# George Ervin "Sonny" Perdue III

NOMINATED FOR

Secretary of Agriculture

**BASIC BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

George Ervin "Sonny" Perdue III was born on December 20, 1946 in Perry, Georgia, and "grew up on a diversified crop and dairy farm in Bonaire." Perdue, in 1965, graduated from Warner Robins High School, in Warner Robins, Georgia. In 1971, he graduated from the University of Georgia with a doctorate degree in veterinary medicine. [Sara Clarke, "[10 Things You Didn't Know About Sonny Perdue](https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2017-02-06/10-things-you-didnt-know-about-sonny-perdue)," *US News and World Report*, 02/06/17, "[Trump Picks Perdue For Agriculture Secretary, Ending Historically Long Search](http://www.agriculture.com/news/business/trump-picks-perdue-for-agriculture-secretary-ending-historically-long-search)," *Agri-Pulse Communications*, 01/18/17, Nancy Badertscher, "Moving On Up," *Macon Telegraph*, 04/16/95, "[Biography](http://sonnyperdue.georgia.gov/00/channel_modifieddate/0,2096,78006749_98067483,00.html)," SonnyPerdue.Georgia.gov, accessed 02/22/17, and "[Governor Sonny Perdue](https://www.nga.org/cms/home/governors/past-governors-bios/page_georgia/col2-content/main-content-list/title_perdue_sonny.default.html)," National Governors Association, accessed 02/22/17]

Sonny Perdue "is married to the former Mary Ruff of Atlanta, Georgia. The couple has four children and eleven grandchildren. Additionally, Sonny and Mary have served as foster parents for eight newborns awaiting adoption." Sonny Perdue is a "devout Southern Baptist." The Perdues used to "attend the First Baptist Church of Woodstock," and they now attend the Second Baptist Church of Warner Robins. ["[Trump picks former Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue for agriculture secretary](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-sonny-perdue-former-georgia-governor-agriculture-secretary/)," *CBS News*, 01/18/17, "[Biography](http://sonnyperdue.georgia.gov/00/channel_modifieddate/0,2096,78006749_98067483,00.html)," SonnyPerdue.Georgia.gov, accessed 02/22/17, and Will Hall, "[TRUMP FULFILLS PROMISE TO EVANGELICALS, AND MORE](http://christianindex.org/trump-fulfills-promise-evangelicals/)," *Louisiana Baptist Message*, 02/07/17]

After graduating college, Sonny Perdue "volunteered to serve his country in the U.S. Air Force, receiving an honorable discharge in 1974 with the rank of captain." Sonny Perdue was a veterinarian in the Air Force. ["[Governor Sonny Perdue](https://www.nga.org/cms/home/governors/past-governors-bios/page_georgia/col2-content/main-content-list/title_perdue_sonny.default.html)," National Governors Association, accessed 02/22/17, and Tom Crawford, “[Political Notes – A Stone’s throw from the 12th district](http://gareport.com/story/2008/05/07/political-notes-a-stone%E2%80%99s-throw-from-the-12th-district/),” *Tom Crawford’s Georgia Report*, 05/07/08]

After his time in the Air Force, Sonny Perdue moved "to North Carolina to begin his veterinary medicine career." [Nancy Badertscher, "Moving On Up," *Macon Telegraph*, 04/16/95]

Within three years of starting to work as a veterinarian in North Carolina, Perdue "moved home" to Bonaire, Georgia, where he "started two businesses from the ground up, concentrating in agribusiness and transportation." [Nancy Badertscher, "Moving On Up," *Macon Telegraph*, 04/16/95, and [Governor Sonny Perdue](https://www.nga.org/cms/home/governors/past-governors-bios/page_georgia/col2-content/main-content-list/title_perdue_sonny.default.html)," National Governors Association, accessed 02/22/17]

Sonny Perdue's "public service began in the 1980s when he served on the Houston County Planning and Zoning Board." [[Governor Sonny Perdue](https://www.nga.org/cms/home/governors/past-governors-bios/page_georgia/col2-content/main-content-list/title_perdue_sonny.default.html)," National Governors Association, accessed 02/22/17]

In 1990, Perdue was tapped by Democrats to run for the Georgia State Senate. He ran and won, and was a Georgia State Senator from 1991-2001. He became the majority leader "in just four years, followed by his election as president pro tempore." In 1998, he switched his party from Democrat to Republican because he "looked into his political future and didn't like what he saw." [[Governor Sonny Perdue](https://www.nga.org/cms/home/governors/past-governors-bios/page_georgia/col2-content/main-content-list/title_perdue_sonny.default.html)," National Governors Association, accessed 02/22/17, Michelle Hiskey, "Perdue looks to football past for leading Georgia in future", *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 12/22/02, and James Salzer, "[Sonny Perdue From Democrat to Georgia GOP Leader](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/sonny-perdue-from-democrat-georgia-gop-leader/MuYDrxfs0SbFRJQ00Gz4gO/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 08/11/02]

Sonny Perdue, in 2002, was elected the first GOP governor of Georgia since Reconstruction. Perdue served as Governor of Georgia from January 2003 to January 2011. ["[Donald Trump is Reportedly About to Name his Final Cabinet Pick](http://fortune.com/2017/01/18/trump-cabinet-sonny-perdue-usda/), *Associated Press*, 01/18/17]

In 2011, Sonny Perdue created "Perdue Partners, LLC," a global trading company. ["[Governor Sonny Perdue Launches Perdue Partners, LLC](http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110418006352/en/Governor-Sonny-Perdue-Launches-Perdue-Partners-LLC)," *BusinessWire*, 04/18/11]

Also in 2011, Sonny Perdue created "Perdue Consulting Group." [Fredreka Schouten, "[Many ex-governors work as lobbyists, consultants](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/08/11/former-governors-lobbying-consulting-revolving-door/2639355/)," *USA Today*, 08/11/13]

Sonny Perdue "has served on the board of the National Grain and Feed Association and is a former president of two regional groups, Georgia Feed and Grain and Southeastern Feed and Grain." ["[Trump Picks Perdue For Agriculture Secretary, Ending Historically Long Search](http://www.agriculture.com/news/business/trump-picks-perdue-for-agriculture-secretary-ending-historically-long-search)," *Agri-Pulse Communications*, 01/18/17]

Sonny Perdue, in 2013, was "elected to serve a three-year-term" on the Georgia Agribusiness Council. He has been Secretary of the Georgia Agribusiness Council since 2015. ["[Inside Agriculture](http://www.ga-agribusiness.org/index.cfm?show=10&mid=232)," Georgia Agribusiness Council Inc., 02/08/13, and Sonny Perdue, [OGE Form](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/5D6D47C0C5AE5048852580E1002C818A/$FILE/Perdue,%20George%20E.%20%20final278.pdf), 03/17]

Sonny Perdue is a mentor at MiddCORE. **MiddCORE is a "mentor-driven, experiential-learning program that builds skills, creates opportunities, and expands networks for tomorrow’s leaders and innovators." ["**[About](http://middcore.middlebury.edu/about/)**," MiddCORE, accessed 02/27/17 and "**[Sonny Perdue](http://middcore.middlebury.edu/mentors/sonny-perdue-former-governor-of-georgia/)**," MiddCORE, accessed 02/27/17]**

Sonny Perdue became a member of the Bipartisan Policy Center's Governors' Council in 2012. When he joined BPC, BPC announced Perdue would work to "bring pragmatic state-based perspectives to national issues." ["[Sonny Perdue](http://bipartisanpolicy.org/person/sonny-perdue/)," Bipartisan Policy Center, accessed 02/27/17 and "[Former Ga. Gov. Sonny Perdue joins nonprofit](http://www.wtvm.com/story/19595446/former-ga-gov-sonny-perdue-joins-nonprofit)," *Associated Press*, 09/20/12]

