

# Stimulus’ bill would hurt well-managed states like Georgia

How many trillions of dollars can Uncle Sam borrow? It seems some in Congress are determined to find out: not only to prop up the economy, and not only to help well-managed states like Georgia, but increasingly to bail out the most spendthrift states in the union.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi this past week unveiled a \$3 trillion “stimulus” bill, the fifth and largest such bill since COVID-19 hit our shores. It would, among other things, send another round of checks to most Americans and extend today’s extra-large unemployment benefits.

State governments would receive a whopping \$500 billion, with hundreds of billions more for cities and counties. It’s a massive borrowing spree on behalf of governments that typically have to balance their budgets. And it would punish every current and future taxpayer in fiscally responsible states such as Georgia, just to fill budget holes in other states that long pre-dated the pandemic.

Right about now, you may be asking why these funds aren’t necessary for Georgia, too. Don’t our state agencies face a 14% cut? Let’s walk through some quick figures.

The state projects a revenue shortfall in the current budget year (ending June 30) of up to \$1.5 billion. A 14% cut for next year would amount to another \$3.5 billion. Call it \$5 billion for those two budgets.

Good stewardship over the past decade means Georgia has some \$2.7 billion in reserves, or about half of the projected shortfall.

Now recall that Pelosi’s new bill is the fifth one. Funding for Georgia from previous bills include an estimated \$522 million for public transit, \$715 million in additional Medicaid funding, \$965 million in relief for education, and \$3.5 billion for other costs “incurred due to the public health emergency.”

That last bit is key. Federal officials could allow more flexible use of that \$3.5 billion, which is part of \$139 billion nationwide. So far, they’ve declined.

While our state government almost certainly won’t spend \$3.5 billion due to the pandemic, it will easily surpass that total in revenue shortfalls because of the recession caused by the pandemic. Yet, federal guidance explicitly prohibits using the money for “revenue replacement.”

That’s short-sighted, not least because it sets the stage for Pelosi’s debt bonanza.

If Georgia’s budget writers could use existing relief funds as they see fit, it’s very likely that money, along with the reserves and some thoughtful budget-cutting, would allow the state to weather this recession without too much pain.

Instead, Pelosi’s bill would send – you might want to sit down for this – more than \$13.7 billion to Georgia, by my calculation. That’s beyond the \$5 billion-plus already authorized because of COVID-19.

For context, \$13.7 billion equals about half of all state funds being spent in Georgia’s current budget. It’s quadruple the currently projected hole in next year’s budget. Many other states would also get billions more than their currently projected shortfalls.

Why? So federal taxpayers could subsidize New York’s bloated budget – lawmakers there increased their budget after the pandemic struck, much of it unrelated to emergency spending – to the tune of \$35 billion. Illinois and New Jersey, saddled with two of the worst-funded public pensions in the nation, would get \$18 billion and \$16 billion, respectively.

These states – their lawmakers, and the voters who keep electing them – created their own problems. They like to boast of their generous public services, but now they’re using the pandemic as an excuse to make the rest of us cover their checks before they bounce.

Remember, much of the real problem, the one actually caused by the Coronavirus-induced shutdown of the economy, could be addressed by the money Congress has already appropriated. Could that problem grow in the coming months, including in Georgia? Of course – but that just underscores the insanity of forging ahead now, before we know how big the shortfalls are, with such an enormous bill.

For now, states need flexibility. That would cost zero – which, even by today’s free-spending standards, is a lot less than \$500 billion.

Kyle Wingfield is president and CEO of the Georgia Public Policy Foundation: [www.georgiapolicy.org](http://www.georgiapolicy.org).

## Letters to the Editor

The **Donalsonville News** reminds letter to the editor writers that shorter is better. Concise letters are not only better read, they are more likely to be published because limited space is available. Almost any point can be made in 350 words or fewer, so this is set as an upper level for length.

Unsigned letters, letters signed with a fictitious signature, copies of letters sent to public officials, or letters containing unverified or anonymous quotes will not be accepted.

We limit letters on a subject when we feel it has been thoroughly aired to the point of letters becoming repetitive. Also rejected are letters that are libelous, in bad taste, or are personal attacks on individuals or private businesses.

Writers must include addresses and telephone numbers. These are for identification purposes only, and will not be published. Send letters to the editor to P.O. Box 338, Donalsonville, GA 39845

# A special group helps repay a special debt

For much of my adult life, I have tried to return to my alma mater, the University of Georgia, a portion of what the institution has given me. I say “a portion” because I can never totally repay the debt I owe UGA for the honor of being a Georgia Bulldog. But that doesn’t mean I can’t try. After all, to whom much is given, much will be required. (Luke 12:48).

I have had the great honor to serve as president of the University of Georgia’s national alumni association and to have been a member of the UGA Foundation. I have endowed a professorship in Crisis Communications Leadership in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communications. Over the years, I have served on numerous committees, spoken at faculty retreats and to incoming Freshmen and hosted seminars.

However, nothing I have been involved in has been more rewarding or brought me more satisfaction than a program called the Yarbrough-Grady Fellowships. They are funded in part from revenues received from this column.

The program is administered by faculty and staff at the Grady College and has been ongoing for more than two decades. It began as a student support fund, allowing students in the college to attend conferences and seminars in their fields of interest as well as bringing noted professionals on campus to speak. It later morphed into internships until finally it was

constituted into its present form: Fellowships.

