

GA Bills hb514 & hb517 (2023-2024) dubbed “Worker Housing” Defeat County/Local “Home Rule” Guaranteed by GA Constitution

April 9, 2024

Op-Ed JasonBoyce@mbaEnterprise.com

Page 1 of 7

Whether this group of legislation is called “Worker Housing”, “Regulation Transparency Act”, “Georgia Homeowner Opportunity Act”, which are all all wonderfully sounding names, or something else, the spin is it will conjure up wonderful things for the less fortunate citizens of Georgia. This legislation has horrid, has designed in side-effects, and will ruin existing neighborhoods and communities.

The content of the bills, when implemented together, are designed to allow speculators, builders, banks, (and possibly shysters), to prevent local governments from enforcing their right to “Home Rule”. Thus, stopping local governments from managing growth in their own communities as we elected them to do.

These bills ensure that honest local government servants, (yes there are some), and local ordinances, are out the window when a developer wants to push. The local servants will not be able to stop the future that is being forced on their community against their voters desires by the developers.

In basic terms, this legislation allows the developers, etc. to force local citizens into a life style dictated by the developer’s greed. The developers have no skin in the game, except money, which they look to increase at the expense of local neighborhoods.

This is simply wrong. So we need to stand up and do our part. 1st by stopping this legislative overreach by the state and 2nd by monitoring our local servants to ensure they stay honest, transparent, and dedicated to the people they serve. (I know there are *some* honest ones at least in Franklin County.)

This overreach is especially true in rural counties, like Franklin where I live. Here land is relatively cheap and life is ... how might I say it? ... ah I know ... “life is less complicated” relative to the hustle bustle of industrialized areas and the big cities. Franklin is ripe to be ruined, and it has started and the bills will make it worse.

It should be no surprise that these bills were introduced and promoted by a real estate developer, **Dale Washburn**. And that **my house representative Alan Powell**, another real estate developer, supports them also, (even after he was asked not to by his constituents). For talking points, the bills are also supported by the **Housing Justice League** (HJL). Btw, name dropping does not make it good legislation.

Don’t take this wrong, everyone is entitled to make an honest living. But I believe public servants should do so while helping their constituents prosper, not in spite of their constituents prosperity.

<display house 1>

Additionally, everyone should guess that **Chris Clark**, president and CEO of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce is also in favor of these bills. I quote, “[**The bills**] **will cut government red tape, encourage private sector innovation, and increase access to safe, affordable housing for every Georgian**” Give Chris a call, ask him when he is moving in!

What Chris Clark, did not say, the other bill supporters ignored it too, is that ‘Worker Housing’ etc. may interfere with ‘Georgia Constitutional’ rights. (More on this in a minute.)

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Page 2 of 7

It is also no surprise that additionally supporting these bills, because there is much, much money to be made, are the **Home Builders Association of Georgia**, the **Georgia Association of Realtors**, and the **Habitat for Humanity**.

Dale Washburn, the sponsor of the bills, has 47+ years in real estate. He chaired a “House study committee” that spent several months last year hearing from housing, business, and government experts , (*that you and I paid for*), about how to *build more homes to accommodate Georgia’s growing labor force, (and where are the illegals to live?)*.

<replace house 1 with Washburn slide 1>

Washburn’s solution was to, ²“... reduce the ability of local governments to stifle development.”, which simply means to **remove property and other rights from local governments, and citizens, which seems to be in conflict with the Georgia Constitution under “Home Rule”** so the ‘powerful’ can turn a forest into a battery plant, or a hay field into safe, affordable (cheap) housing **disrupting the character, culture, and quality of life of the locals ignoring the destruction being done to the communities**.

These bills allow developers, ‘legally’, to overwhelm infrastructure in many ways placing unreasonable costs on existing citizens that the ‘new comers’ will probably never, ever be able to return to the community.