Sonny Perdue "has no relation or affiliation with the poultry producer, Perdue Farms." [Greg Trotter, "[Illinois farmers hopeful about Sonny Perdue, Trump's pick for ag secretary](http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-sonny-perdue-reaction-0120-biz-20170119-story.html)" *Chicago Tribune*, 01/19/17]

**BUSINESS AND REAL ESTATE ISSUES**

**Sonny Perdue "made his wealth" in the agriculture industry. He "got into the grain elevator business in 1976" and built Houston Fertilizer and Grain, "one of the largest grain dealers in the state." Media reports describe Houston Fertilizer and Grain as a company that "sells fertilizer, seed and grain to farmers and then buys the crops they produce." However, in Perdue's 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure, he said that the company "does not engage in agribusiness" but "simply holds, manages and rents commercial real estate in Bonaire, Fort Valley, and Calhoun, Georgia.**

Sonny Perdue "reportedly made his wealth in agriculture as owner of Houston Fertilizer and Grain and AGrowStar, Inc." ["DVM makes history as new Ga. Governor," *DVM 360*, 02/01/03]

Sonny Perdue "got into the grain elevator business in 1976" and built Houston Fertilizer and Grain, "one of the largest grain dealers in the state." Sonny Perdue "meshed his interest in agribusiness with his brotherinlaw's mechanical wizardry to open a grain elevator. Three years later, Perdue's brotherinlaw died, but Perdue kept [Houston Fertilizer and Grain] going first with his sister and then on his own." Houston Fertilizer and Grain "sells fertilizer, seed and grain to farmers and then buys the crops they produce." [Nancy Badertscher, "Moving On Up," *Macon Telegraph*, 04/16/95, and Alan Judd, "WATCHDOG: PERSONAL FINANCES; Perdue borrows millions; Governor invokes right to keep details private," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/18/09, and "[HOUSTON FERTILIZER & GRAIN CO., INC](https://ecorp.sos.ga.gov/BusinessSearch/BusinessInformation?businessId=538118&businessType=Domestic%20Profit%20Corporation)," Georgia Division of Corporations, accessed 03/17/17]

As of 2017, according to Sonny Perdue's Office of Government Ethics disclosure, Houston Fertilizer and Grain currently "does not engage in agribusiness" but "simply holds, manages and rents commercial real estate in Bonaire, Fort Valley, and Calhoun, Georgia." In the same disclosure form, Perdue reported that Houston Fertilizer and Grain's value is between $1,000,001 – $5,000,000 and that in the prior 12 months he had received $28,305 of "passive business ownership income" from the company. [Sonny Perdue, [OGE Form](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/5D6D47C0C5AE5048852580E1002C818A/$FILE/Perdue,%20George%20E.%20%20final278.pdf), 03/17]

**On Sonny Perdue's 2006 financial disclosure form, he said that "Houston Fertilizer owed AgGeorgia $877,985 on a loan dating to 1996."**

When Perdue ran for Governor for a second term in 2006, on his financial disclosure form he reported that "Houston Fertilizer owed AgGeorgia $877,985 on a loan dating to 1996." No such loan exists on Sonny Perdue's 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure. [Alan Judd, "WATCHDOG: PERSONAL FINANCES; Perdue borrows millions; Governor invokes right to keep details private," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/18/09, and Sonny Perdue, [OGE Form](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/5D6D47C0C5AE5048852580E1002C818A/$FILE/Perdue,%20George%20E.%20%20final278.pdf), 03/17]

**Sonny Perdue started a trucking company, Perdue Inc., with his wife Mary in 1993. Perdue Inc. started as a "small short hauling operation to assist farmers," but has since "expanded its goals to include logistics and transportation for other industries." The company "currently serves businesses throughout Georgia and the Southeastern United States." According to his 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure, Sonny Perdue received $598,591 of "passive business ownership income" in the prior 12 months from Perdue Inc. Perdue's daughter-in-law, Jessica Perdue, is currently the CFO of Perdue Inc.**

Sonny Perdue "also owns Perdue Inc., a trucking company that he and his wife, Mary, started in 1993. The company hauls grain, paper and other commodities across the Southeast." [Dan Chapman, "Perdue sparks ethics unease; His companies seek an edge through ports.; Critics question mixing of private, state business by a sitting governor," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 11/14/10]

Sonny Perdue incorporated Perdue Inc. "in conjunction with Houston Fertilizer and Grain." ["[About Us](http://www.perdueinc.com/about.html)," Perdue Inc., accessed 03/02/17]

Although Perdue Inc. started as a "small short hauling operation to assist farmers," the company has since "expanded its goals to include logistics and transportation for other industries." Perdue Inc. "currently serves businesses throughout Georgia and the Southeastern United States" but they are "always looking to expand [their] operations and customer base." ["[About Us](http://www.perdueinc.com/about.html)," Perdue Inc., accessed 03/02/17]

In 2009, Perdue Inc. was certified by the Georgia Ports Authority, and in 2010 was listed in the authority's "directory of firms seeking ports-related business." ["Report: Perdue met with Ga. port officials," *Associated Press*, 11/15/10]

According to his 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure, Sonny Perdue received $598,591 of "passive business ownership income" in the prior 12 months from Perdue Inc. He reported Perdue Inc.'s value as being between $1,000,001 and $5,000,000 and said that the company is a "Qualified Subchapter S Subsidiary owned by Perdue Business Holdings Inc." [Sonny Perdue, [OGE Form](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/5D6D47C0C5AE5048852580E1002C818A/$FILE/Perdue,%20George%20E.%20%20final278.pdf), 03/17]

Jessica Perdue, who is Sonny Perdue's daughter-in-law, is the current CFO of Perdue Inc., according to Georgia Secretary of State records. From at least December 2006 to October 2009, she appeared on the website as "Jessica Wood" with a "marketing" position. As of March 2017, Jessica Perdue does not appear on Perdue Inc.'s website. [Sonny Perdue, [Press Release](http://sonnyperdue.georgia.gov/00/press/detail/0,2668,78006749_161042670_161463335,00.html), 07/19/10, "[PERDUE INC.](https://ecorp.sos.ga.gov/BusinessSearch/BusinessInformation?businessId=874247&businessType=Domestic%20Profit%20Corporation)," Georgia Division of Corporations, accessed 03/17/17, "[Meet Our Team](http://web.archive.org/web/20091013001230/http://www.perdueinc.com/team.html)," Perdue Inc., accessed via archive.org, and "[Meet Our Team](http://www.perdueinc.com/team.html)," Perdue Inc., accessed 03/17/17]

**In 1996, Sonny Perdue created the "Perdue Family Limited Partnership." Three months later, Perdue's father sold 653.377 acres of his property to the Perdue Family Limited Partnership.**

In 1996, Sonny Perdue created the "Perdue Family Limited Partnership." Three months after the Perdue Family Limited Partnership was incorporated, his father, George Perdue Jr., sold Sonny Perdue 653.377 acres of his property, selling LL 232, 233, 234, 216, 248, and 249 in the 10th district to Perdue Family Limited Partnership on December 31, 1996. ["[Perdue Family Limited Partnership](https://ecorp.sos.ga.gov/BusinessSearch/BusinessInformation?businessId=993532&businessType=Domestic%20Limited%20Partnership)," Georgia Corporations Division, Georgia Secretary of State, 09/18/96 and [George Ervin Perdue Jr. and Perdue Family Limited Partnership](http://cotthosting.com/GAHoustonExternal/HTML5Viewer/ImageViewer.aspx?bHideCartFunctions=False&bIsRefresh=False), Warranty Deed, Houston County Superior Court, 12/31/96]

**In 1999, Perdue purchased AGrowStar, another agriculture business that "purchases and stores corn, wheat and soybeans from farmers, then markets and sells the crops to processors." On his 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure, Perdue indicated that he only receives a "passive business ownership income" from AGrowStar. However outside media has reported that Perdue "remains a managing member" of AGrowStar, "with an ownership interest and day-to-day responsibilities."**

