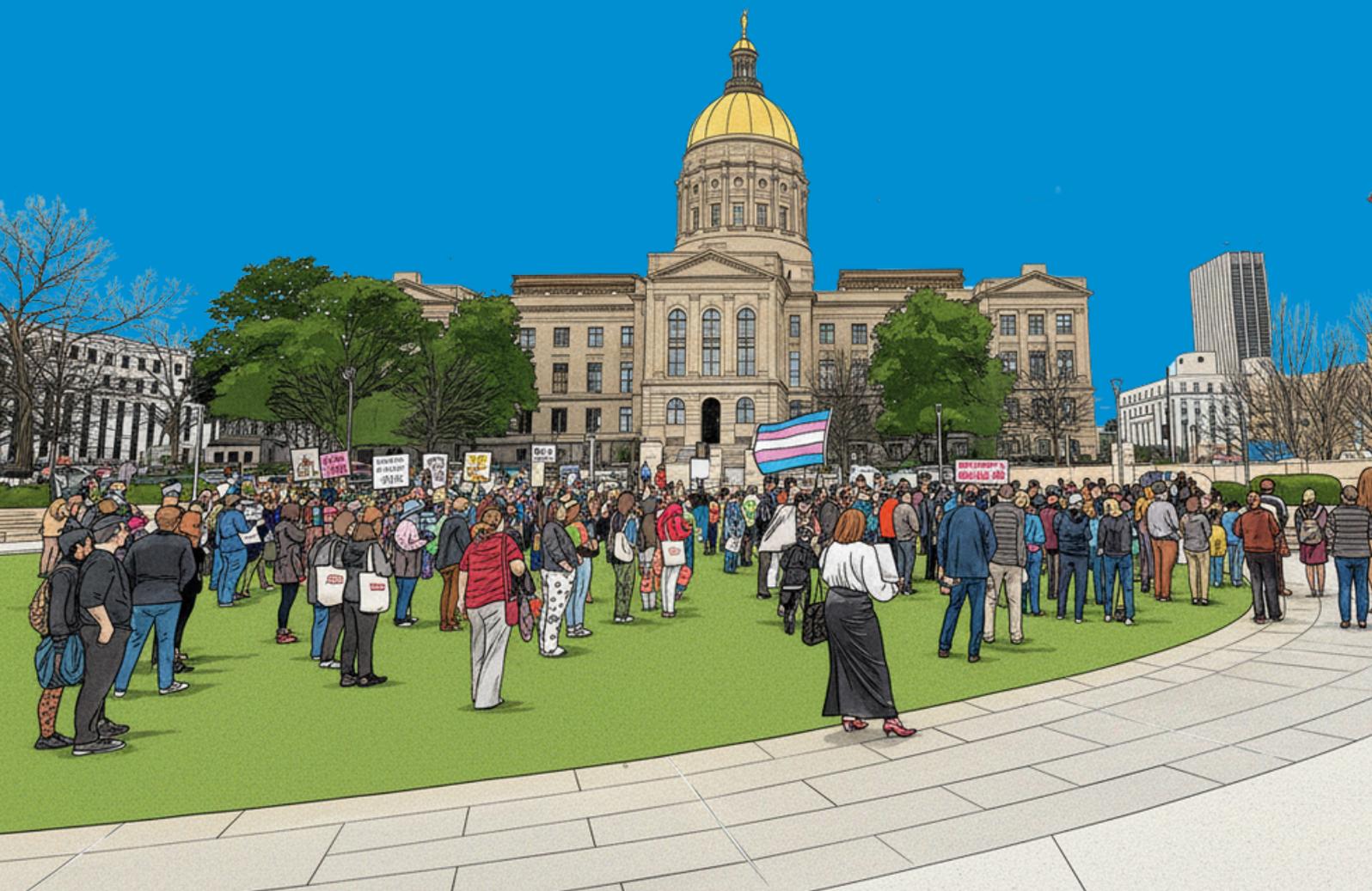


# Georgia LGBTQ+ Jewish Advocacy Guide 2026



SOJOURN

Southern Jewish Resource Network for Gender and Sexual Diversity



**Born & raised at the intersection of LGBTQ+, Jewish, and Southern communities, **SOJOURN** is the premier resource for education, outreach, and advocacy.**

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**SOJOURN'S mission** is to empower communities to advance and celebrate gender and sexual diversity across the South.