<Battery plant story, Jackson means business>

The State does not consider the financial burden placed on county’s roads, water, sewer, and/or even more importantly, the educational burdens of overwhelming school systems and policing. (Get involved in this fight for the kids and your safety !) <apt story hwy 51 (Stevie)>

That means the GA State ‘**Worker Housing**’ has the potential to **increase local taxes, manipulate local property values, overwhelm education quality and reduce public safety**. Another side-effect is possibly changing voter demographics which will effect neighborhood customs and values for decades to come.

These bills must be stopped. Unfortunately, hb514 has passed. So put on your calendar to repeal it next year! And do not let hb517 get through either!

<replace “Washburn slide 1” with my smiling face>

For a historical perspective, let’s journey back for a moment to Gwinnett County in the spring of 1974. That’s when we first got there. Gwinnett was being built around hard working conservative family values. Gwinnett had the best schools in Georgia, all the community qualities of life that my wife and I were looking for to start a family. That’s why we settled there. It was a fine bedroom community with a rural flair and plenty of cows. There were others to choose from in the 70’s. We choose Gwinnett.

Gwinnett had plenty of like minded community volunteers, myself included. I, and others built churches and recreational facilities for the kids. These things were done with our values, for our quality of life. These personally, capitalistically funded, (not govt funded), projects included swimming pools and the Gwinnett Soccer Association, just to name a few. It was perfect for folks like me who worked in the metro Atlanta area and desired to support the community.

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Page 3 of 7

But even before the Olympic money explosion which killed Gwinnett; the attack of the land grab dollars came. Gwinnett’s leadership lost it’s vision, it’ path, it’s oath of office. The infrastructure was overwhelmed, the culture, the community, and the quality of life, was destroyed in just a few short years. (At least the Ronald Regan Parkway was not renamed to the “huge, ill maintained, speed trap”, that’s a good thing.)

Why did Gwinnett quality of life change so dramatically? Maybe because county leadership cared more that money could be made from solicited ridiculous growth during scandal after scandal. Maybe they should have been spending time understanding, and working for, not in spite of, their current residents. **As I recall, they had sworn an oath to serve**, not one to get rich.

<landing strip story – Franklin has it’s own airport scandal>

Thus, Gwinnett citizens jumped ship. Yup, like horses leaving a burning barn. We left the things we had built to the new caretakers. Now Gwinnett, compared to when we were there, is a sad place to live where just a few years back it had the best schools in the State.

Don’t misunderstand Gwinnett’s history, they did this to themselves. And believe me, there are still very good, very honest, very dedicated, people in Gwinnett County. I gave up on Gwinnett, my family left. But others are still there, not only trying to rebuild the county, but also working night and day to save America. But now the State wants a piece of every counties pie. (And that’s a huge *ouch*.)

Franklin is where I landed when I left Gwinnett after about 30 years. Franklin was calm, safe, and neighbors would help, sometimes without even being asked.

Unfortunately humans can be dishonest, and/or simply make mistakes. So, as of January 1, 2023, Franklin is trying to figure out stuff and fix stuff when it is not good for it’s current residents. Growth for growth itself, is NOT good for current communities so it makes no sense. Growth must be for the benefit of the current residents as much as it is for the people and/or businesses that are providing that growth for the county.

One thing that needs fixing is our Gwinnett County style ‘**Comprehensive Plan**’ and ‘**Unified Development Code**’. Those documents look like they were copy/pasted from Gwinnett’s. (And a 90%+ plagiarized document suggests that it is true!) **I strongly encourage each and every one of you to find, read, and try to understand those documents in your county.**

<display house 2>

Those documents are county tools that the state and others will use against you to sneak in ‘Worker Housing’. The States philosophy seems to be, if an item is not written down at the County/Municipality level, then it is fair game for the State to dictate to you how they want it done. That may or may not be legal, but it is definitely ridiculous! <right behind those trees is my Ag-intensive farm>

Franklin growth politically is managed by the Franklin IBA. It makes sense to have 5 officials to help insure growth for our agricultural county. What is very strange, is that board is not made up of ranchers, farmers, and school board members. It’s made up of City Mayors who have no skin in the game when it comes to anything agricultural, anything outside their city limits. They need Police, Water, Fire, Sewer and Sidewalks. We need good schools, clean chemical free land, guard dogs, horse trails and a place to turn a round a big, big trailer.