In 1999, Sonny Perdue purchased AGrowStar. AGrowStar "purchases and stores corn, wheat and soybeans from farmers, then markets and sells the crops to processors" and has "3 million bushels of storage capacity at 11 sites in Georgia and South Carolina." ["Political News," *Associated Press*, 10/18/06 and James Salzer, Shannon McCaffrey, and Greg Bluestein, "[TRUMP TRANSITION; Trump expects Perdue to produce 'big results](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/donald-trump-expects-sonny-perdue-produce-big-results-chief/6pzbGpHpt5BMzJmAEndK3M/),'" *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/20/17]

In his 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure, Perdue described AGrowStar LLC as a "grain merchandising company." In the same form, he reported AGrowStar's value as being between $5,000,001 and $25,000,000 and said that the company is a "Qualified Subchapter S Subsidiary owned by Perdue Business Holdings Inc." Perdue reported $15,326 in "passive business ownership income" from AGrowStar LLC in the past 12 months. He also holds a "note receivable from AGrowStar, LLC" worth "$500,001 -$1,000,000," and he has received interest income of "$50,001 - $100,000" from the note in the past 12 months. [Sonny Perdue, [OGE Form](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/5D6D47C0C5AE5048852580E1002C818A/$FILE/Perdue,%20George%20E.%20%20final278.pdf), 03/17]

Although on his 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure Sonny Perdue indicated that he receives only a "passive business ownership income" from AGrowStar, outside media has reported that Perdue "remains a managing member -- with an ownership interest and day-to-day responsibilities" of AGrowStar. [Sonny Perdue, [OGE Form](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/5D6D47C0C5AE5048852580E1002C818A/$FILE/Perdue,%20George%20E.%20%20final278.pdf), 03/17 and Shannon McCaffrey and Aaron Gould Sheinin, "[For Sonny and David Perdue, trucking venture crashed](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/for-sonny-and-david-perdue-trucking-venture-crashed/BE7PulkqoFGLgxLAlg5EyH/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/12/17]

**In October 2014, AGrowStar filed a lawsuit that sought "at least $2.2 million from a North Carolina bank and a handful of executives from a now-defunct wheat mill as well as attorneys’ fees and punitive damages."**

In October 2014, AGrowStar filed a lawsuit that sought "at least $2.2 million from a North Carolina bank and a handful of executives from a now-defunct wheat mill as well as attorneys’ fees and punitive damages." [Greg Bluestein, "[The circle of life: Sonny Perdue hires Roy Barnes as his attorney](http://politics.blog.ajc.com/2014/12/15/the-circle-of-life-sonny-perdue-hires-roy-barnes-as-his-attorney/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 12/15/14]

As of 2015, AGrowStar LLC was the "petitioning creditor" in a case before the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of North Carolina titled " re: MIDSTATE MILLS, INC., Chapter 7 Debtor, CASE NO. 13-50033 (Bankr. W.D.N.C.)." ["MIDSTATE MILLS: Georgia State Suit Can Proceed," *Troubled Company Reporter*, November 16, 2015]

**The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has fined two of Sonny Perdue's companies for violations. In 1990, OSHA cited Houston Fertilizer and Grain for two violations, one of which was a "serious violation" that incurred a penalty of $200. More recently, in 2012, OSHA fined AGrowStar "$74,375 for 20 'serious violations'" including failing to develop a plan to "prevent amputation hazards by guarding machinery," failing to "develop an emergency action plan," and for "allowing combustible dust to accumulate." After the citation, an OHSA director said that AGrowStar had "'put workers at risk of serious injury or death by failing to implement proper safety and health protections.'"**

In 1990, Houston Fertilizer and Grain received an Occupational Safety and Health Administration complaint in which they were cited with two violations. One was labeled a serious violation under the Mechanical Power-Transmission Apparatus standard and incurred a penalty of $200. The other fell within the “other” category under The Control of Hazardous Energy, Lockout/Tagout standard with no monetary penalty. [[Houston Fertilizer & Grain, Violation, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, 09/14/90]

In 2012, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration fined AGrowStar "$74,375 for 20 'serious violations.'" AGrowStar was cited with serious violations for "allowing combustible dust to accumulate," and for failing to: "develop and implement lockout/tagout procedures for energy sources; develop a housekeeping program for areas where wheat, corn and soybean were stored; train industrial truck operators; prevent amputation hazards by guarding machinery; develop an emergency action plan; train on an annual basis employees who are exposed to fire or explosion hazards; secure a permit prior to entering a confined space to perform maintenance; conduct atmospheric testing before entering silos; list chemicals in the hazard communication program; provide fall protection; and properly install and repair electrical equipment." A serious violation is a violation where "there is substantial probability that death or serious physical harm could result from a hazard about which the employer knew or should have known." After the citation, the OHSA director at Atlanta's-East Area office said that AGrowStar "'put workers at risk of serious injury or death by failing to implement proper safety and health protections.'" [Christina Wright, "OSHA fines Fort Valley company $74K," *Macon Telegraph*, 02/29/12, and "Georgia's AGrowStar Cited by Us Department of Labor's Osha for Combustible Dust and Other Hazards; More Than $74,000 in Fines Proposed," *States News Service*, 02/29/12]

OHSA started an inspection at AGrowStar's grain handling facility in Fort Valley, Georgia site in September 2011 after getting a complaint. There had been an August 2011 incident "in which an overloaded bin of corn fell during the night," and although none of the facility's employees were injured, "OSHA inspected the entire facility for compliance." ["OHSA fines AGrowStar at Fort Valley," *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, 03/01/12, and Christina Wright "Houston/ Peach News Roundup," *Macon Telegraph*, 03/07/12]

**Sonny Perdue created "Perdue Consulting Group" in 2011, "just months" after he left the governorship. According to Perdue's 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure, Perdue Consulting Group "is not currently operating" and "has no current clients."**

Sonny Perdue launched "Perdue Consulting Group" in 2011, "just months" after stepping down from public office. On its website, Perdue Consulting Group said it offered clients "advice on public policy, government efficiency and economic development. In an interview, Sonny Perdue described the consulting operation as an entity created on the advice of his accountants and attorneys with little activity." [Fredreka Schouten, "[Many ex-governors work as lobbyists, consultants](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/08/11/former-governors-lobbying-consulting-revolving-door/2639355/)," *USA Today*, 08/11/13]

According to Sonny Perdue's 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure, Perdue Consulting Group "is not currently operating" and "has no current clients." Perdue also reported that Perdue Consulting Group is now owned by Perdue Partners LLC. [Sonny Perdue, [OGE Form](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/5D6D47C0C5AE5048852580E1002C818A/$FILE/Perdue,%20George%20E.%20%20final278.pdf), 03/17]

**According to the same 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure form, Sonny Perdue also received "$50,307" in "passive business ownership income" from ProAg Products LLC in the past 12 months.**

According to his 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure, Sonny Perdue received "$50,307" in "passive business ownership income" from ProAg Products LLC in the previous 12 months. According to Perdue's disclosure, ProAg Products LLC is a "grain market trading business and is owned by "Perdue Business Holdings." According to Georgia Secretary of State records, ProAg Products was registered in January 2016. [Sonny Perdue, [OGE Form](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/5D6D47C0C5AE5048852580E1002C818A/$FILE/Perdue,%20George%20E.%20%20final278.pdf), 03/17, and "[PRO AG PRODUCTS, LLC](https://ecorp.sos.ga.gov/BusinessSearch/BusinessInformation?businessId=2145699&businessType=Domestic%20Limited%20Liability%20Company)," Georgia Division of Corporations, accessed 03/17/17]

**According to his 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure, Sonny Perdue is no longer involved with Perdue Farms; Perdue had been the "owner-operator" of Perdue Farms as of 2011.**