**SOJOURN'S vision** is a South rooted in belonging, full inclusion, and justice.

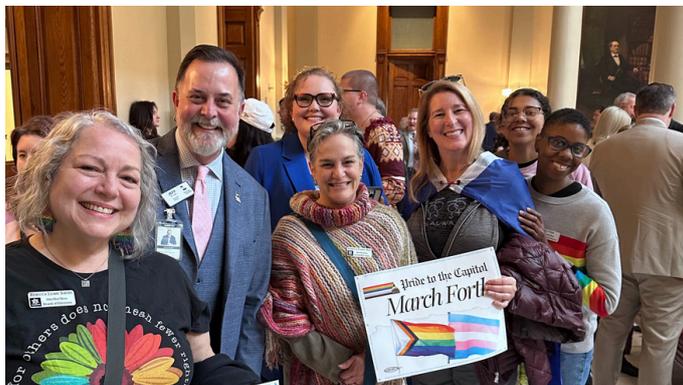
**SOJOURN'S values** are  
Jewish Identity · Liberation  
Individual Worth · Intersectionality  
Empathy · Education · Community

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**This guide is made possible with the support of**

**JWFA**

JEWISH WOMEN'S FUND OF ATLANTA



## Why Show Up As Jews?

For better or for worse, faith voices in the South hold power in advocacy! However, the predominant narrative is often that religious communities oppose LGBTQ+ rights. When our Jewish communities are silent about anti-trans legislation, it sends a message to trans youth in our communities that Judaism isn't something that includes them. In contrast, when Jewish organizations take a stand against anti-trans policies, it demonstrates to trans Jews that their communities embrace them not just with words, but with actions.

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## The Cycle of the 2026 Georgia Legislative Session

**Session starts** on January 12

**Crossover Day**, the last day for the House and Senate to send bills to the other chamber, is on March 6

**Georgia Pride to the Capitol** is on March 10

**Sine Die (last day of session)** is on April 2



## How a Bill Becomes A Law in Georgia

- A legislator decides to **sponsor** a bill addressing a need
- A non-partisan attorney in the Office of Legislative Counsel advises the legislator on legal issues and drafts the bill
- Legislator files the bill with the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate, who assigns it a number.
- On the next legislative day after filing, the bill is **formally introduced** in the chamber.
- The chamber's presiding officer assigns the bill to a **standing committee**.
- In the House only, on the next legislative day, the House Clerk reads the bill's title in chamber, although the actual bill is now assigned to a committee.
- Often, a bill will be referred to a **subcommittee** based on subject matter before the full committee holds hearings and makes revisions.
- The assigned committee considers and studies the bill, which typically involves **legislative hearings** where interested parties can comment.
- If the committee takes no action on the bill, it "dies."
- After considering a bill, committees can **vote** either to:
  - Recommend Pass
  - Recommend Do Not Pass
  - Recommend Do Pass with changes (amendments or substitutes)
  - Report without recommendation (in House)
  - Hold Bill.
- Final Committee action is reported to the chamber in a written report.

