KEISHA
LANCE BOTTOMS
GOVERNOR

Insiders Out, Taxpayers First Ethics Plan

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Insiders Out, Taxpayers First Ethics Plan

Georgians should not have to wonder whether state government is working for them or for the insiders who know how to work the system.

Keisha Lance Bottoms' plan will strengthen ethics rules, open state spending and contracting to the public, and make sure no governor can personally profit from doing business with the state.

Recent scrutiny of state contracting has exposed real weaknesses in Georgia's ethics and procurement laws, including concerns about contracts worth hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, limited competition, and too little oversight.

During the 2026 legislative session, Republican State Sen. Ben Watson took to the Senate floor to raise concerns about state contracts with Jackson Healthcare and the lack of oversight surrounding them. Watson summed up the problem bluntly: "The fox was in the henhouse."

Georgia needs rules strong enough to make sure it never happens again.

The plan will:

- Prevent governors from profiting from state contracts.
- Require governors to divest from companies doing business with the state.
- Fully close the "Jackson Loophole" and strengthen competitive bidding.
- Modernize Georgia's Open Checkbook so taxpayers can easily follow their money.
- Put the state procurement process online from beginning to end.
- Bring greater transparency to the General Assembly.

Keep the Governor's Business Out of State Business

Georgia should have a simple rule: the governor should not be able to make money from companies receiving state contracts.

Keisha will prohibit the governor from holding contracts with the State of Georgia within one year of taking office.

That prohibition should apply to existing contracts, renewals, extensions, amendments, and other arrangements that could allow a governor to continue benefiting financially from the state.

Public officials should make decisions based on what is best for taxpayers, not what benefits their own bottom line. State employees should never be placed in the position of regulating, negotiating with, or overseeing a company owned by the governor.

Earlier this year, Republican Rep. Jason Ridley introduced legislation aimed directly at preventing a governor like Rick Jackson from maintaining substantial financial interests in companies holding state contracts. The proposal advanced from the House Governmental Affairs Committee but never received a House floor vote. Georgia should finish the job and establish a clear statewide standard.

Divest Before Taking Office

A governor should not be allowed to oversee state agencies while maintaining a controlling financial interest in companies doing business with those same agencies.

Keisha will require an incoming governor to divest any controlling interest in a company holding state contracts before taking office. If the governor refuses to divest, those contracts will be terminated at the earliest lawful opportunity.

Simply moving an ownership interest into a trust will not be enough if the governor continues to benefit financially. The purpose of divestment is to eliminate the conflict, not hide it behind paperwork.

Rick Jackson has said he would unwind his companies' state contracts if elected. But in July, after making that pledge, a Jackson Healthcare subsidiary extended a multimillion-dollar state contract through June 2027, six months into the next governor's term. State records show the company has received nearly $18 million under the contract since 2022, and Jackson himself signed one of the renewal documents. Jackson has since said he would terminate the contract if elected.

Georgia taxpayers should not have to rely on Jackson, or any future governor, to decide when, how, or whether to eliminate their own financial conflicts.

The law should decide, the rules should be clear, and the conflict should be eliminated before the governor takes office.

Fully Close the Jackson Loophole

Georgia took an important step in 2026 to stop state agencies from using contract renewals and extensions to evade competitive bidding requirements. That provision was described as closing the "Rick Jackson Loophole."

Keisha will go further and fully close the "Jackson Loophole" by making sure state agencies cannot avoid competition through no-bid contracts, contract amendments, extensions, renewals, or artificially dividing large purchases into smaller contracts.

Major state contracts should be competitively bid except in genuine, time-limited emergencies.

When an agency awards a contract without competition, it should be required to publicly explain:

- Why competitive bidding was not possible.
- Why the selected vendor was chosen.
- The total value and duration of the contract.
- Whether the vendor or its owners have financial relationships with state officials.
- When the contract will return to a competitive bidding process.

Emergency and sole-source contracts should expire after a defined period and should not be repeatedly renewed or expanded to avoid competition.

Keisha will also require greater scrutiny when a contract grows substantially beyond its original value. A small contract should not become a massive taxpayer obligation through a series of amendments that were never subjected to open competition.

Let Georgians Follow Their Money

Taxpayers should not need to be accountants, journalists, or government insiders to figure out where their money goes.

Georgia already publishes state spending information through Open Georgia, but the information is only updated annually, and the system is not as timely, searchable, or user-friendly as it should be.

Keisha will modernize Georgia's Open Checkbook into an easy-to-use, continuously updated online tool where Georgians can search state expenditures, vendors, contracts, payments, amendments, and renewals.

The public should be able to search by agency, vendor, contract, amount, purpose, and date. Large contracts and significant amendments should be easy to identify, and taxpayers should be able to see how much a vendor has received from the state across multiple agencies and contracts.

The goal is simple: if the state spends taxpayer money, taxpayers should be able to see where it went.

As mayor, Keisha launched Atlanta's Open Checkbook to give residents greater visibility into city spending. As governor, she will bring that same commitment to transparency to state government.

Put State Contracting Online

Transparency should begin before a contract is awarded, not after the money has already been spent.

Keisha will create one searchable online location where Georgians can follow the state procurement process from solicitation through final payment.

The public should be able to see:

- State solicitations and RFPs.
- Bid specifications and deadlines.
- Companies that submitted bids.
- Bid amounts.
- Contract awards.
- Contract amendments and extensions.
- Sole-source and no-bid justifications.
- The total amount ultimately paid under the contract.

This will allow taxpayers, journalists, watchdog organizations, and competing businesses to determine whether state contracts were awarded fairly and whether taxpayers received a good deal.

It will also make it easier to identify patterns, including vendors repeatedly receiving no-bid work, contracts that dramatically increase after being awarded, or agencies that consistently rely on sole-source procurement.

Taxpayers deserve to know not only who received a state contract, but how they got it.

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Keisha's Record on Ethics and Transparency

Keisha Lance Bottoms has already shown what stronger ethics and transparency can look like in government. As Mayor of Atlanta, Keisha advanced a series of reforms designed to strengthen oversight, protect public dollars, and rebuild trust in City Hall. She tightened restrictions on the use of city credit cards, expanded oversight of employee bonuses, and established clearer consequences for misuse of public funds. She also launched Atlanta's first Open Checkbook, giving the public online access to city budgets, expenditures, contracts, and vendor information and making it easier for residents to see how their tax dollars were being spent.

Keisha appointed Atlanta's first Chief Transparency Officer and created a Task Force for the Promotion of Public Trust to recommend additional reforms to the city's ethics, transparency, and compliance policies. Under her administration, the average response time for open records requests was reduced from 72 days to just 4 days, making city government more responsive and accessible to the public.

She then spearheaded the creation of Atlanta's Office of the Inspector General, establishing an independent structure focused on preventing corruption and strengthening public trust in city government.

Her work earned recognition from the Georgia First Amendment Foundation, which honored her administration for its transparency reforms and said Atlanta's approach could "blaze a path for every city, county and state to follow."

Keisha's ethics plan for state government builds on that record. She has already opened the books, strengthened oversight, sped up access to public records, and put new safeguards in place at City Hall. As Governor, she will bring that same commitment to accountability and transparency to state government.