In his last financial disclosure form from his time as Georgia Governor, filed in 2011, Sonny Perdue said that he was the owner-operator of Perdue Farms in Kathleen, GA and that he owned more than 5% interest in Perdue Farms. Perdue Farms is not listed on his 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure. [Sonny Perdue, [Personal Financial Disclosure](http://media.ethics.ga.gov/search/Financial/Financial_Details.aspx?FilerID=F2006001089), 06/29/11, and Sonny Perdue, [OGE Form](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/5D6D47C0C5AE5048852580E1002C818A/$FILE/Perdue,%20George%20E.%20%20final278.pdf), 03/17]

**While he was Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue left managers "in charge of day-to-day operations" for AGrowStar, Houston Fertilizer & Grain, and Perdue Inc. However, he refused to place his financial assets in a blind trust during his governorship because his businesses "would have suffered if he had put them in a blind trust." Disclosures showed he increased his assets by one third, or $6 million during his first term alone.**

Sonny Perdue left managers "in charge of day-to-day operations for his companies, AGrowStar LLC, Houston Fertilizer & Grain and Perdue Inc.," while he was Governor of Georgia. At the end of his term, he said that the mangers at the companies had "'done well without [his] assistance' these past eight years." Perdue's 2006 disclosure showed that "his net worth had increased by about one-third, to $6 million, during his first term." [Travis Fain, "Perdue’s business deals have raised some eyebrows," *Macon Telegraph*, 12/26/10, and James Salzer, Greg Bluestein, and Shannon McCaffrey, "[Trump Taps Perdue as Agriculture Chief](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/trump-taps-perdue-agriculture-chief/sBixvQJApY44lrZ1awpS5L/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 1/19/17]

Sonny Perdue has said he did not place his financial interests in a blind trust during his governorship because his businesses, Houston Fertilizer & Grain Co. and AGrowStar LLC, "would have suffered if he had put them in a blind trust." ["Perdue must repay $21M business loan by March 1," *Associated Press*, 01/10/09]

**Sonny Perdue, in is 2017 ethics letter detailing the steps he would take to avoid conflicts of interest if he is confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture, said that he would "put most of his assets into a blind trust" and would resign from various paid positions he holds. However, in the same letter he said that he would not be divesting from Perdue Properties LLC or Perdue Real Estate Holdings LLC, but that during his time as Agriculture Secretary "these entities will remain dormant."**

Sonny Perdue, in his 2017 letter to USDA's designated ethics official detailing the steps he would take to avoid conflicts of interest as Secretary of Agriculture, said that upon his confirmation as Secretary he would "put most of his assets into a blind trust" and "recuse himself from decisions that could affect his grain company, AGrowStar LLC, until a promissory note from the firm is repaid." He also said he would "'resign from'" his "'positions with the National Grain and Feed Association, Perdue Management Holdings LLC, the Bipartisan Policy Center Governor's Council, the Georgia Agribusiness Council, and Perdue Business Holdings, Inc.'" [Ian Kullgren, "[See Sonny Perdue's ethics forms](http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-agriculture/2017/03/sonny-perdue-ethics-disclosures-for-usda-secretary-219183)," *Politico*, 03/13/17, and [Sonny Perdue to Stuart Bender](https://www.agri-pulse.com/ext/resources/pdfs/Sonny-Perdue-OGE-Ethics-Agreement.pdf), 03/07/17]

However, in the same 2017 ethics letter, Sonny Perdue wrote that he was "the sole owner" of Perdue Properties LLC and Perdue Real Estate Holdings LLC, and that, upon his confirmation as Secretary as Agriculture, he will not divest from these companies. However, he has said that both "entities are dormant and have no assets and generate no income" and that during his time as Agriculture Secretary "these entities will remain dormant" and that he will "not perform any services for these entities, except that I will comply with any requirements involving legal filings, taxes and fees that are necessary to maintain these entities while they are dormant." [[Sonny Perdue to Stuart Bender](https://www.agri-pulse.com/ext/resources/pdfs/Sonny-Perdue-OGE-Ethics-Agreement.pdf), 03/07/17]

**On his 2017 Office of Government of Ethics disclosure, Sonny Perdue also listed Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust, Soque River Construction LLC, Perdue Business Holdings Inc., Legacy 13:22 LLC, TW Rocky Mount Real Estate LLC, and TWAS Rocky Mount LLC in the "other assets and income" section.**

In addition to the above entities, Sonny Perdue also listed the following entities under the "other assets and income" section of his March 2017 Office of Government Ethics disclosure: Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust, FALF LLC, Soque River Construction LLC, Perdue Business Holdings Inc., Legacy 13:22 LLC, TW Rocky Mount Real Estate LLC, and TWAS Rocky Mount LLC. [Sonny Perdue, [OGE Form](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/5D6D47C0C5AE5048852580E1002C818A/$FILE/Perdue,%20George%20E.%20%20final278.pdf), 03/17]

**ETHICAL ISSUES**

**Although Sonny Perdue was a strong proponent of ethics reform while he was in the Georgia State Senate in the 1990s, and one of his first acts as Governor of Georgia was to sign an executive order "establishing a new code of ethics for executive branch employees" to "restore public trust in state government," during his governorship, Perdue "became a target of frequent criticism that he was failing to honor his own ethics pledge."**

When he was a Georgia State Senator, Sonny Perdue, in 1992, supported HB 1125, an ethics reform bill to lower campaign contribution limits and require greater lobbyist disclosure. In 1996, he cosponsored SB 489, a bill to prohibit lobbyists from spending any money on legislators or public employees. In 1999, he authored, and was the sole sponsor of, SB 33, legislation to prohibit former public officers from lobbying the state within one year of service. [[HB 1125](https://readux.library.emory.edu/books/emory:918g4/pdf/#page=2), Georgia Senate, p. 1565 - 1577, 03/31/92 and Norma Wagner, "Ethics bill signals new era," *The Atlanta Journal and* Constitution, 04/01/92 and [SB 489](http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/Archives/19951996/leg/fulltext/sb489.htm), Georgia Senate, 01/09/96 and [SB 33](http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/Archives/19992000/leg/sum/sb33.htm), Georgia Senate, 01/15/99]

In 2003, in his initial months as Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue said his "'first goal as governor'" was to "'restore public trust in state government by changing the culture of state government'" because "'people have become cynical about their government.'" [Eric Lipton And Steve Eder, "[Ethics Questions Dogged Agriculture Nominee as Georgia Governor](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/us/politics/sonny-perdue-georgia.html?_r=1&mtrref=undefined)," *New York Times*, 03/08/17]

In an effort to help "restore public trust," one of Sonny Perdue's "first acts after he was sworn in as governor in January 2003 was to sign an executive order establishing a new code of ethics for executive branch employees. The order, which applied to the governor himself, prohibited state employees from using their powers for 'any financial or other personal benefit' and barred them from taking any gifts worth more than $25." [Eric Lipton And Steve Eder, "[Ethics Questions Dogged Agriculture Nominee as Georgia Governor,](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/us/politics/sonny-perdue-georgia.html?_r=1&mtrref=undefined&gwh=39C69CC5E79441A8ECF6A5F55B8345E5&gwt=pay)" *New York Times*, 03/08/17]

However, Sonny Perdue "became a target of frequent criticism that he was failing to honor his own ethics pledge during his eight years as governor." Before he left office at the end of 2011, "13 complaints had been filed against Mr. Perdue with the State Ethics Commission," and on two occasions the commission "ruled that the governor had violated state ethics laws." [Eric Lipton And Steve Eder, "[Ethics Questions Dogged Agriculture Nominee as Georgia Governor](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/us/politics/sonny-perdue-georgia.html?_r=1&mtrref=undefined)," *New York Times*, 03/08/17]