## How a Bill Becomes A Law in Georgia, cont'd.

- The bill is read a second time on the legislative day following the Committee report.
- Bills that pass committee are placed on the **General Calendar**. The Rules Committee and the chamber's presiding officer decide which bills from the General Calendar will be placed on the **Rules Calendar** to be heard on the House or Senate floor the next day.
- Once on the floor, a bill is **debated by the full legislative chamber**, has amendments introduced, and is **voted on**.
- If the bill is approved by a majority of the voting membership of the chamber, it is **transmitted to the other chamber**, where the process of introduction, committee hearings, and voting begins again.
- If the second chamber passes the bill, it is returned to its original chamber.
- If the changes made by the second chamber are accepted by a majority of the original chamber, the bill is submitted to the Governor.
- If the originating chamber rejects the changes, a **conference committee** may be formed, consisting of three members from each chamber. Both versions of the bill will go before the conference committee to be reconciled. Both full chambers must agree to the Conference Committee's final version of the bill. If that happens, the bill is **submitted to the Governor**.
- The Governor may **approve or veto** a bill within six days while the General Assembly is in session, or within 40 days of sine die.
  - If the Governor takes no action within the prescribed time, the bill becomes a law – also called a 'pocket veto'.
  - If the Governor vetoes the Bill, the General Assembly may override the veto with a two-thirds vote by each House during the next Session.
- If the Governor signs the bill, it **goes into effect as a law on the following July 1**, unless a different effective date is provided in the language of the bill.

## Preparing to Visit the Georgia Capitol

- All attendees should bring a drivers' license or government-issued photo ID for the required security check at the Capitol. Each entrance to the Capitol is secured and visitors are required to present government-issued photo identification to gain entry (i.e., drivers' license or passport). If you do not have a photo ID, security will not allow you to enter the building.
- Bring as few personal items as possible! There is no designated security to monitor attendees' personal items, like coats, purses, etc. Attendees will also need to walk from where they park to the State Capitol, so dress warmly and bring as few personal items to monitor. Bring a water bottle, non perishable snacks, and wear comfortable clothing and shoes.
- The State Capitol may be CROWDED. Please prepare for this and try not to block stairs and walkways. Please also try to allow those working in the Capitol to get to the places they need to go in the building.
- The City of Atlanta Fire Marshall limits the number of people who may enter the State Capitol at any given time. Once the maximum occupancy is reached, Capitol Police will not allow more guests inside. Georgia AAPI Legislative Day attendance will be on a first-come, first-served, space-limited basis.



# Directions to the Georgia Capitol

## From the North

- Take I-75/85 South to exit 248A (Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive).
- Bear right onto MLK Jr. Drive. The Capitol will be on the left.

## From the South

- Take I-75/85 North to exit 245 (Capitol Avenue).
- At the bottom of the exit ramp, continue straight through the stop sign.
- At the first traffic light, turn left onto Hank Aaron Drive.
- The Capitol will be approximately one mile down on the left.

## From the East

- Take I-20 West to exit 58A (Capitol Avenue).
- Turn right on Capitol Avenue.
- The Capitol will be approximately one mile down on the left.

## From the West

- Take I-20 East to exit 56B (Windsor St./Spring St./Stadium).
- At the third light, turn left onto Central Avenue.
- Go to Mitchell Street and turn right.
- The Capitol will be two blocks down on the left.

## Parking

*There will be a charge for parking.* Fees will vary between \$5 - 15 for the day. Please be prepared to pay cash, as some lots will not accept debit/credit cards. Recommended parking is located in the following places:

- Pete Hackney Parking Deck: Best access for Luncheon/Floyd building.
  - Get off I-85/75 ramp onto MLK Jr. Drive, turn RIGHT immediately onto Jesse Hill Jr. Drive. The entrance to the parking deck is on your right immediately after the pedestrian bridge.
  - There is a walking sky-bridge access using elevators to get to the Floyd Building.
- The Lanier parking lot is adjacent to Trinity United Methodist Church on Washington Ave just past Trinity Avenue.
- Underground Atlanta parking is just past the intersection of MLK, Jr. Drive and Central Avenue.

## Directions to the Georgia Capitol, cont'd.

**MARTA:** Take the east/west rapid rail line to Georgia State Station. Exit station onto Piedmont Avenue. Turn LEFT and travel two blocks to Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive. For more information on taking MARTA to the Capitol, visit [www.itsmarta.com](http://www.itsmarta.com).

