

Questions for State Representative Candidates in District 179:

1. What is your position regarding (a) the consolidation of Glynn County and the City of Brunswick? b) Incorporation of St. Simons Island? c) Giving the citizens the right to vote on these questions?

Don Hogan (Incumbent):

As someone who has spent over five decades in Glynn County, and has served as a County Commissioner, I am in favor of the consolidation of Glynn County and the City of Brunswick. We are fortunate to have a thriving tourism industry in Glynn County, and I would love to see that industry be expanded on in Brunswick. By consolidating the County and the City of Brunswick, we are releasing major tax burdens that are placed on business who may want to bring their commerce into the area, but have decided not to due to the extra cost that it will bring their business. I am not in favor of incorporation of St. Simons Island, because of the potential economic impact that this could have on our county. Incorporation of St. Simons Island would increase the economic burden on businesses, which could in return damage Glynn County's reputation of being business friendly.

Julie Jordan:

My position on both issues is to proceed cautiously. While consolidation could fulfill its promise of lower costs and higher efficiencies, it risks some loss of community identity for Brunswick, and may disadvantage already under served populations. It also opens the issue of how a consolidated government would be structured to ensure fair representation to all.

Incorporation is even more complicated. In addition to governing structure there are questions about which if any services would continue to be the responsibility of the county, and how that body would be compensated. What of the infrastructure put in place using county money? Should Sea Island be included in the new city and, if so, should access be available to all? Might a middle ground be allowing the Island more self-governance, for example, giving more power to the Island Planning Commission?

As a legislator I would support the decisions of county residents on both these issues, but with some caveats. First, that the issues be studied extensively as to costs, lifestyle impacts, and best practices for making the change.

So while both consolidation and incorporation have obvious benefits for some residents of the county, they have ramifications for all. Some have advocated that, in the case of incorporation, only Island residents should vote. Though it is years out of date, a 2004 study by the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute estimated that incorporation would lower SSI property taxes by more than \$3 million but would cost the remainder of the county \$8 million in revenue. This leads to my conclusion that if either issue reaches the stage of a referendum that vote should be open to all. Restricting the decision to those most likely to benefit is unfair and is also bound to exacerbate any hostilities that arise out of the vote.

2. What is your position regarding drilling off the coast of Georgia?

Hogan:

As I've said, maintaining, and increasing tourism in Glynn County is a major priority of mine. I've seen firsthand what our expanded tourism industry has done for the County and for Glynn County Schools. That's why I was proud to serve as one of the sponsors to House Resolution 1041 this past session, which voiced opposition to offshore drilling and urged for support of Georgia's Coastal tourism and fishing industries. Protecting Georgia's Coast is incredibly important, and that's why I was also proud to help assist in securing \$650,000 on the state level for the Coastal Resources Division of the DNR, which will be used to clean up our waterways after the significant amount of storm damage we have seen over the past year.

Jordan:

Our Georgia coast is one of our most valuable and beautiful assets. Tourists come from all over the world to visit our beaches and marshes. Shrimpers, fishermen, and the seafood industry rely on our nutrient rich waters. These resources are threatened by offshore drilling, seismic testing, and unmanaged coastal development. We must protect and preserve our home and we must do it together!

3. What can you, as a state legislator, do to bring opportunities for economic growth to Glynn County?

Hogan:

As the State Representative for House District 179, I have worked hand in hand with our local governments to ensure our district's unique characteristics, such as our tourism industry and coastal attributes are well represented in Atlanta. I have had the honor to serve on the House Economic Development and Tourism industry, where we have worked hard to ensure Georgia continues to be the number one state to do business in. I also assisted in ensuring adequate funding was locked down in the state budget for the Coastal Greenway Project, a nature path that will run through Georgia's six coastal counties. This project has the potential to bring an immense amount of economic growth into Glynn County, and I am very excited to see its implementation. If elected for another term, I will continue working hard to make sure businesses feel they are welcome in Georgia, and in Glynn County.

Jordan:

In 2017, CNBC ranked Georgia number two for business and number one for economy. The advantages Georgia offers businesses include logistics, global access, quality of life and a talented workforce. However, these advantages are not always evident in a rural area and small community like Glynn County. We need to improve access to affordable housing, healthcare, high speed internet and child care.