**In April 2002, the Georgia Ethics Commission forced Sonny Perdue to return $30,000 in illegal contributions to his gubernatorial campaign. Purdue had illegally "transferred $10,000 from his state Senate campaign fund into his gubernatorial campaign fund." He also received donations "of $10,000 each" from two companies for which he was the Chief Financial Officer. These donations violated the state law that "only one donation can be made by companies that share 'common ownership or control.'"**

In his 2002 gubernatorial campaign, Sonny Perdue illegally "transferred $10,000 from his state Senate campaign fund into his gubernatorial campaign fund." He ultimately had to return the funds. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* editorialized that Perdue's "missteps… [were] even more disappointing, because as a member of the Senate Ethics Committee, he championed efforts to strengthen Georgia ethics laws." [Editorial, "No Excuse for Breaking Ethics Laws," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/22/02]

After making his illegal campaign contribution from his state senate campaign to his gubernatorial campaign, Sonny Perdue said he didn't think he had "done anything wrong." [John McCosh, "Candidate Defends his Funds Transfer," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/22/02]

In the same 2002 campaign, Sonny Perdue received donations "of $10,000 each from Perdue Inc. and Houston Fertilizer & Grain Co." According to data from the Georgia Secretary of State's website, "Perdue [was] Chief Financial Officer of both companies” at the time and was also “sole stockholder of Perdue Inc." Because Perdue was CFO of both companies, these donations were a "violation of a law that says only one donation can be made by companies that share 'common ownership or control.'" [John McCosh, "Perdue backtracks on funds transfer," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/20/02 and Editorial, "No Excuse for Breaking Ethics Laws," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/22/02]

However, Sonny Perdue defended the "$10,000 donations from Perdue Inc. and Houston Fertilizer and Grain Co." Perdue's campaign's communications director, Dan McLagan, said that "although Perdue is an officer in Perdue Inc., he does not direct the company and does not own stock in it." McLagan said that Perdue's wife was "'the sole stockholder in Perdue Inc.'" [John McCosh, "Perdue backtracks on funds transfer," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/20/02, and Editorial, "OUR OPINIONS: No excuse for breaking ethics laws," *Atlanta-Journal Constitution*, 02/22/02]

In April 2002, the Georgia Ethics Commission "ordered former state Sen. Sonny Perdue to return $30,000 in improper contributions to his campaign for the Republican nomination for governor." The Commission did not fine Perdue because of the "'transparent nature' of the contributions and Perdue's quick and voluntary response to the violation." ["Ethics Panel Fines Perdue, Hears Other Charges," *Associated Press*, 04/20/02]

**Sonny Perdue, in 2005, was the first Georgia Governor to be fined by the Georgia State Ethics Commission. After an investigation, the commission fined Perdue "$1,900 for campaign disclosure law violations and ordered him to repay more than $18,000 in campaign contributions, most of that to his wife, Mary, for using her company's [Perdue Inc.'s] airplane."**

In 2004, the Chairman of the Georgia Democratic Party filed a complaint against Sonny Perdue, alleging that, as a gubernatorial candidate, he had "violated campaign finance limits by using his company plane for campaign-related flights when the company, Perdue Inc., had reached its contribution limit." The Georgia State Ethics Commission launched an investigation. [Ben Smith, "Legislature / State politics: Top Democrat hits Perdue on ethics," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/30/04 and Dick Pettys, "Perdue fined, ordered to repay $18,000 for campaign violations," *Associated Press*, 06/17/05]

In June 2005, after its investigation into Sonny Perdue, the Georgia State Ethics Commission "fined Gov. Sonny Perdue $1,900 for campaign disclosure law violations and ordered him to repay more than $18,000 in campaign contributions, most of that to his wife for using her company's [Perdue Inc.'s] airplane." The Commission ruled that Perdue's flights on a corporate airplane belonging to "a company owned by First Lady Mary Perdue" constituted an in-kind contribution of $12,155 for the 187 hours Perdue used the plane." The company, "Perdue Inc., had already given Perdue's campaign the maximum donation allowed by state contribution laws, making the use of the plane an excessive contribution. Perdue was fined $1,000 and ordered to repay Perdue Inc. the $12,155." [Dick Pettys, "Perdue fined, ordered to repay $18,000 for campaign violations," *Associated Press*, 06/17/05, and Brandon Larrabee, "[Perdue Will Pay Fines in Ethics Deal](http://onlineathens.com/stories/061805/new_20050618047.shtml#.WLSZCBLyuRs)," *Athens Banner-Herald*, 06/18/05]

Additionally, Sonny Perdue was ordered to pay $900 "for a series of reporting errors on the campaign disclosures" and to "return $6,000 worth of contributions from the snare." [Brandon Larrabee, "[Perdue Will Pay Fines in Ethics Deal](http://onlineathens.com/stories/061805/new_20050618047.shtml#.WLSZCBLyuRs)," *Athens Banner-Herald*, 6/18/05]

**Sonny Perdue was defensive about his ethics violations, saying the investigations into the violations were "politically motivated" and that he had only committed "technical" violations. Shortly after the investigations, the executive secretary of the Georgia State Ethics Commission was fired from his job. He has blamed Perdue for his being fired.**

Sonny Perdue defended his ethics violations as "technical," and said that the investigations into his campaign's finances were "politically motivated." [Eric Lipton And Steve Eder, "[Ethics Questions Dogged Agriculture Nominee as Georgia Governor,](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/us/politics/sonny-perdue-georgia.html?_r=1&mtrref=undefined&gwh=39C69CC5E79441A8ECF6A5F55B8345E5&gwt=pay)" *New York Times*, 03/08/17]

Coincidentally, in 2006, shortly after the investigations took place, "Teddy Lee, the executive secretary of the State Ethics Commission, was fired from his job." Lee has "blamed Mr. Perdue for his firing."[Eric Lipton And Steve Eder, "[Ethics Questions Dogged Agriculture Nominee as Georgia Governor,](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/us/politics/sonny-perdue-georgia.html?_r=1&mtrref=undefined&gwh=39C69CC5E79441A8ECF6A5F55B8345E5&gwt=pay)" *New York Times*, 03/08/17]

**In addition to the two times that the Georgia State Ethics Commission found Sonny Perdue in violation of state ethics laws, he had many other scandals during his time in public office. Perdue, in 2003, bought land that was adjacent to Oaky Woods, a "huge tract of forest." In 2004, when the state of Georgia had an opportunity to buy 20,000 acres of the Oaky Woods forest from Weyerhaeuser Corporation, "Perdue refused to sign the agreement, saying the state couldn't afford it." As a result, Oaky Woods was ultimately sold to developers for "$1,600 an acre," which made the value of Perdue's property "more than" double. The month before Perdue left office, "the State Properties Commission, of which Perdue was chairman, "voted to buy slightly more than 10,000 acres of Oaky Woods" for about "$29 million, or $2,874 per acre."**

Sonny Perdue, in 2003, bought land in Houston County, Georgia. The land was adjacent to Oaky Woods, a "20,000-acre wildlife preserve." To buy the land, Larry O'Neal, Sonny Perdue's lawyer, "set up two limited liability companies. One [was] called Mayson - an apparent merging of the first names of Sonny Perdue and his wife, Mary." Sonny Perdue "negotiated on behalf of Maryson to buy land adjacent to Oaky Woods but that he had no financial interest in [Oaky Woods]." ["[Perdue Ethics Charges Linger](http://chronicle.augusta.com/metro/2006-12-27/perdue-ethics-charges-linger)," *Augusta Chronicle,* 12/27/06, James Salazar, "[Diverted funds aid Sonny Perdue projects](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/diverted-funds-aid-sonny-perdue-projects/PXuc3t1GClJRPVYfOQMm5L/)" *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/13/17 and Georgina Gustin, "[Sonny Perdue, Trump’s Agriculture Pick, Could Roll Back Forest Protections](https://insideclimatenews.org/news/06022017/sonny-perdue-georgia-usda-agriculture-secretary-national-forest-service-climate-change)," *Inside Climate News,* 02/07/17]

