



END-OF-SESSION REPORT

Georgia Legislature 2023

As the legislative session began in January of 2023, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp entered his second and final term as governor. Governor Kemp's legislative priorities included business development and government reform. He also stated a focus on rural Georgia. View Governor Kemp's full list of priorities [here](#).

Despite recent high-profile state elections, Republicans still hold control in Georgia. The Republican party controls:

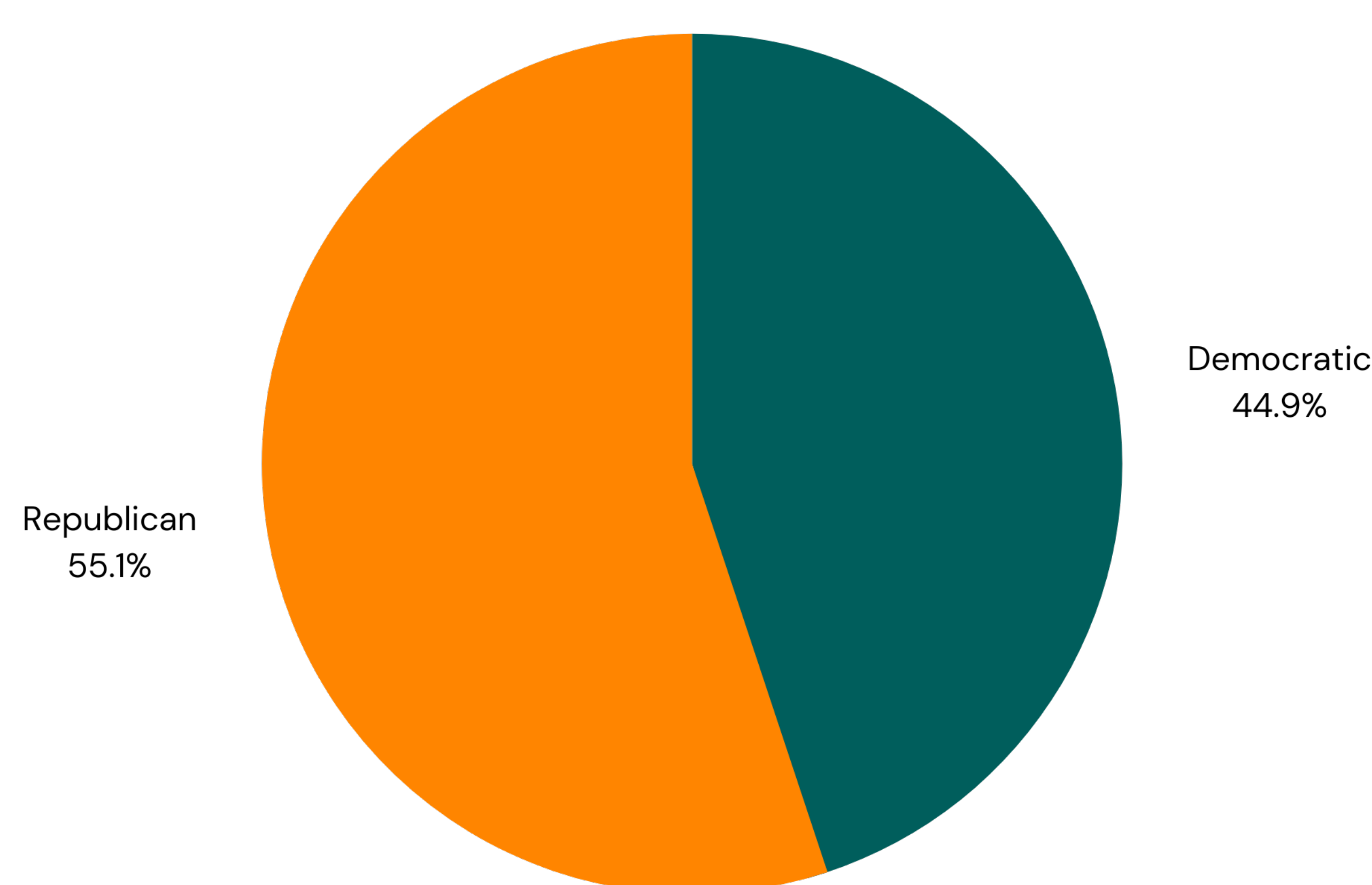
- The Office of the Governor
- Both chambers of the State House
- The Secretary of State
- The State Attorney General

Entering the 2023 session, Republicans held 98 of 180 seats in the House of Representatives. In the Senate, they held 32 of the 56 seats.

