

# Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island

## Questionnaire Gubernatorial Candidates

1) Currently, a number of Authority boards in Georgia are required by law to have members with qualifications related to the duties they must perform. This is not the case with the Jekyll Island Authority board, however. If you were to be elected as Georgia's next governor, would you be willing to support legislation that would require the majority of JIA board appointees to have credentials in subject areas relevant to the tasks they might be called upon to perform, including, but not limited to, such areas as public land planning and development, outdoor recreation, hospitality and tourism, public sector economics, and coastal ecology?

*Yes, I will. In my first term, I made the Environmental Protection Division of the Department of Natural Resources more effective by giving it more positions. I also appointed prominent environmental leader Pierre Howard to the Board of Natural Resources. As governor, I'll ensure that Georgia's brightest minds in the scientific and conservation fields are given leadership roles on our environmental boards and commissions – including the Jekyll Island Authority.*

2) One of the main goals of IPJI is to keep Jekyll Island's remaining open beachfront unobstructed and directly accessible to the general public. Would you, as governor, be willing to encourage the Jekyll Island Authority board to refrain from commercializing beachfront land that is currently in its natural state or is home to a public amenity?

As you answer this question, please bear in mind two facts:

- An open beach policy need not conflict with the ongoing reconstruction of Jekyll's aging hotels, convention center and retail shops, which will take place on land that has already been developed
- Jekyll Island is Georgia's only oceanfront state park and, as such, public demand for access to the island's main beach will increase dramatically over the next two decades in response to a projected population increase of 46 percent statewide and 55 percent in Georgia's ten coastal counties [data source: Office of Planning and Budget, March, 2010].

*Georgia is one of the nation's most beautiful and diverse states, with landscapes ranging from mountains to swamps to miles of untouched shoreline and barrier islands. Preserving these unique places and making them accessible to visitors will be a priority of mine as governor. Further, I believe the policy of the JIA*

*should be to refrain from commercializing Jekyll Island's beachfront that is currently in its natural state.*

*In 2000, I enacted the Georgia Greenspace Program to help counties buy and preserve environmentally sensitive land and combat the traffic congestion and pollution that accompanies urban sprawl. The goal of the legislation was to preserve 20% of the land in the state's 40 most rapidly developing counties. In addition, I enacted a sustainability package that provided \$59.1 million towards preserving more public and park land. The money was utilized by over 100 counties and cities to purchase and preserve more than 10,000 acres of land, including an 1870s gristmill, a wetland for blue herons, and an old-growth forest.*

*This is the type of policy position I have taken in regards to preserving undeveloped lands, and I intend to continue that policy with appointments to the JIA.*

3) The 1971 act mandating that not more than 35 percent of Jekyll Island can be developed is one of the most important pieces of legislation in the state park's history. The so-called 65/35 rule cannot be upheld, however, without a clear definition of what constitutes "developed" and "undeveloped" land. At present, the definitions of these terms subscribed to by the JIA are, in some cases, at odds with best practices in land use classification.

As governor, would you be willing to help uphold the 65/35 law by asking your JIA board appointees to align the Authority's definitions of developed and undeveloped land with national standards for land use classification, meaning those followed by such organizations as the American Planning Association, the Georgia Planning Association, and the National Resources Inventory?

Yes.

4) Georgia law mandates that the Jekyll Island Authority make "the island park's facilities available to people of average income." Many people believe that Jekyll's long-standing tradition of affordability is one of the state park's most important assets; others feel that Jekyll's lodgings and amenities need to be more upscale if the island is to compete with other coastal vacation destinations. If you were in charge of revamping Jekyll Island's lodgings and amenities, what would be your priorities?

*As governor, I will take a two-pronged approach to ensuring Jekyll Island is affordable for Georgians yet desirable to tourists. First, I have long believed that our state parks should be enjoyed by all Georgians. In 2001, I pledged to offer assistance to Georgia's tourism industry during the depressed travel climate after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. The "Georgia for Georgians" campaign, offered a 20% discount at all state-operated parks and historic sites, and at more than 100 privately operated lodges for anyone who showed a valid Georgia driver's*

*license. I'll continue to make sure Georgians can enjoy our state's attractions, like Jekyll Island regardless of income. The focus of the JIA should be toward average income Georgians.*

*Second, I understand that if we could increase tourism visitation by only two percent in Georgia, this alone would generate an additional \$85 million in state tax revenue and an additional \$57 million in local tax revenues. Therefore, just revamping Jekyll Island's amenities isn't enough – we much support the island with tourism advertising. During my term as Governor, I was a strong advocate for the tourism industry – I sponsored a \$1 million marketing package that was designed to revive Georgia's tourism industry, which doubled the state's previous tourism advertising budget. Investing in advertising can market Jekyll Island to coastal tourists to ensure that it remains one of the country's coveted island destinations.*

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**Please return responses by email to [degan@igc.org](mailto:degan@igc.org)**