In 2004, the State of Georgia "had a chance to buy the 20,000-acre wildlife preserve from timber giant Weyerhaeuser Corp. for about $30 million." The Nature Conservancy "offered to buy a huge tract of forest once owned by timber giant Weyerhaeuser, if the state agreed to compensate the group for the purchase later." However, Sonny Perdue "refused to sign the agreement, saying the state couldn't afford it." [James Salazar, "[Diverted funds aid Sonny Perdue projects](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/diverted-funds-aid-sonny-perdue-projects/PXuc3t1GClJRPVYfOQMm5L/)" *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/13/17 and Georgina Gustin, "[Sonny Perdue, Trump’s Agriculture Pick, Could Roll Back Forest Protections](https://insideclimatenews.org/news/06022017/sonny-perdue-georgia-usda-agriculture-secretary-national-forest-service-climate-change)," *Inside Climate News,* 02/07/17]

As a result, the same year "Oaky Woods was sold to developers from Houston County, who made plans to build up to 35,000 homes on it." The developers "paid $1,600 an acre" and "the value of Perdue's nearby land more than doubled." [James Salazar, "[Diverted funds aid Sonny Perdue projects](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/diverted-funds-aid-sonny-perdue-projects/PXuc3t1GClJRPVYfOQMm5L/)" *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/13/17 and Georgina Gustin, "[Sonny Perdue, Trump’s Agriculture Pick, Could Roll Back Forest Protections](https://insideclimatenews.org/news/06022017/sonny-perdue-georgia-usda-agriculture-secretary-national-forest-service-climate-change)," *Inside Climate News,* 02/07/17]

In 2010, in "the month before Perdue left office," the State Properties Commission "voted to buy slightly more than 10,000 acres of Oaky Woods" for about "$29 million, or $2,874 per acre. The state paid about the same for half the property as the developers did for the entire woods six years earlier, despite the downturn in land values across the nation." Even though Perdue's spokesman said that "Perdue went out of his way to avoid being directly involved in the negotiations for Oaky Woods," Perdue "served as chairman of the State Properties Commission, which ultimately voted to buy Oaky Woods." [James Salazar, "[Diverted funds aid Sonny Perdue projects](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/diverted-funds-aid-sonny-perdue-projects/PXuc3t1GClJRPVYfOQMm5L/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/13/17]

**Sonny Perdue, in 2004, "spent $2 million to buy about 20 acres of Florida land" that was "appraised at only $185,700." Because the land was adjacent to a new road being constructed that would run to Disney World, the value of the land would "almost certainly skyrocket in value."**

Sonny Perdue, in 2004, "spent $2 million to buy about 20 acres of Florida land just miles from Disney World." Despite the high price Perdue paid, the land was "appraised at only $185,700. Because the property had a lower appraised value, Perdue was "paying less in taxes." ["[Perdue's $2 million Florida land deal questioned](http://www.daltondailycitizen.com/news/perdue-s-million-florida-land-deal-questioned/article_cbd46d8c-5953-531e-8bed-ba19605d5e18.html)," *Daily News,* 08/17/06]

The land Sonny Perdue purchased was adjacent to "a new toll road" that being constructed that ran "directly to Disney World." Real estate experts said that because the area around Disney World had "been experiencing rapid growth…property like Perdue’s [would] almost certainly skyrocket in value." As of 2006, some estimated that " if Perdue sold half-acre lots on just half of his property" he would stand "to make millions of dollars." ["[Perdue's $2 million Florida land deal questioned](http://www.daltondailycitizen.com/news/perdue-s-million-florida-land-deal-questioned/article_cbd46d8c-5953-531e-8bed-ba19605d5e18.html)," *Daily News,* 08/17/06]

**Sonny Perdue bought the land from "Georgia mega-developer" and "political supporter" Stanley Thomas, who Perdue had previously appointed to the State Board of Economic Development, a position seen as "a plum post for a developer." After buying the Florida property, Perdue was able, through a legal mechanism, to secure a "$300,000 tax deferral." Before he bought the land, Sonny Perdue had asked Thomas "to help find an investment that qualified for the tax deferral." When faced with allegations of cronyism, Perdue claimed there was "nothing improper" about his buying the land from Thomas.**

Sonny Perdue bought the land from Fourth Quarter Properties, owned by Stanley Thomas, a "Georgia mega-developer," "wealthy Republican donor," and "political supporter" of Perdue. The previous year, in August 2003, Perdue "appointed Thomas to the state Board of Economic Development," a position seen as "a plum post for a developer." Just weeks after Perdue bought the land, Fourth Quarter Properties "donated a whopping $250,000" to the Georgia Republican Party. Perdue had also, on at least one occasion, used Thomas' "fleet of planes" "at least once to get to a West Coast fundraiser." Sonny Perdue "bought the Florida land sight unseen" from Stan Thomas, spending "a quarter of his net worth on the land without ever seeing it." ["[Perdue's $2 million Florida land deal questioned](http://www.daltondailycitizen.com/news/perdue-s-million-florida-land-deal-questioned/article_cbd46d8c-5953-531e-8bed-ba19605d5e18.html)," *Daily News,* 08/17/06, and "Investigation shines light on Fla. land deal; Report says Perdue transaction might be part of more complicated development deal," *Macon Telegraph*, 12/21/06]

Sonny Perdue, in 2006, secured a "$300,000 tax deferral" through the Florida real estate deal. He "postponed the federal tax" on the Florida property "through a legal mechanism that allows taxpayers to reinvest capital gains from investment property in similar property of equal or greater value." Perdue bought the 20 acres in Florida "with proceeds of a Georgia property sale" of the land he "inherited from his father." Had Perdue kept the money he inherited from the property sale, he "would have been liable for a 15 percent federal capital gains tax and a 6 percent state income tax." Because Perdue purchased the land "just one day before a 180-day grace period expired," he could "reinvest money from the Georgia sale without facing hefty taxes." ["Investigation shines light on Fla. land deal; Report says Perdue transaction might be part of more complicated development deal," *Macon Telegraph*, 12/21/06, and Bill Shipp, "[Connect the Dots on Perdue's Land Deal](http://onlineathens.com/stories/122406/opinion_20061224073.shtml#.WMTFmhIrKCS)," *Athens Banner-Herald*, 12/24/06]

Sonny Perdue's critics accused him of using the plot of land in Florida as a "parking place for his money" to avoid paying "$300,000 in federal taxes on $2 million he had received from the sale of land owned by the Perdue family in Georgia." Before he bought the Florida land, Sonny Perdue had asked Thomas "to help find an investment that qualified for the tax deferral." ["Investigation shines light on Fla. land deal; Report says Perdue transaction might be part of more complicated development deal," *Macon Telegraph*, 12/21/06, and Bill Shipp, "[Connect the Dots on Perdue's Land Deal](http://onlineathens.com/stories/122406/opinion_20061224073.shtml#.WMTFwhIrKCS)," *Athens Banner-Herald*, 12/24/06]

In his 2006 gubernatorial campaign, Democrats accused Sonny Perdue "of cronyism" because of his "financial dealings with Thomas" and "whether Thomas would expect favors in return," and called for an investigation into whether Perdue had violated anti-corruption laws. ["Investigation shines light on Fla. land deal; Report says Perdue transaction might be part of more complicated development deal," *Macon Telegraph*, 12/21/06, and "[Perdue's $2 million Florida land deal questioned](http://www.daltondailycitizen.com/news/perdue-s-million-florida-land-deal-questioned/article_cbd46d8c-5953-531e-8bed-ba19605d5e18.html)," *Daily News,* 08/17/06]