Ahead of the session, the Senate Republican Majority Caucus outlined their [2023 legislative priorities](#). Likewise, Georgia's Senate Democratic Caucus



announced their [legislative agenda](#) for 2023-2024.



KEY 2023 SESSION DATA

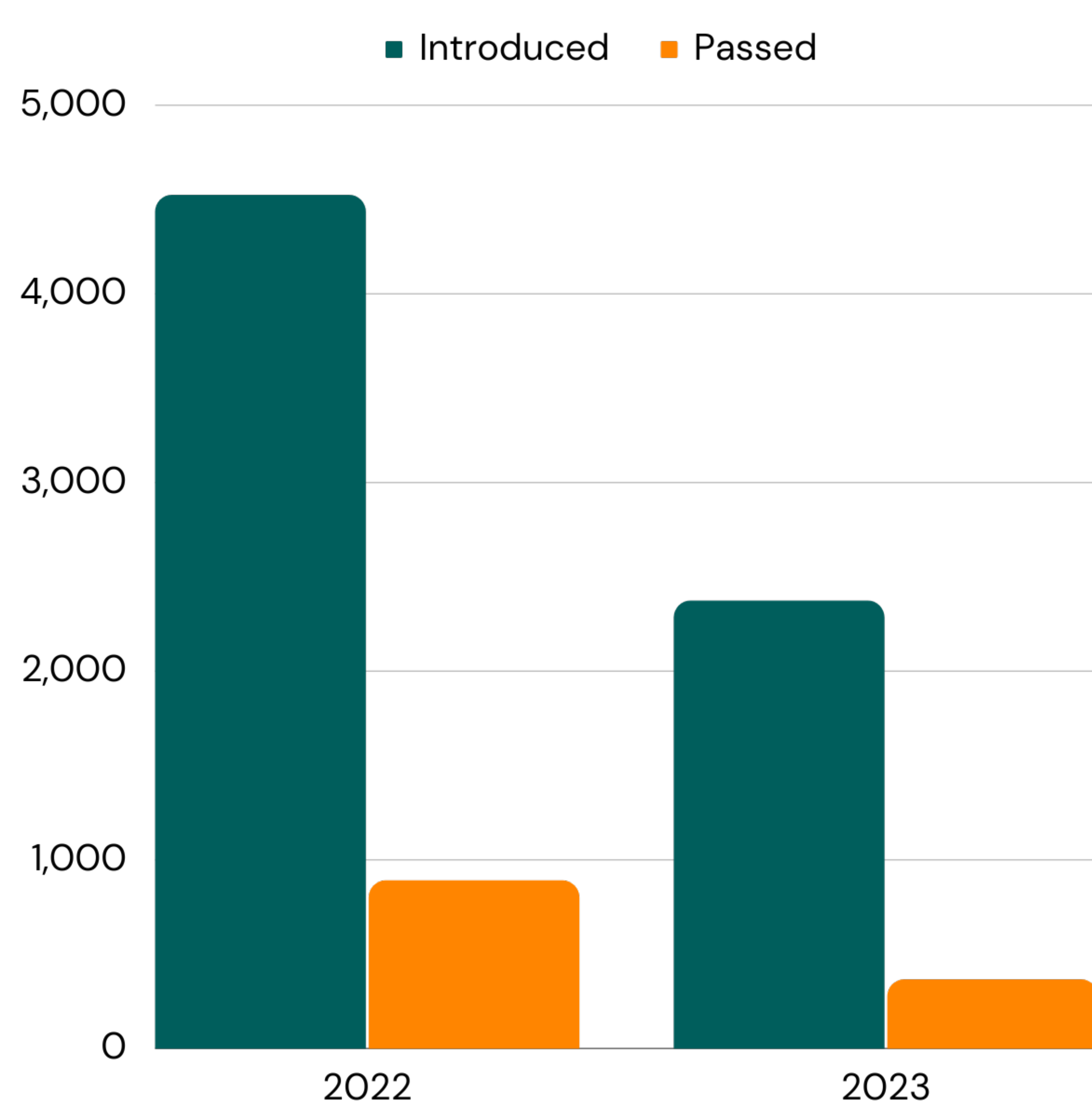
This year's legislative session lasted from January 9 until March 29. The general assembly passed [367 Bills](#) into law, out of 2,371 introduced. Major initiatives passed into law focused on:

- Taxation
- Economic investments
- Elections
- Education
- Abortion
- Crime policy

This represents a decrease in activity from 2022, when the general assembly

passed 891 bills into law out of 4,521 introduced. Major legislation from the 2022 session focused on:

- The environment
- Voting rights
- Education
- Abortion
- Healthcare
- Guns
- The public safety training facility known as “Cop City”



KEY LEGISLATIVE TRENDS IN GEORGIA

- Environment
- Education
- Voting rights
- LGBTQIA+ issues
- Gun legislation
- “Cop City”

LEGISLATION IMPACTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Climate and environment-related bills made massive waves in the news. Two

consumer protection laws, HB 477 and HB 73, were introduced.

HB 477, proposed increasing regulation of a known harmful soil additive. HB 73 sought to decrease scams and low-quality energy service in the solar industry by requiring that solar companies be certified by the Georgia Public Service Commission. While both bills generated attention and debate, neither ended up becoming law.

HB 71, called the Okefenokee Protection Act, proposed limiting surface mining on certain areas within the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. The bill was stalled in the House, preventing the application of these protections. Despite advocacy efforts, there was little substantial policy passed to address climate change.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Education remained a key topic of discussion, resulting in the passage of three major bills. The Safe Schools Act was championed by Governor Kemp and signed into law in April. The Act requires that classrooms conduct intruder alert drills and create school safety plans. Schools must report those actions to the Georgia Emergency Management Agency.

One provision of the Act, requiring “anti-gang” training for educators, was the subject of concern from community members and legislators. Many

Georgians share concerns that the provision may lead to increased racial profiling.

Two bipartisan bills aimed at improving literacy in schools became law. SB 211 will establish a Georgia State Council on Literacy. The Council will oversee schools' development and implementation of 5-year literacy plans. HB 538 is also called Georgia's Early Literacy Act. It requires that the State Board of Education approve high-quality instructional materials for use in kindergarten through third grade.

LEGISLATION IMPACTING VOTING RIGHTS AND ELECTIONS

In Georgia, debates over voting rights have garnered national focus in recent years. This legislative session was no different. Governor Kemp signed two bills into law that restrict access to voting.

HB 422 will halt bipartisan appointments to the Ware County Board of Elections. Instead, appointments will be in line with the political party of the gubernatorial candidate that earned the most votes in the county. SB 221 is an elections omnibus bill including an amendment to ban election drop boxes. It also makes it easier for Georgians to challenge many voter registrations at once.

This session also saw the passage of SB 129, which expands voting rights for Georgians in both primary and general

