compelling. Complete.

SPECIAL AJC EDITORIAL

## A message to our elected officials

# OUR SENIORS DESERVE BETTER

## When it comes to senior care industry, you can lift state to safer place

Dear members of the Georgia legislature:

Today, you gather under the Gold Dome to begin another important legislative session.

That's why we're taking an extraordinary step and using today's front page to urge you to repair the broken system that should protect vulnerable residents of the state's assisted living and large personal care homes.

You have an opportunity to make this reform the centerpiece of your leadership this year.

Because lives are at stake, this issue should rank at least as high as the state Constitution's requirement to pass a balanced budget.

It is that important.

The preamble of our state's Constitution emphasizes the need to "promote the interest and happiness of the citizen and of the family" in Georgia. The state Bill of Rights that quickly follows reads, "Protection to person and property is the paramount duty of government and shall be impartial and complete."

That last word "complete" is important because the current apparatus for overseeing Georgia's assisted living and large personal care homes cannot be described using that word. Even "incomplete" is too charitable a descriptor for what's now in place.

"Broken" is a more apt term, given the human toll that failures in senior care have exacted on some of our state's most vulnerable.

Too many times, those flaws have led to human harm. Georgia's elders should not have to die or suffer terribly in ways that appear related to neglect or abuse.

These are people such as World War II veteran Larry McDonough, who was found doubled over by a family caregiver in heavy winter clothing on a sun deck outside a St. Simons Island facility on a day when temperatures hovered around 100 degrees.

Senior care continued on A9

TO OUR READERS

WHY WE PUT AN EDITORIAL ON THE FRONT PAGE

Thousands of Georgia families rely on assisted living communities and personal care homes; that reliance will grow as baby boomers age.

We've spent more than a year examining the quality of care in these facilities. Our work reveals dangerous gaps that leave our senior citizens vulnerable and unprotected.

You've urged us to stay on this story and push for change. We plan to do that.

— Kevin Riley, Editor

**STATEWIDE INVESTIGATION:** The AJC has been digging into Georgia's troubled senior care industry and bringing you our findings since September. More results of our exclusive investigation will be published during the coming months. Stay up to date with our ongoing investigation at [ajc.com/unprotected](http://ajc.com/unprotected).



ONLY IN THE AJC CENSUS

## Undercounted county works to boost census response rates

About 60% of Clayton's residents live in hard-to-reach communities.

By Leon Stafford  
lstafford@ajc.com

Though the call for census participation will ring throughout metro Atlanta over the next four months, nowhere will it be louder

than in Clayton County.

The south metro home to the world's busiest airport, Clayton State University and an entire museum built around "Gone With the Wind" is pushing hard to boost its census response rates in 2020 — getting everybody counted — because of what's at stake.

About 60% of Clayton residents live in hard-to-reach communities — one of the highest such pop-

ulations in the state, according to a Georgia census profile. And as the census form has moved online, about one-fifth of county residents don't have access to the internet in their homes or are limited to dial-up connections.

That could mean millions lost from the more than \$47 billion in federal dollars expected to be tied to the census that could go to the county for prenatal

care, programs in schools or road and highway improvements. It also could stymie the millions in federal dollars Clayton is hoping to attract to bring commuter trains to the community.

About 71.3% of the county's households mailed back their 2010 census questionnaires, according to the state analysis.

Census continued on A8

AJC CONTINUING COVERAGE SENATE ELECTION

## Influx of hopefuls scrambles Dem unity

Party leaders' hopes to rally early behind one candidate dashed.

By Greg Bluestein  
gbluestein@ajc.com

Top Georgia Democrats once dreamed of unifying behind one candidate in the race against Republican U.S. Sen. Kelly Loeffler. That seems as unlikely as ever now.

Political newcomer Matt Liebman proved he can raise significant cash and be a credible contender. Former U.S. Attorney Ed Tarver told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution that he'll soon enter the race. And powerful Democrats are still actively trying to recruit the Rev. Raphael Warnock to run.

Meanwhile, a handful of other potential contenders are rumbling about a run, raising the prospect of a jam-packed November ticket to fill the remaining two years of retired U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson's term.

But more competitors also mean more competition for resources.

"While there may be endless enthusiasm for multiple candidates in the special election in the Loeffler seat, there is not a bottomless pit from which to fundraise," said Kristin Oblander, a veteran Democratic fundraiser.

"The sooner the Democrats can coalesce around a premier candidate," she said, "the better."

Normally, a surge of Democrats seeking a U.S. Senate seat wouldn't unnerve party officials. Democrats had to scramble in 2016 to recruit a millionaire challenger to Isakson just before a key deadline.

But a special election brings different dynamics. Candidates from all parties share the same ballot, with no primary to filter out non-

Senate continued on A11

BALANCED COVERAGE

The debate over the U.S. Senate races is divisive, and these types of controversial stories receive special treatment. We always try to present as much information as possible so that readers can use those facts to reach their own conclusions.

TOP NEWS, A3  
Atlantans unite in prayer for John Lewis

Dozens attended a prayer vigil in support of ailing U.S. representative who is battling stage 4 pancreatic cancer.

INDEX  
Classifieds D4 Deaths B4  
Comics D6 Scoreboard C7

Volume 72, Number 13



**ROLEX**  
OYSTER PERPETUAL SKY-DWELLER

**BROWN & Co.**  
JEWELERS

BUCKHEAD | 3225 Peachtree Rd. NE 404.814.9800  
ROSWELL | 674 Holcomb Bridge Rd. 770.993.1080

ROLEX • OYSTER PERPETUAL AND SKY-DWELLER ARE © TRADEMARKS.