

# the **GROUP**

Strategy • Policy • Communications

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Zachary Williams, Chief Operating Officer, DeKalb County Government  
FROM: theGROUP  
DATE: January 16, 2026  
RE: DeKalb County Federal Government Relations Representation Scope

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### INTRODUCTION

theGROUP appreciates the opportunity to present a proposal to partner with DeKalb County on lobbying and government relations advisory services. As a leading bipartisan Washington, D.C., based strategy, policy, and consulting firm with more than three decades of experience connecting the public and private sectors, theGROUP is well positioned to contribute to DeKalb County's strategic engagements in pursuit of its's policy and regulatory objectives before the Trump Administration and Congress.

It is our goal to establish a long-term trusted advisor relationship with DeKalb County like we have enjoyed with many other clients over the years, including with our municipal partners. Given the significant breadth of work discussed with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and senior members of DeKalb County, and the fast-paced nature of the evolving federal government environment, this engagement will require leveraging high-level political relationships and providing direct visibility into a wide range of bipartisan policy dynamics with key committees of jurisdiction, caucuses, congressional leadership, and the Administration.

As proposed, the outlined scope of work below for lobbying and government relations representation will be executed by theGROUP for a **\$15,000 per month retainer**. This agreement will be entirely separate from the proposed CEO Executive Advisory work agreement.

### SCOPE OF WORK

- Act as liaison on behalf of DeKalb County with the U.S. Congress, specifically with key congressional committees with jurisdiction over appropriations and legislation of interest to the County.
- Act as a liaison on behalf of DeKalb County with Executive Branch agencies, with a focus on water infrastructure, housing, economic development, and safety.
- Assess, along with designated County staff, the County's federal needs and priorities, develop comprehensive federal policy agenda, and organize briefings for congressional staff.

- Elevate the County's agenda and initiatives before congressional and Administration stakeholders.
- Develop and implement effective short term and multi-year strategies and action plans that provide for current year and long-term gains.
- Track appropriations, federal legislation, Congressional dynamics, and overall federal trends.
- Identify potential federal opportunities for the County relative to appropriations, legislation, grants, etc., and help position the County to secure funding in the appropriations process.
- Provide strategic and tactical support for federal legislation, including but not limited to, annual appropriations act of the U.S. Congress, Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), Surface Transportation reauthorization, and other appropriate legislation in furtherance of the County's goals and objectives.
- Schedule regular meetings with DeKalb County Intergovernmental staff and provide timely responses to requests made by the CEO and County's Intergovernmental Affairs Manager.
- Schedule meetings for the CEO and County officials to present the County's priorities to the Georgia Congressional Delegation and other key federal stakeholders.
- Coordinate congressional letters of support from the Georgia Congressional Delegation for federal grants and appropriations requests when required by the County.
- Coordinate, as required, the communication between the County and the Georgia Congressional Delegation, other members of Congress, federal administration officials, and other key players.
- Inform the County's Intergovernmental Affairs Manager regarding any legislative or administrative initiatives believed to be potentially detrimental or beneficial to the County; and always be responsive to requests from the CEO for additional assignments within this scope of work.
- Support engagement and communication with the NACo and other relevant Washington-based organizations on matters of importance to the County as needed or directed by the CEO and/or her designee.

## **WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO**

Clients seek theGROUP because we know the people, processes, policies, and politics required to navigate Washington's ever-shifting legislative and advocacy terrain – and we get things done. Our effectiveness draws upon our collective work across political campaigns and legislative victories on behalf of Republicans and Democrats, various business sectors, and the federal government –

including within the Obama-Biden White House and alongside the Congressional leadership from both parties. In addition to elected and appointed officials, we have relationships with a diverse group of thought leaders who influence the conversation in Washington and play a major role in fostering and amplifying economic development and social policy both domestically and abroad. Our services include:

- Political Engagement Strategy
- Communications Strategy
- Federal Lobbying
- Policy Monitoring & Issue Analysis
- Intelligence Gathering
- Coalition Building
- Crisis Management
- Economic Development

#### **HIGHLIGHTED ACHIEVEMENTS ON BEHALF OF OUR GOVERNMENT CLIENTS**

theGROUP has significant experience in assisting our clients to achieve their business, reputational, regulatory, policy, and political objectives. These achievements include the following:

- theGROUP successfully engaged the office of the Trump Administration's United States Trade Ambassador to secure an exemption of shipping fees for U.S. companies exporting goods to the Island of Bermuda. Without the exemption, the proposed fees would have drastically impeded Bermuda's ability to import food, oil, and other essential resources, and drastically affected U.S. trade and employment interests.
- theGROUP worked with its client, the District of Columbia, and other stakeholders, including the NFL and the Washington Commanders, to secure what Bloomberg Government called "one of last year's most dramatic lobbying victories," as we used our deep understanding of the legislative process and exercised relationships with a group of bipartisan Members in the House and Senate pass legislation transferring control of 187 acres, which includes RFK Stadium from the federal government to the District of Columbia.
- theGROUP successfully secured \$755 million in COVID-19 relief funds for the District of Columbia.
- theGROUP supported the City of Atlanta in response to a series of major water main breaks that caused significant disruptions to constituents and secured an increase in the amount of federal funding that can be directed towards water infrastructure in Atlanta to \$100 million, up from \$75 million and advancing a \$1 million U.S. Army Corps of Engineers infrastructure assessment study on an expedited timeline.

- theGROUP assisted the City of Atlanta in securing a \$50 million RAISE Grant to advance the Atlanta Regional Commission's project to build a new multi-use trail to help connect schools, hospitals, job centers, and MARTA rail between the BeltLine and the Flint River Trail.

#### **HIGHLIGHTED ACHIEVEMENTS ON BEHALF OF OUR CORPORATE CLIENTS**

- theGROUP successfully engaged a major multinational manufacturing company, a major international labor union, and a senior Member of the United States Senate to reach an agreement to develop and build high-speed trains in a key county in the Senator's state. In this effort, theGROUP coordinated engagement among the Senator, the CEO, and an international union President to ensure all parties reached an acceptable agreement.
- theGROUP successfully advocated for several provisions that became part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) on behalf of several of our clients.
- We developed a CEO and executive engagement strategy for a major defense contractor to align company priorities with administration objectives, leading to support for the largest defense contract in American history. Additionally, we collaborated with congressional leaders on behalf of the contractor to secure the sale of a major aviation weapons platform to an international ally in the Middle East. Lastly, we worked closely with congressional leaders to secure funding for a naval amphibious warship that was not included in President Biden's original budget.
- We worked with a major financial services client to elevate their national profile before Congress and the Administration by highlighting shared value alignment of advancing financial inclusion and innovation. In raising their profile and building goodwill in Washington, we devised and executed a plan to expand partnerships and advance product adoption among government sponsored banks resulting in significant year-to-year revenue growth in high-priority sectors.
- Developed and coordinated a successful strategy to dramatically lower proposed changes to the higher education endowment tax in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, including eliminating the tax for small colleges with substantial endowments. Our work with Republican leadership in the Senate was critical to the overall success of the strategy. We worked strategically with other small colleges and coalitions to message and build awareness of the harm of the proposed tax increase and identified key champions in the Senate and important allies to secure legislative fixes to the legislation.

## MEET theGROUP



Jorge Aguilar, Principal – Jorge is a multifaceted professional who helps clients navigate the intricacies of the Democratic Caucus and develop compelling narratives and branding strategies. He spent nearly a decade with then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) in various roles. As Executive Director of Nancy Pelosi for Congress, he managed a multi-million-dollar budget, coordinated political communications and campaigns, and oversaw the whip operation for her successful Speaker re-elections in 2019 and 2021. As Press Secretary and Director of Hispanic Media, he led press operations for numerous high-profile international congressional trips and managed rapid response efforts. Prior to his tenure with Pelosi, he was involved in President Obama's successful 2012 campaign and worked on congressional campaigns for members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.