[Area street map linked here!](#)

### Entrances, Security, and Accessibility

- Entrances to the Capitol building are on all 4 sides of the building. Each entrance is secured and all visitors are required to present government-issued photo identification (i.e., drivers' license or passport). If you do not have a photo ID, security will not let you in the building.
- **ACCESSIBILITY:** Visitors with disabilities/wheelchairs may stop briefly at the loading zone on Mitchell Street or MLK Jr. Drive for drop off. Disabled guests can use ramps provided to enter the Capitol on the ground (first) floor. [Here is an up-to-date guide on accessibility.](#)
- All visitors must enter the Capitol through a metal detector; the X-ray machine must examine hand-carried items. No weapons, including pocketknives, are allowed in the Capitol. These items should be left in a vehicle because Capitol security will not hold these items.



# Navigating the Capitol Grounds

On days that are scheduled for people to meet up, usually people gather on the 3rd floor on the east side of the building, between 332 and 353.

Rallies at Liberty Plaza are outside on the east side of the Capitol, across the street.

Press conferences are usually on one set of the Capitol steps inside.

For trainings, luncheons, or vigils, look for details and directions.

There are restrooms on the ground floor. Once you arrive, it's a great time to use the facilities.

To speak with your senator or representative at the ropes outside their chamber:

- Know who your representatives are and potentially where they stand on the matter you want to discuss with them. Knowing what they look like is important so you can approach them when they come out of the chamber.
- The Senate is on the North side of the building, between 353 and 321. The House is on the South side of the building, between 332 and 307.
- Depending on the status of the bill, go to the Page desk of either the Senate or House and fill out the Page form to request a conversation with your legislator. You will include your name, your representative's name, and briefly what you want to discuss. Hand it back to those at the desk.
- It is uncertain how long you will wait. You may stand up close to the ropes or lean against the wall. If after 30-45 minutes pass and your legislator does not come out, you may ask the Page desk if they can see if you can make another request because they have not come out.

[Interior Capitol Map linked here!](#)

# Best Practices for Talking to Legislators

Engaging with legislators is all about getting the right information to the right person at the right time!

## **Meeting a legislator at the ropes**

Once your legislator comes out of the chamber, calmly approach them, say their name or wave, introduce yourself with your name and that you are their constituent. Briefly share your concerns. You may ask them what they think or if they have any questions. Ask them directly about how they plan to vote. Tell them you will stay in touch with them either way. Thank them for their time and leave them with any resources that they can refer to later. If with a group, report back to staff/leadership about your conversation.

## **Speaking to your representative's office**

Calling or visiting your elected official's office is most effective in the days before they are scheduled to take action on an issue. Expect to speak with a staffer or policy advisor from your representative's office. Prepare notes and talking points to keep your conversation organized and on track. Identify that you are a constituent of their district, and be courteous and respectful when engaging, even if you are feeling emotional or frustrated. Make a specific ask of your legislator (to vote for or against a bill, etc.) and get verbal commitments from the staffer you are speaking to. If you don't know the answer to a question asked, it's best to ask if you can follow up with an answer. You can also leave behind your contact information, as well as a fact sheet or informational packet, and request the opportunity to follow up on the issue you spoke about.

## **Testifying at a committee hearing**

When testifying at a committee hearing, it is most effective to use your personal story and expertise to make your case. You should prepare your remarks ahead of time, and make copies to distribute afterwards. Try to avoid repeating arguments that have already been made, going over your time limit, or insulting anyone. Always end by thanking legislators for their time.

## **How can I find out who my legislators are?**

[You can use this tool from our friends at Georgia Equality!](#)

# Jewish Talking Points for Anti-Trans Legislation

**The following sections establish meaningful reasoning, rooted in Jewish tradition, to stand against some of the most common types of anti-trans legislation.**

## **Bans or restrictions on trans health care**

This type of legislation bans or restricts treating trans people for gender dysphoria. Most outright bans apply to those under the age of 18, but bills have been proposed for up to age 26. Health care for trans adults is usually not made illegal outright, but limited through unnecessarily strict policies that make the care prohibitively expensive to provide, receive, or insure.

One of the most important Jewish teachings is *pikuach nefesh* - the idea that our highest priority, as Jews, is to save a life. Access to gender-affirming medical care can be life-saving for trans people. Bans and restrictions on health care for trans people fundamentally go against Jewish teaching to protect and affirm the lives of others.