Truth-in-advertising requires me to say that I am funding fellowships for which I could never qualify and in a journalism school I could not get into today. This assumes, of course, I would have even been granted admission to the university, which, given my less-than-stellar academic performance in high school, would have been somewhere south of zero. Thankfully, I got in and out of the place when I did. Timing is everything.

This year, seven Yarbrough-Grady Fellows were among UGA’s 2020 graduating class. This group happened to be all female and all brighter than the proverbial penny. Their geography is diverse. Lindsey Deutsch, Caitlin Oh and

Julia Strother are from Cobb County. Serena Graham is from Forsyth County. Allison Chenard hails from North Carolina, Mary Gardner (MG) Coffee from Texas and Maddie Fiorante from Oregon.

Sadly, they, like the rest of the Seniors across the country in the 2020 graduating class, have been denied the privilege of a formal graduation ceremony because of the Coronavirus pandemic. That makes them and what they have accomplished no less special.

They join a group of Fellows from over the past decade who are scattered around the country in advertising agencies, PR firms, the media, non-profits and a number of Fortune 500 companies. Working with the staff at Grady, we are creating a special network for the Yarbrough-Grady Fellows

to stay in touch with each other. My firm expectation is that those Fellows in the workforce will serve as mentors to those about to join it. I can think of nothing more valuable that could come out of this program.

If anybody tells you they are self-made, they are blowing smoke. If we have accomplished anything positive in our lives, it is because someone helped us. We have all had a mentor or, more likely, mentors.

I was fortunate to have had a mentor named Jasper Dorsey who was himself a Grady grad and a passionate supporter of all things UGA. He was vice president of Southern Bell’s operations and found something redeemable in this young manager.

Jasper Dorsey taught me about the world of business. But, he also taught me about life. I am far from the only person to have been mentored by this wise man. He touched a lot of lives and we are all the better for it. One of his mantras was that we should all leave this world better than we found it. Otherwise, we have simply wasted time and space.

I will admit I have wasted a lot of time and space in my lifetime and I am not sure how much better this world is because I have been in it. But it is my hope that the young people who have been and will become a part of the Yarbrough-Grady Fellows program in the future will collectively and individually make a positive difference in this world. If so, they will have made my time here worthwhile and I will have gone a long way in repaying the debt I owe my beloved alma mater.

You can reach Dick Yarbrough at [dick@dickyarbrough.com](mailto:dick@dickyarbrough.com); at P.O. Box 725373, Atlanta, Georgia 31139 or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/dick-yarb](https://www.facebook.com/dick-yarb)



Dick Yarbrough



## Guest Editorial

Kyle Wingfield

# The first bite of this Summer’s battle

I felt it the other day while grilling hamburgers on the back deck – the sure, painful sign Summer is on the way. A yellow fly bite.

I vowed right then and there that this ummer would be different. I wasn’t going to let their annual onslaught of terrorism dictate my quality of life.

For those of you not in South Georgia, let me introduce you to the “yellow fly,” as we call them. They are yellow-bodied biting flies that viciously attack South Georgians for three-to-six weeks in late May-early June every year. Last year, they were so omnipresent and merciless that my family would have to run screaming from our house to our cars, keys in hand, draped in blankets, in a futile attempt to escape these bloodthirsty flies’ hellish fury.

Not so this Summer, I vowed.

The first bite sent me straight to the local feed and seed store, where I asked for the strongest insecticide known to man or beast.

I was handed a large plastic jug with a skull and



## Len’s Lines

Len Robbins

crossbones on it.

“You’re only supposed to use a little bit,” I was told.

“How much?” I asked.

“It tells you on the directions.”

So I went home and scanned the directions. The directions said something about only a licensed professional could use this product, that you must receive a permit from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Board of Health before using, that you must wear protective goggles and a HAZMAT suit, yada, yada, yada.

I lost interest when I saw the metric conversion chart. It if ain’t measured in pounds, me no comprehend.

So I poured about a pound into my sprayer, mixed it with a pound of water, and ventured into the backyard wearing shorts, a t-shirt and flip-flops. The yellow flies promptly starting chomping on the fresh meat, so I sprayed myself down to keep them away. I sprayed our entire yard twice – refilling the sprayer three times.

“That should do it,” I said to myself as I watched a passing bird crash to his death.

The next day, I grabbed up some chicken breasts and headed to the backyard grill. It took about four minutes outside before I started dancing around, the yellow flies savagely stinging the backside of my legs, leaving red welts.

“What the hey? I thought I got rid of those evil flying maggots,” I bellowed in frustration.

Apparently not so. See, yellow flies, also called deer flies or horse

flies, can’t be tamed by insecticides. Why? My theory is insecticides don’t work because yellow flies aren’t insects. Rather, they’re blood-sucking mammals.

As usual, science doesn’t support my theorem.

According to my subsequent research, science claims they are of the family Tabanidae (Latin for “Flying Beelzebub”). Experts say common pest-control methods don’t work on these yellow demons. They recommend a trap using a shiny ball and doctoring the ball with something sticky, which catches the yellow flies. This method was first perfected by The Professor on the “The Harlem Globetrotters Visit” episode of “Gilligan’s Island.”

Science can clone sheep and figure out how to get a computer in a watch, but can’t rid the earth of pesky yellow flies? Oh well.

Mother Nature’s most barbaric terrorists win this week. But next week, my yard will be riddled with sticky, shiny rubber balls.

So much for Yard of the Month.

© Len Robbins 2020