Sonny Perdue responded there "was nothing improper about the deal" and that he "bought the land in Florida because purchasing property in Georgia while he was governor would have created a conflict of interest." In response to accusations, Perdue also said that he "‘like[d] land.’" ["[Perdue's $2 million Florida land deal questioned](http://www.daltondailycitizen.com/news/perdue-s-million-florida-land-deal-questioned/article_cbd46d8c-5953-531e-8bed-ba19605d5e18.html)," *Daily News,* 08/17/06]

In October 2006, Georgia Democratic Party Chairman Bobby Kahn filed "an ethics complaint against Perdue," alleging that he "had underestimated the value of the land on his financial disclosure form to make his net worth appear lower." The complaint alleged that "'such a conscious effort to suppress information violates both the letter and the spirit of the personal financial disclosure requirements.'" Perdue had "listed his net worth at $6 million." [Shannon McCaffrey, "Value of Perdue's Florida land skyrockets," *Associated Press*, 06/29/07 and Tom Crawford, "[Perdue strikes back at Taylor over land deal](http://gareport.com/story/2006/10/11/perdue-strikes-back-at-taylor-over-land-deal/)," Tom Crawford's Georgia Report Blog, 10/11/06]

**In 2005, Georgia State Representative Larry O'Neal, who was also Sonny Perdue's personal lawyer, introduced a bill that allowed Perdue "to avoid paying $100,000 in taxes" on the sale of the land he inherited from his father in Georgia. Perdue signed the bill into law, and said he was unaware of the tax break "until he was informed of it by his accountant."**

In April 2005, Sonny Perdue "signed a sweeping tax package into law that allowed him to avoid paying $100,000 in taxes" on the sale of the land he inherited from his father in Georgia. Portions of the law that applied to "out-of-state land buys were made retroactive to Jan. 1 2004, meaning they applied to Perdue's transaction in Florida." Without “the backdated tax break," Perdue would "have had to pay taxes on money he made in 2004 by selling property he owned in Georgia. " [Raisa Habersham, "[3 Minutes, 1 Tax Bill, $100,000 for Sonny Perdue](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/minutes-tax-bill-100-000-for-sonny-perdue/7tIHq7lCoiiAPHJtSREMBP/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 10/01/06 and Shannon McCaffrey, "Value of Perdue's Florida land skyrockets," *Associated Press*, 6/29/07]

The tax bill that Perdue signed was "sponsored by state Rep. Larry O'Neal," a Republican legislator who was also "Perdue's lawyer." O'Neal had previously "worked on private land deals for Perdue." Perdue signed the bill into law on April 12, 2005, "three days before taxes were due." [Shannon McCaffrey, "Value of Perdue's Florida land skyrockets," *Associated Press*, 6/29/07, and Raisa Habersham, "[3 Minutes, 1 Tax Bill, $100,000 for Sonny Perdue](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/minutes-tax-bill-100-000-for-sonny-perdue/7tIHq7lCoiiAPHJtSREMBP/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 10/01/06]

Even though his personal lawyer introduced the bill, Sonny Perdue said that "he did not know about the tax break until he was informed of it by his accountant." A former employee of the Georgia Democratic party filed an ethics complaint against Larry O'Neal, "alleging that he misused his office to engineer a tax break for the governor." A legislative ethics panel, made up entirely of Republicans, dismissed the complaint against O'Neal "based on a technicality." [Shannon McCaffrey, "Value of Perdue's Florida land skyrockets," *Associated Press*, 6/29/07, and Tom Crawford, "[GOP leaders dismiss O’Neal ethics complaint](http://gareport.com/story/2007/02/15/gop-leaders-dismiss-o%E2%80%99neal-ethics-complaint/)," Tom Crawford's Georgia Report Blog, 02/15/07]

In October 2006, Sonny Perdue, in an appearance on a radio program called "The Right Side with Shelley Wynter," was asked how an average Georgian could "have a friend of mine write me a bill that saves me a $100,000 on my taxes." Perdue replied, "Well, you get elected governor, Brian. I appreciate your question. That was really nice. I appreciate you being a fan." [Betty Clermont, "[Georgia Governor Perdue has Record of Hypocrisy and Ethical Violations](http://www.politicalaffairs.net/georgia-governor-perdue-has-record-of-hypocrisy-and-ethical-violations/)," Political Affairs Blog, 10/26/06] (*Audio of Perdue's comment is available* [*here*](http://alt.cimedia.com/ajc/audio/getelected.mp3)*.*)

**In his time in public office, Sonny Perdue received thousands of dollars in benefits and gifts. When he was a state legislator in 1996, lobbyists gave him playoff World Series tickets. State records show that during his time as governor he collected "at least $25,000 worth of benefits or gifts," which ranged "from tickets to a Nascar race and football games to flights paid for by Altria, the tobacco company, and by CSX, the railroad giant."**

Sonny Perdue, in 1996, received playoff and World Series tickets as a gift from lobbyists. [Ken Foskett, "Most Gifts by Lobbyists Face a Halt; But Legislature Committees Could Accept Meals, Travel," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/02/96]

In 2000, when asked if he had received gifts from lobbyists, Sonny Perdue said, "'If you go back far enough, you could probably find some things on my reports.'" [Richard Whitt, "Lobbyists Wield Influence with Dinners, Dollars," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/12/00]

State records show that, during his time as Georgia Governor, Sonny Perdue collected "at least $25,000 worth of benefits or gifts," which ranged "from tickets to a Nascar race and football games to flights paid for by Altria, the tobacco company, and by CSX, the railroad giant." In particular, he received a "$12,000 private jet ride to New York from an IBM lobbyist" and a "$5,000 jet ride from a tobacco lobbyist." [Eric Lipton and Steve Eder, "[Ethics Questions Dogged Agriculture Nominee as Georgia Governor](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/us/politics/sonny-perdue-georgia.html?_r=1&mtrref=undefined)," *New York Times*, 03/08/17 and Ian Kullgren, "[How Perdue’s power benefits his friends](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/03/donald-trump-sonny-perdue-agriculture-235982)," *Politico*, 03/13/17]

**In 2002, Sonny Perdue's company, Houston Fertilizer and Grain owed "a combined $3,400 in taxes and fees dating from 1997" on two pieces of property in Peach County, Georgia. Houston Fertilizer and Grain was also late paying taxes in Gordon County, Georgia in 2002.**

As of 2002, Sonny Perdue's company, Houston Fertilizer and Grain Co., Inc. owed taxes on two pieces of property in Peach County, Georgia. Houston Fertilizer and Grain Co., Inc. owed "a combined $3,400 in taxes and fees dating from 1997." Perdue said that he "never received notice from Peach County" that "back taxes were due." Houston Fertilizer and Grain Co., Inc. had appealed "its property valuation and was excused from paying taxes for some years until the case was settled. But taxes not affected by the appeals resulted in an outstanding tab of $3,400." [Dick Pettys, "GOP gubernatorial nominee owes property taxes in two counties," *Associated Press*, 09/05/02, and "Perdue company behind on taxes; Campaign: Bill to be paid today," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 09/06/02]

In 2002, Houston Fertilizer and Grain Co., Inc. was also late paying taxes in Gordon County, Georgia. Sonny Perdue's campaign said that Houston Fertilizer and Grain didn't get the bills because they were "sent to the wrong address." Houston Fertilizer and Grain Co., Inc. owed "$1,577," which was "more than eight months past due." ["Perdue company behind on taxes; Campaign: Bill to be paid today," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 09/06/02]

**In 2003, Sonny Perdue appointed key executives at two of his companies to the Georgia Agricultural Exposition Authority and the Georgia Development Authority, respectively. The same year, one of the companies, AGrowStar, opened "two new facilities" and increased total grain capacity to "nearly 2 million bushels."**