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Page 4 of 7

Again, don’t misunderstand. Most Franklin County citizens are not against growth. But they are standing up against growth that does not fit our community, and I implore you to do so in your county. Franklin County residents have polished Franklin such that it is currently rated as one of the best places to live in the USA. Our current residents want it to stay that way. We want like minded people to join us, but we don’t want the State to force development upon us.

In 1974 when my wife and I chose to live in Gwinnett, it was a great place. But to be clear, Gwinnett did it to themselves, and so be it. The problem now is that the State wants to do it to everyone else with their “Worker Housing”, kill local culture campaign. Don’t let the State get away with it! Protect yourselves. Kill these bills.

<replace house 2 with smiling face>

The State, via the ‘Worker Housing’ buzzword, is forcing their version of ‘growth’ onto my county, onto your county, onto all of Georgia, (well I’m not sure about all of Georgia, Buckhead may have an exemption).

These bills are designed for Real Estate Businesses and Developers to enrich themselves without regard to the quality of life that they are destroying. And as a side effect, (or maybe on purpose), these bills will effectively change election outcomes.

People are not stupid, they know that one size does not fit all, and it is not right for the central government to force their rules onto all counties, when the GA constitution says it cannot. Central rule, communism style tactics have no place in our republic. At the Federal level or at the State level.

<round a bout story- tree trucks>

These bills strip away our zoning rights(hb517), and as horrid as that is, it also strips away our management right to establish reasonable county timelines for growth(hb514). Together, they also may change the voting demographic and definitely take away our rights spelled out clearly in the Georgia Constitution.

The Georgia Constitution provides the rights to Counties and Municipalities know as “Home Rule”.

Counties and Municipalities have the right to manage their own infrastructures and properties. This allows them to ensure they can get it right for the people that voted them into local office. The State, under the guise of the Real Estate industry, and Developers want to take those rights away.

<display house 3>

In summary, “Worker Housing” not only brings in massive occupancy that disrupts county operations, infrastructure, and safety which effects the county’s way of life forever. That affects your schools, your safety, and possibly even your pronouns, and maybe not for the betterment of the current resident’s ideals.

The bottom line is this. . . HB514(2023-2024) and HB517(2023-2024) are a blatant overreach and must be stopped. Unfortunately hb514 has passed. But there is always next year to get it overturned, so not all is lost, not yet anyway. And additional good news about stopping this overreach is coming up right now.

There is support to stop the State restrictions on local rights.

Counties, Mayors, and even the ACCG and others have chimed in, but we still need citizen support. Clint Mueller, the director of government affairs at the **Association County Commissioners of Georgia**, had this to say about HB517.

GA Bills hb514 & hb517 (2023-2024) dubbed “Worker Housing” Defeat County/Local “Home Rule” Guaranteed by GA Constitution

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Page 5 of 7

Quote from Chris Mueller, director of ACCG: “HB 517 bars local governments from regulating design elements and would stymie local control and the power of people’s votes.” Clint continued and said, “A local government’s job is to balance the wishes and needs of the community” he said. “They are elected to provide that balance in the community ... and they are able to respond to the needs of their community with the powers that they have.” He continues, “Local governments must consider a number of infrastructure concerns — such as roads, sewage, and schools — when making decisions about housing and therefore have a direct interest in housing regulation.”¹ (Mueller article has more to say...¹)

<display Washburn slide 2>

Dale Washburn has a solution for low cost housing.

o Memorize it

o Repeat it to Everyone that is willing to listening

o And Kill HB514 and HB517 2023-2024

Washburn’s solution is to “... reduce the ability of local governments to stifle development.”