I will work with the Georgia Department of Economic Development, our state's leading sales and marketing organization, whose activities include planning and mobilizing state resources for economic development. I will also collaborate with the House of Representatives Rural Development Council, which helps with infrastructure needs.

Georgia has been very successful at creating a climate for business. But it's not an equal climate statewide. Through input from the local community, county and statewide organizations, I will work with my colleagues in writing, sponsoring, and voting for bills that assist Glynn County in growing our local economy.

4. What do you feel are the top three issues facing Glynn County today?

Hogan:

From my perspective, the top three areas that need to be worked on in Glynn County today are resolving issues with the Joint Water Sewer Commission, encouraging economic growth in areas in Glynn County that have not seen a significant amount of economic impact, and continuing to work with the Environmental Protection Division and the Environmental Protection Agency to clean up Glynn County's Superfund sites.

Jordan:

In addition to protecting and preserving the environment, other key issues for me are economic development and a living wage! We must do more to prepare local residents for the changing economy so that we can be competitive in a global market. Increased job training and continued efforts to bring new industries into the area are key to expanding job opportunities in Glynn County.

To prepare our children to be college and career ready, we must expand access to quality Pre-K education. We need to provide Pre-K education and transportation to all our families. Over 25% of our children are growing up in poverty. They must have access to high quality schools and teachers in order to succeed. The benefits of early education include lower retention rates, higher graduation rates, and is one of the best investments we can make as a community to help our students compete in the job market and in life.

Access to affordable and quality health care continues to be a growing problem for Glynn County due to physician shortages and not enough primary care. We need to start by expanding Medicaid and close the healthcare gap for the uninsured. We must secure access to affordable, quality health care for all Georgians.

5. In your role as a state legislator, do you believe you should you be driving an agenda that benefits Glynn County or waiting for the County and/or City Commissioners to ask for your help?

Hogan:

My number one priority at the State Capitol is to ensure my constituents are well represented. This wouldn't be possible without constituent input, and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the citizens in District 179 for continuing to reach out to me with any concerns or questions that you have had. With that being said, it is also important in my role that I listen to any concerns that the County and City Commissioners have, given that I represent them too. However, at the end of the day, when I make decisions in the House Chamber, my number one priority is ensuring those decisions have a positive impact on all citizens in Glynn County.

Jordan:

As a state legislator, I believe my first responsibility is to my constituents and how proposed new laws and modifications to existing laws will affect them. I will bring all of your voices to Atlanta along with educators, who are under represented in the legislative body. I believe I should actively seek the input of local leaders, local business owners, teachers, and everyday constituents regarding our area's needs and how bills will aid or hinder in meeting those needs. From that perspective, I feel that as a state representative, I should be proactive in understanding what constituents want and need in terms of the legislative agenda.

6. What can you do, in your role, to help Glynn County address and solve the current issues with its infrastructure?

Hogan:

As District 179's State Representative, I will continue working with the Glynn County Board of Commissioners and the City of Brunswick to make sure a plan is put in place to address Glynn County's infrastructure. As someone who is an advocate of maintaining and expanding our tourism industry, I understand that we cannot do this without solid infrastructure in place.

Jordan:

Glynn County has critical infrastructure needs in several areas.

- Affordable housing is in short supply. The Federal Reserve says more than a third of the households in the county are "housing burdened and there are over 200 names on the local housing authorities waiting list for Section 8 and other subsidies. This contributes to a growing population of homeless, including many families.
- The Joint Commission on Water and Sewer is confronting over a \$100 million in infrastructure repair costs over the next 20 years and over \$200 million to meet projected expansion demands. These needs have begun to curtail economic development in the area.
- The county lacks any public transportation; a particular hardship for the elderly and many of the working poor.
- The county is increasingly faced with flood control and storm drainage issues.

As a state legislator I will acquaint myself with the large number of state and state-administered federal programs available to address these problems and assist local agencies in plugging into what can be obscure and difficult-to-access resources. Some problems may be regional in nature, making it imperative to work cooperatively with our First District Congressperson and my fellow coastal legislative representatives to identify and find solutions.