

## **Response by Former State Senator Eric Johnson Republican Candidate for Governor**

[www.johnsonforgeorgians.com](http://www.johnsonforgeorgians.com)

### *Life sciences economic development:*

#### **What is the role of state government in supporting life sciences economic development?**

Georgia is poised to be a national leader in research and development. Georgia has unique scientific research and development institutions particularly in the areas of engineering and bioscience. Georgia is home to more than 20 internationally recognized institutions of scientific research and development. These institutions produce new ideas every year. However, Georgia has not yet created the environment necessary to take these ideas off the shelf and turn them into products and services and jobs. Georgia must continue to support the Georgia Research Alliance and the Eminent Scholar Program. But we must take this one step further. We will create a climate where experienced entrepreneurs will stay here or are invited to come to Georgia. Supporting “Eminent Entrepreneurs” is a key to developing and improving the climate in Georgia for bioscience investment and entrepreneurship.

Georgia must also look for ways to use our research and development institutions to partner with the research and innovations developed by and used by our armed forces. Georgia is home to 12 active military bases, many of which are the largest in the nation. Georgia’s love and support of the military, coupled with the premier research and development institutions that we have, make Georgia a natural home for the military’s research and development arm.

To continue to attract new business and investment into Georgia, we must provide increased “seed capital” for investment. One of the biggest obstacles to high-tech businesses in Georgia is a lack of local venture capital. We must allow our retirement systems to invest a portion of their funds in alternative assets. Georgia is the only state which prohibits investments in alternative assets. Georgia has already lost billions in revenue, jobs and other economic benefits to other states because Georgia’s laws do not support the growth of venture capital.

*K-16 science education:*

**How can Georgia ensure that its students will be able to compete for 21<sup>st</sup> century advanced technology jobs and that our state will have the skilled work force to support life sciences industry growth?**

As Governor, I will focus on supporting students and parents and equipping teachers and principals with the tools they need. However, to remain competitive, Georgia cannot stay with the status quo in education. We are no longer competing with South Carolina and Alabama. We are competing with South Korea and India. Georgia must fundamentally change the way it approaches education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. A vibrant system in which options and opportunities abound will enable all Georgia's students to be the best they can be and prepare them for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Every child – regardless of income – must have the ability to receive the very best education possible – whether in their neighborhood public school, a charter school, a magnet school, a home school, a virtual school, or a private school. To do that, we must “personalize” their education.

If we want to provide the highest quality education for every child, then we must put the individual child's needs above the interest of the government and the ego of those who run schools. We must put the children FIRST, not the bureaucracy.

We need to build on the success of HOPE and offer new EarlyHOPE Scholarships to all students in grades K-12 to attend the school of their choice. These scholarships would allow parents to use the state's portion of the funding to help pay for any school they can get their child into – public or private. Every child would have access to the best school possible and private schools would remain independent. In addition, this will leave local funds in place to either return to property taxpayers or to increase spending on the remaining students in local public schools. It doesn't cost the taxpayers a dime.

*Federal health care reform:*

**What, if anything, is the most critical need for Georgians when it comes to health care reform?**

\$5 of every \$6 dollars of health care spending is paid for by someone other than the person receiving care— insurance companies, emergency rooms, or the government. Individuals are insulated from the reality of what their decisions cost. Health care in this country can only be reformed when we encourage citizens to take back control of their health care. Georgia must take the lead in replacing our bureaucratic and heavily regulated third-party payment system with a new individualized system of consumer choice and free-market competition. Georgia will continue to promote the adoption of consumer-based health care plans such as health savings accounts to let traditional market forces influence the cost of medical services.

I am very opposed to the nationalization of our health care system. I believe that while some changes can be made, government takeover of health care is a very bad idea. I believe the new law is more about power than a concern about people's health. I support Georgia partnering with other states to challenge in court the egregious aspects of Obamacare. I also believe that states should be given more freedom and flexibility to provide appropriate healthcare to the poorest of their citizens.