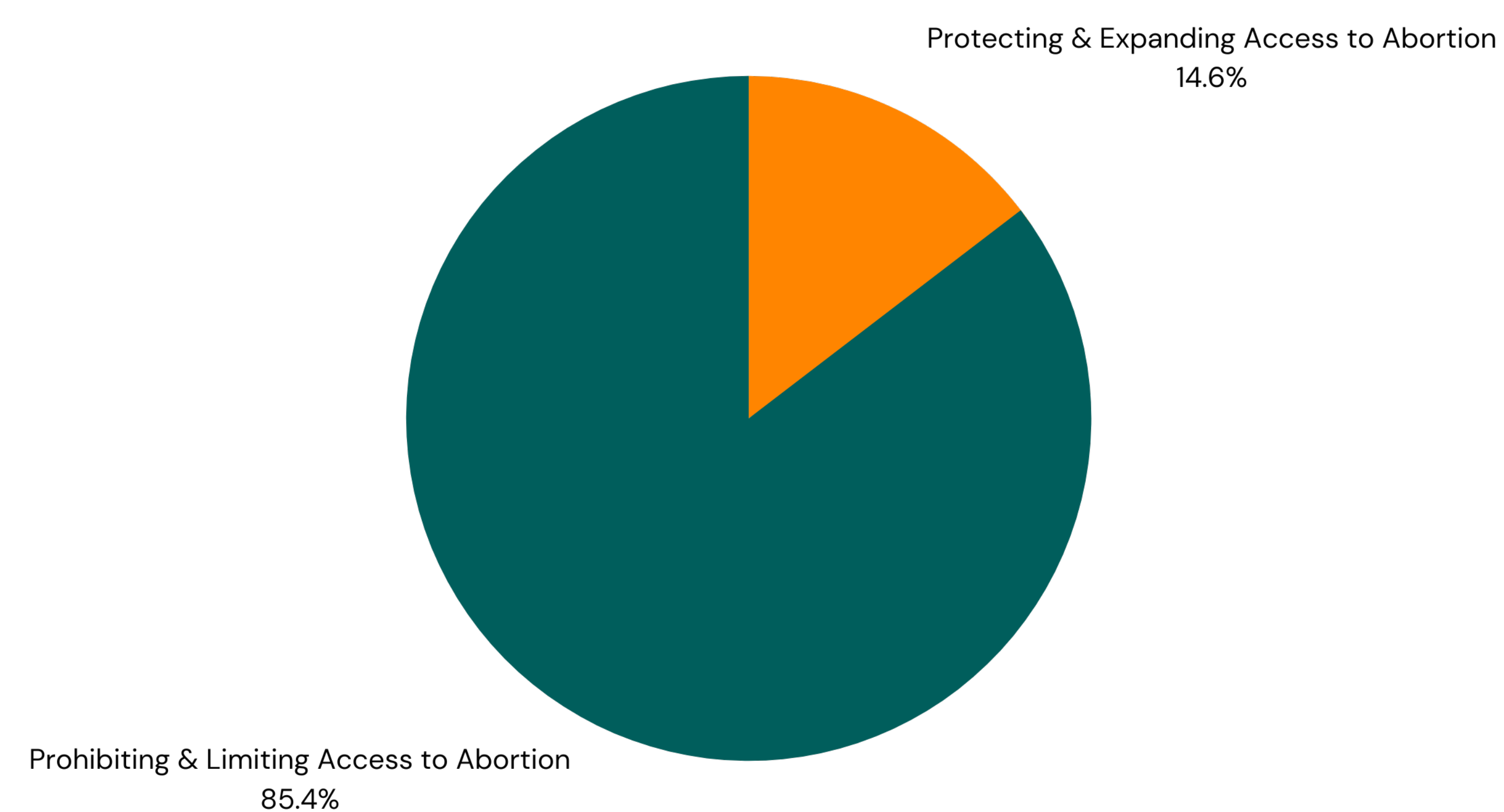


elections. It also ensures time off for employees to vote early during elections.

ABORTION LEGISLATION

The Georgia legislature passed HB 481, known as the "Life Act", in 2019. The Act placed a 6-week ban on abortions. HB 481 is currently in effect, pending ongoing litigation in State of Georgia v. Sistersong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective et al.

Since 2020, 37 abortion-related bills have been introduced. Only three have been passed into law. The legislature remains stagnant on this issue until the courts make their final decision.



LEGISLATION IMPACTING THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

One prominent national trend is an increase in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. The Georgia session was no different. Twenty-nine LGBTQ-related bills were introduced, and one bill became law.

SB 140 prohibits physicians from providing gender-affirming care to minors. This includes gender-affirming surgeries and hormone replacement therapy. Providers that violate this ban are at risk of losing their permits or licenses. SB 140 became law in March.

In response to SB 140, four families with transgender children are suuing the state of Georgia. They claim that the law violates their fundamental rights as parents, including the right to make medical decisions to ensure the health and well-being of their children. They also claim that SB 140 violates the US Constitution.

As of July 1, 2023, 20 states have passed laws banning gender-affirming care. There is a national campaign targeting the LGBTQ+ community, particularly trans and gender non-conforming individuals. There has been surge of anti-trans legislation over the past three years. 2023 has seen the largest spike in legislation both introduced and made law in decades.



GUN LEGISLATION

SB 319, Georgia's Constitutional Carry Act, went into effect on January 1, 2023. The law allows most adults to carry firearms in most public spaces without a permit. However, SB 319 has raised gun safety concerns among many legislators. This concern led to the introduction of 16 bills restricting access to guns this session. However, none of the measures became law.

Pro-gun legislators introduced five bills to further expand access to guns. Again, none were made law. Everytown for Gun Safety, a gun control advocacy organization, ranks Georgia as 47th in the nation for strong gun laws. Georgia also experiences the 14th highest number of gun deaths per capita.

