

LETTERS_TO_EDITOR

Georgia's resources must be carefully conserved, not sold to the highest bidders

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It should come as no surprise that Georgia's perennial stature as "America's most business-friendly state" is being achieved by making dubious trade-offs that are often hidden, deceptively disguised or falsely denied.

Foolhardy policy being foisted on Georgians includes House Bill 1146, which would favor coastal profiteers by allowing them to sell water resources, advancing profitable projects built where and when local officials and the communities they serve would prefer they were not. Motivation to subvert local control with accelerated, opportunistic profit-making is catalyzed by Bryan County's thriving housing market, boosted by the construction of an enormous Hyundai EV plant nearby — another result of Georgia's aggressive industrialization, implemented without proper evaluation of collateral impacts.

If a developer has land and a water permit, or the imminent prospect of getting one thanks to HB 1146, it will be much easier to coerce local officials into approving his project, contrary to local land-use plans or widely supported growth controls. Once developed, without adequate site planning and infrastructure, these projects are likely to cause polluted runoff, contaminating waterways, wildlife habitat and nearby properties. Mitigating impacts would require still more costly burdens on local taxpayers who would be expected to subsidize needed pollution control projects. Similar taxpayer obligations would apply to growth-induced roads, schools, sewer systems, etc.

To ensure that Georgians can defend their well-justified claims on quality of life and corresponding growth controls, Gov. Kemp must be encouraged to reject HB 1146. For the common good, Georgia's economic development must be properly evaluated and planned instead of being unconditionally promoted.

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