I am appalled. Is Dale Washburn spitting in the face of his constituents as he builds the real estate industry. These bills are not good for residents, not good for citizens, not good for property values, and definitely not good for the quality of life in Georgia, especially for rural Georgia.

<replace Washman slide 2 with smiling face>

Thank you for listening to the horrors of bills hb514 and hb517, and thank you in advance for the time you’ll spend contact your family, friends, neighbors, and legislators to get these bills stopped.

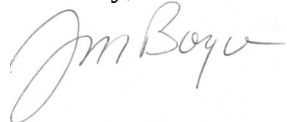
(ps. Take a peak at Georgia House Bill 1093, (currently ‘withdrawn/recommitted’ status) would prohibit local governments from enacting any restrictions including permits, conditions, fees or amenity requirements on housing that is used or is intended for use as a long-term rental.)

(pss. Keep tabs on SB420: (‘some’ definition’s in bill) Foreigners cannot buy agricultural lands in GA. So they can by Cities, just not farms? And don’ forget Senate Bill 494 (‘Georgia Hemp Farming Act’)).

I’m out of time, but do me a little favor; Keep active, keep involved, and keep the quality of life in your community that you worked so hard to build. Don’t let the State infringe on your “Home Rule”.

Don’t hesitate to contact me if I can help in anyway.

Sincerely,



Jason Boyce

JasonBoyce@mbaenterprise.com

Emails: Please include **CPGA-** in the Subject when you email.

P.S. HB514 & HB517 Bill Summaries; next page

P.S.S Sources: last page.

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Page 6 of 7

GEORGIA CONSTITUTION; SECTION II. HOME RULE FOR COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES

- Paragraph I. Home rule for counties. (a) The governing authority of each county shall have legislative power to adopt clearly reasonable ordinances, resolutions, or regulations relating to its property, affairs, and local government for which no provision has been made by general law and which is not inconsistent with this Constitution or any local law applicable thereto. (and so on and so forth. . .)
- If the State passes “Worker Housing” and that overrides county regulations already in effect, then HOME RULE FOR COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES is dead. In any case, these bills are destructive.
- HB514 | **Georgia 2023-2024 | Housing Regulation Transparency Act;**
[GA HB514 | 2023-2024 | Regular Session | LegiScan](#)
- Sponsor: Dale Washburn(R) - **Passed** - Relating to zoning procedures, so as to provide for the length and renewal of moratoriums related to zoning decisions; to provide for legislative findings; to provide procedures for the levy, collection, use, and waiver of fees related to zoning decisions and related permits; to revise notice and hearing requirements for certain zoning decisions; to provide a short title; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes. (. . .)
 - **Issue: State Limits moratoriums, so unwanted development & lower property values, etc.**
Supported by: GA Chamber of Commerce, Investors, Builders, Real Estate Businesses, , Georgia Public Policy Foundation etc.
- HB517 | **Georgia 2023-2024 | Georgia Homeowner Opportunity Act";**
[GA HB517 | 2023-2024 | Regular Session | LegiScan](#)
- Sponsor: Dale Washburn(R) – **Recessed** -To **prohibit local governments** from adopting or enforcing ordinances or regulations relating to or regulating building design elements as applied to one- or two-family dwellings; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes. (. . .)
 - **Issue: State forces local area to accept unwanted development, lower property values, etc.**
Supported by: GA Chamber of Commerce, Investors, Builders, Real Estate Businesses, Georgia Public Policy Foundation etc.
- HB1093 | **Georgia 2023-2024 | Agricultural land & foreign persons and entities**
<https://legiscan.com/GA/bill/HB1093/2023>
- SB540 | **Georgia 2023-2024 | Selling or renting dwellings (criminal issues)**
<https://legiscan.com/GA/bill/SB540/2023>

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Page 7 of 7

• Find your State Representative(s) and Senator(s) – Then “Trust but Verify” that they vote ‘NO’.