"COP CITY"

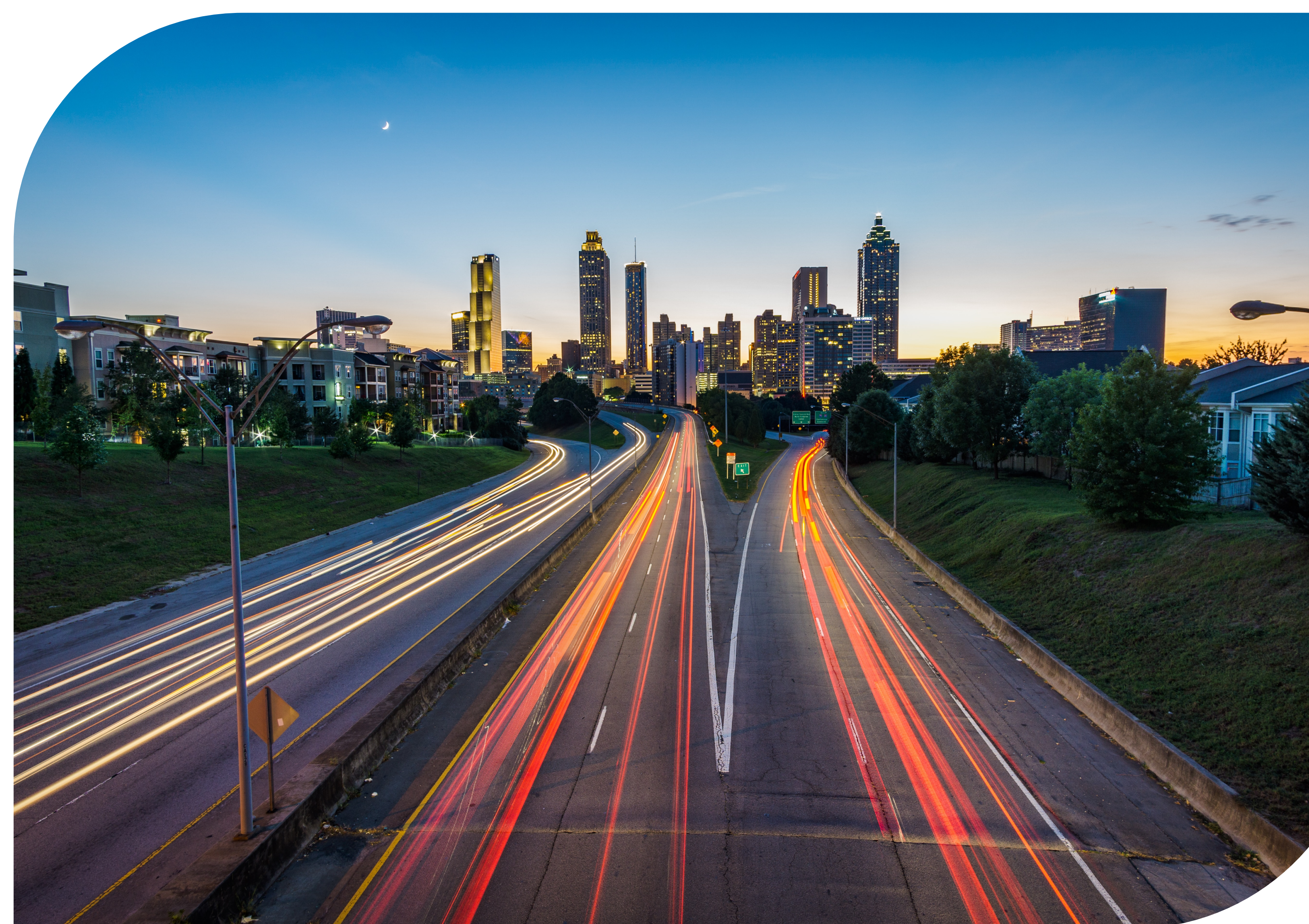
The Atlanta City Council approved legislation to fund "Cop City", a public safety training center in southeast Atlanta. The measure passed with an 11-Yes and 4-No vote. \$67 million in taxpayer dollars will be allocated from the Atlanta City Council budget to build Cop City.

HB 325 came in response to a series of violent shootings involving police officers and rising concerns regarding Cop City. The bill is also called the Transparency in Policing Act, and never made it out of the House.

Without the passage of HB 325 and with the Council moving forward in Atlanta, organizers have pivoted towards collecting signatures for a ballot referendum. Should organizers receive enough signatures, a referendum to stop Cop City will be on the ballot in 2024.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the 2023 legislative session, the Georgia legislature passed 15.47% of the bills introduced. The legislature met many of its goals. With a Republican majority, their efforts were not thwarted by the Democratic caucus. However, facing court challenges, Republicans will likely wait many months to continue with their agenda.



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