David Cleary, Principal – David is a public policy strategist with over 25 years of Capitol Hill experience. He helps clients achieve their business and political goals by advising on legislative and regulatory matters. He has served as Staff Director for the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee under Senators Lamar Alexander and Richard Burr, and as Chief of Staff to Senator Alexander. He also worked for the House Education and Workforce Committee under Chairman John Boehner and at the U.S. Department of Education.



Art Collins, Founder & Chairman – A trusted advisor and strategist with over three decades of experience in public policy, corporate communications, and political campaigns. Art counsels C-suite corporate leaders, board members, governments, non-profits, and political clients in areas such as information technology, financial services, energy, healthcare, national and homeland security, agriculture, transportation, and manufacturing. He serves as Chairman of the Board for the Morehouse School of Medicine and is on the boards of AFLAC, RLJ Lodging Trust, KB Home, and Board of Trustees of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art.

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Sudafi Henry, Managing Partner – One of the "500 most influential people in Washington," a lawyer and tactician experienced in navigating federal agencies and regulatory processes for technology firms, major banking and securities trade associations, and global transportation and retail corporations who develops public policy and political strategies for engaging Washington, DC and beyond. Sudafi previously served as Senior Advisor and Director of Legislative Affairs to then-Vice President Joe Biden and as Counsel and Senior Policy Advisor for then-House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD). He also held other senior positions within the U.S. House of Representatives.



Kwabena Nsiah, Principal – A seasoned political and policy advisor who develops comprehensive strategies for a broad range of stakeholders seeking to navigate immediate and long-term challenges and priorities. Most recently served as the Chief of Staff to former-Congressman Cedric Richmond (D-LA) and has held many other senior positions on Capitol Hill such as Policy Director for Congressional Black Caucus, Senior Policy Advisor for Sen. Martin Heinrich's (D-NM) Joint Economic Committee and Policy Advisor for former-Congressman Xavier Becerra's (D-CA) Leadership Office.



Estefanía Rodriguez, Principal – A lawyer with nearly a decade of experience on Capitol Hill who advises clients on the legislative and political dynamics in Congress and within the Administration. Estefania formulates and executes comprehensive policy and communications solutions for clients. Most recently, she served as Chief of Staff and Legislative Director to former-Congresswoman Carolyn Bourdeaux (D-GA). She previously served as Policy Director for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and Policy Advisor to several Members of Congress, including the former-Rep. and now Governor of Puerto Rico, Pedro R. Pierluisi. Estefania has a track record of passing bipartisan legislation, coordinating with the White House and Democratic leadership, and leveraging her deep relationships within key congressional Caucuses.



Pam Thiessen, Partner – A respected Capitol Hill veteran who has a proven track record of getting priorities accomplished no matter how difficult the environment. For more than 25 years, Pam was at the center of major policy successes on a broad range of domestic and international issues as the chief legislative strategist for former-Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), serving as his Staff Director for the Senate Committee on Homeland Security Governmental Affairs, Deputy Chief of Staff and Legislative Director. Prior to joining Portman's staff, Pam served in the Senate Republican leadership as Staff Director of the Senate Republican Policy Committee and in other senior roles in the U.S. Senate.



Darrel Thompson, Partner – An accomplished Capitol Hill professional whose expertise includes a focus on workplace rules and regulations, business and labor negotiations, economic development, and matters related to the manufacturing, transportation, and construction industries. He currently serves on the Corporate Advisory Council of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF). Previously, Darrel served as Deputy Chief of Staff to former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), and he held senior positions in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. He also served as Chief of Staff for the Barack Obama for Senate campaign.

LIST OF CLIENTS