## **“Parental Rights in Education” bills**

Legislation focused on “parental rights in education” often mandates the outing of LGBTQ+ students to parents by school employees, and prevents educators from acknowledging LGBTQ+ identity.

These bills are based in the idea that parents are the only people who can be trusted to have the best interests of their children in mind. However, Jewish wisdom holds that our children don't belong to us. They are both a loan and a gift from G-d, and a child's job is to find their own path in life. The tradition of *l'dor vador* teaches us that Judaism is passed from generation to generation, not just by parents, but by the whole community. As Jewish community members, we want our kids to feel safe and trust the adults in their lives, no matter the context.

## Trans erasure bills

Trans erasure bills codify definitions of “male” and “female” into state law based on sex assigned at birth. This creates obstacles to gender marker changes on birth certificates, drivers’ licenses, and other state ID documents, and creates ripple effects for all other legislation having to do with gender, such as non-discrimination laws.

A name change is a holy, meaningful thing, signifying that you’re coming closer to yourself and closer to G-d. In the Torah, we see G-d change the names of Abraham, Sarah, and Jacob (Israel) to honor their covenants with G-d and signify who they would go on to be in the world. There is a deep, divine precedent in our tradition for these changes to the markers of identity, and we should fight to see these values reflected in the places where we live.

## Sports bans

These discriminatory bills prohibit trans youth from participating in public school and college sports.

We believe that every person is created *b’tzelem Elohim*, in the image of G-d. That includes each and every member of the LGBTQ+ community, and informs our obligation to pursue justice and celebrate gender and sexual diversity. LGBTQ+ individuals should never be discriminated against, whether in housing, healthcare, or on the sports field.

## Bathroom bans

This legislation bans trans people from using bathrooms that align with their gender identity in public spaces.

Transgender people - like all people - thrive when they are treated with *kavod*, or respect. And exclusion, just as it would for anyone, takes its toll. Bathroom bans single trans people out for discrimination and harassment.

# AT SOJOURN, WE...

Southern Jewish Resource Network for Gender and Sexual Diversity

## EMPOWER

SOJOURN supports Jewish and LGBTQ+ individuals and communities through nourishing connections, resource referrals, and guidance for Jewish institutions welcoming LGBTQ+ community members.

- **LGBTQ+ Guides** to Jewish communities
- **Queer Jewish Professionals** - monthly virtual resource space for queer employees of Southern Jewish orgs
- **Parent & Caregiver Support**
- **Mental health** information, resources, and referrals for the Jewish community

## CELEBRATE

SOJOURN facilitates Jewish and queer community spaces and organizes Jewish participation in Pride events, building celebratory, joyful spaces for those who need them most.

- **QueerHillah** - social programming for queer Jews in their 20s + 30s
- **Youth Group** for LGBTQ+ & Jewish teens ages 12-17
- **Purim Off Ponce**, our Annual Givers' Celebration (next March 21, 2026)
- **Pride** celebrations across the South

## EDUCATE

SOJOURN offers a variety of trainings and programs on full inclusion and organizational best practices that are enhanced with ritual innovation.

- **Fundamentals of Gender & Sexual Diversity** covering the evolving landscape of LGBTQ+ identities
- **Pathways to Progress** - our virtual speaker series
- **Welcoming Communities Project** - 6-18 months for orgs to implement best practices & enhance culture
- **EDGE: Early Development for Gender Equity** - for preschool administrators, teachers and parents

## ADVOCATE

SOJOURN mobilizes Jewish communities across the South to oppose anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

- **The Thrive Coalition** - Jewish coalition of 300+ orgs doing trans-related advocacy
- Legislative Updates & Action Steps
- **Resources** - How to Talk about Anti-trans Legislation from a Jewish Lens, The Role of Jewish Community Spaces Amid Hostile Legislation for LGBTQ+ Youth

## GET IN TOUCH!



- [www.sojourngsd.org](http://www.sojourngsd.org)
- [@sojourngsd](https://www.instagram.com/sojourngsd)
- [facebook.com/sojourngsd](https://www.facebook.com/sojourngsd)
- [info@sojourngsd.org](mailto:info@sojourngsd.org)



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