- Allen Powell(R) – 2023 promoting both bills - (My representative, this is very disappointing.)
 - Allen is for Central Government’s control of Local management and property.
 - After saying he had not yet decided and appreciated our concerns, his vote was yes.
 - After citizens phone calls expressing concern over ‘Worker Housing’, he voted for it.
 - After attending a citizen’s meeting of why it is wrong for our county, he voted for it.
- Allen Powell(R) – 2023 Sponsored Legislation:
 - House Bills, including promoting voter integrity working with Garland Favorito, adjusting salaries for the Franklin County Board of Education – all recessed; House Bills, providing ‘honorary’ status to individuals, the AARP, the positive effect of Golf in Georgia – all passed; And others, see link. <https://legiscan.com/GA/people/alan-powell/id/1914>

Sources; (there are more)

¹ <https://www.gpb.org/news/2023/02/24/two-bills-aimed-at-affordable-housing-draw-industry-backing-and-local-criticism>

² <https://www.georgiapolicy.org/news/bill-limiting-zoning-moratoriums-advances/>

Author: J. Thomas Perdue : (not the exact Washburn quote, but paraphrased by this author.)

The bipartisan bill, introduced by Rep. Dale Washburn, R-Macon, aims to lower Georgia’s housing costs and reduce the ability of local governments to stifle development.

+ <https://www.gacities.com/Legislative-Session/Bill/HB517>

+ <https://www.bryancountynews.com/news/hb-517-aimed-local-building-regs/>

+ <https://capitol-beat.org/2023/02/two-bills-aimed-at-affordable-housing-draw-industry-backing-and-local-criticism/>

+ <http://metroatlantaceo.com/news/2023/02/georgia-coalition-housing-opportunity-supports-hb-517-and-hb-514/>

+ <https://www.wabe.org/gop-state-lawmaker-plans-bill-to-override-local-residential-lot-restrictions-design-standards-in-workforce-housing-quest/>

+ <https://www.facebook.com/DaleWashburnSchoolofRealEstate/>

+ <https://www.globalatlanta.com/kia-plant-ceo-tells-state-lawmakers-affordable-housing-shortage-hurting-worker-recruitment/> (Kia Auto Plant Lobbies the State for ‘worker housing’)

+ https://www.appenmedia.com/news/north-georgia-localities-oppose-state-bills-on-rental-properties/article_552a72a2-966e-11ec-b6fa-bb797b19c96f.html (State overreach on rental housing)

david@dhancock.com – Gwinnett Board of Education.

Bold Springs - Franklin County, GA
Feeding the World
While Enjoying Our County Life Style



The STATE Knows Best
YES “Worker Housing” for STATE Rule.

(A **COMM**on **U**sed **N**ame that **IS M**entioned
as *Central Gov’t Rule* is what again? I forget)

<house 6>



**A 'new' rental property in Bold Springs
(behind the trees is my farm fencing)**

<house 1>

Washburn's solution is legislation to
²“... reduce the ability of local governments to stifle
development.”

Which simply means to
remove property, and other rights from
local governments, and citizens

Which seems to be in definite conflict with the
Georgia Constitution under”Home Rule”

Simply so the developers can
turn a Forest into a Battery Plant
or a

Hay Field into “safe, affordable (cheap) housing”
disrupting the character, culture, and quality of life
of the locals while ignoring the destruction being
done to the communities.

Bold Springs - Franklin County, GA
Another 'Established' Rural Residential
Adjoining Property



<house 4 & 5>



**Another 'new' rental property
(behind the trees is my farm fencing)**

<house 2>



**Another 'new' rental property
(behind the trees is my farm fencing)**

<house 3>



**“Worker Housing” Dale Washburn has a solution
Repeat it to Everyone
And Kill HB514 & HB517 2023-2024**

Remember Dale’s solution is to
***²“... ~~reduce~~ (no, we must Save) the ability of
local governments to stifle (improper)
development.”***

**Local Communities can loose their ability
to enforce zoning standards for their own
neighborhoods if this is not stopped.**

<Washburn 2>

images for display only and may not represent actual “worker housing”