In 2003, Sonny Perdue appointed Danny Brown, the president of AGrowStar, to the Georgia Agricultural Exposition Authority. The positon is "unpaid but comes with a small expense account." In the same year, "AGrowStar, under Brown’s leadership, opened two new facilities… The acquisitions increased the company’s total grain capacity to nearly 2 million bushels." [Ian Kullgren, "[How Perdue’s power benefits his friends](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/03/donald-trump-sonny-perdue-agriculture-235982)," *Politico*, 03/13/17]

Also in 2003, Sonny Perdue appointed Jacob Redmond, who is the general manager for Houston Fertilizer, "to be the agriculture representative on the Georgia Development Authority." [Ian Kullgren, "[How Perdue’s power benefits his friends](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/03/donald-trump-sonny-perdue-agriculture-235982)," *Politico*, 03/13/17]

**While he was Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue faced a "series of allegations" about his improper use of state aircraft. In 2003, he was accused of illegally flying a state helicopter without a license. In 2004, a Georgia resident filed an ethics complaint against him for "using a state helicopter to drop off his son at a high school football game" and later the same year another Georgia resident filed a complaint against him for using a state plane for a "one-hour flight" from El Salvador to Honduras.**

Sonny Perdue, in 2003, drew "complaints from the head of the Georgia State Patrol's aviation unit" after he handled the controls of a state-owned helicopter on the way to a Georgia Southern University Football match. An attorney for the Georgia State Patrol chastised Perdue, saying, "'This is state property. It's not a governor's play toy. There's not a whole lot of room for error.'" ["[Ga. Gov. Accused of Unlicensed Piloting](http://www.michigansthumb.com/news/article/Ga-Gov-Accused-of-Unlicensed-Piloting-7365663.php)," *Associated Press*, 04/27/03]

In January 2004, a "Forsyth County resident filed a separate ethics complaint against Perdue for using a state helicopter to drop off his son at a high school football game.

[Ben Smith, "Legislature / State politics: Top Democrat hits Perdue on ethics," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/30/04]

In 2004, a Georgia citizen filed a complaint against Perdue for using a state plane for a "one-hour flight" from El Salvador to Honduras. Perdue went to El Salvador to represent President George W. Bush at the inauguration of the Salvadorian president, but at every stop of the trip Perdue lobbied "for Georgia's proposal to become the headquarters of the Free Trade Area of the Americas." As such, Perdue's spokesman said, the expense of the state plane "wasn't done for Perdue's personal convenience" but was done as "'justifiable state business.'" The complaint came "on top of a series of allegations about Perdue's use of state aircraft." [Walter Jones, "[Perdue's use of aircraft an issue](http://jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/082404/geo_16447351.shtml#.WMxo9xIrJPM)," *Morris News Service*, 08/24/04]

**When he was Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue "rewarded donors with appointments to positions in state government." His cousin's husband also got a government job shortly after he became Governor, and he appointed his own legal adviser to the Georgia Supreme Court.**

Mary Sue Murray and James A. Franklin donated $1,000 and $3,240 respectively to Sonny Perdue's 2002 gubernatorial race. In 2003, Perdue appointed both Murray and Franklin to the state board of education. [Ian Kullgren, "[How Perdue’s power benefits his friends](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/03/donald-trump-sonny-perdue-agriculture-235982)," *Politico*, 03/13/17]

In 2002, Clarence Victor Beadles, who was the CEO of a lumber company in Moultrie, Georgia, donated $2,500 to Perdue's gubernatorial campaign. Beadles, in 2003 "got an appointment to the Georgia Forestry Commission." [Ian Kullgren, "[How Perdue’s power benefits his friends](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/03/donald-trump-sonny-perdue-agriculture-235982)," *Politico*, 03/13/17]

Also in 2002, John Pearson, a contractor in Cumming, Georgia, donated $8,000 to Perdue's campaign. Sonny Perdue, in 2003, appointed Pearson " to the Construction Industry Licensing Board." [Ian Kullgren, "[How Perdue’s power benefits his friends](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/03/donald-trump-sonny-perdue-agriculture-235982)," *Politico*, 03/13/17]

In June 2003, five months after Sonny Perdue took office as Governor, his first cousin's husband, Jim Floyd, got a job as "agriculture and youth director for the state-operated Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter." Perdue said that he only learned that Floyd was on payroll "after the fact" and he saw "nothing wrong with it." [Dick Pettys, "Dems question hiring of Perdue relative at Ag Center," *Associated Press*, 10/09/05]

Sonny Perdue, in 2005, "named his own legal adviser to a vacancy on the Georgia Supreme Court." [Dick Pettys, "Perdue taps his own legal adviser for Supreme Court vacancy," *Associated Press*, 06/08/05, *Georgia Trend*, October 1, 2005]

**In a period from 2007 to 2009, Sonny Perdue owed "$300 in late fees for not filing reports," though his campaign lawyer argued that because "Perdue shifted all his leftover campaign money to a federal political action committee" he did not "need to file state reports for his campaign."**

According to Georgia State Ethics Commission records, as of May 2011 Sonny Perdue was one of over "2,000 officials, candidates and committees" that collectively owed "$300,000 in late filing fees." ["Lawmakers owe $11K in late filing fees," *Tifton Gazette*, 05/08/11]

As of May 2011, Sonny Perdue owed "$300 in late fees for not filing reports from 2007-2009… His campaign lawyer, Robert Highsmith, pointed out that Perdue shifted all his leftover campaign money to a federal political action committee. Highsmith said the former governor didn't need to file state reports for his campaign." [James Salzer, "Legislators owe Georgia money; Nearly 50 haven't paid late fees on campaign finance reports," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 05/08/11]

**When he was Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue "lobbied the Department of Transportation to widen Georgia 96," a road that ran adjacent to Perdue's property. DOT approved the project and, in December 2012, a court order allowed DOT to take Perdue's properties "within the bounds of the required right of way of Georgia Highway Project" near State Route 96, as long as the Department paid Perdue a "sum of money estimated as just compensation" for the properties taken.**

When he was Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue "lobbied the Department of Transportation to widen Georgia 96, a highway that runs through Bonaire in Houston County, to four lanes and move the road north which would locate it adjacent to property that Perdue owns." DOT "approved the project" and scheduled it to begin in 2013. The project was "the widening and reconstruction of SR 96 from I-75 to SR 247 for a total of 8.97 miles." [Tom Crawford, "[Perdue's role in road project questioned](http://gareport.com/story/2010/05/11/perdues-role-in-road-project-questioned/)," Tom Crawford's Georgia Report Blog, 05/11/10, and [Approved Revised Project Concept Report](https://gtas.dot.ga.gov/322450-/Concept%20Report/322450-_REVCR_Oct2009.pdf), Department of Transportation State of Georgia, 10/29/09]

In a court order in December 2012, the Superior Court of Houston County, Georgia allowed the Department of Transportation to take Sonny Perdue's property "within the bounds of the required right of way of Georgia Highway Project CSNHS-0008-00 (407)" for a "sum of money estimated as just compensation" for Parcel No.15 in Land Lot 12 of the 11th District in Houston County, which is "1.108 acres of land" near "State Route 96." A second order by the same court allowed the Department of Transportation to take Sonny Perdue's property "within the bounds of the required right of way of Georgia Highway Project CSNHS-0008-00 (407)" for a "sum of money estimated as just compensation" for Parcel No.71 in Land Lot 76 of the 11th District in Houston County, which is ".002 acres of land" near "State Route 96." [Department of Transportation vs. George Ervin Perdue III, Case No. 2012-V-107590, and Department of Transportation vs. George Ervin Perdue III, Case No. 2012-V-107591]

**While he was Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue took out millions of dollars in loans from AgGeorgia Farm Credit. Most notably, in September 2008, Perdue took out a "21 million business loan," "the largest ever made" to a sitting governor in Georgia. AgGeorgia allowed Perdue to take out the loan even though he put up an unusually small amount of collateral. While neither Perdue nor the bank's CEO would discuss anything about the loan, of the 23 farmers and agribusiness owners who governed the bank, Perdue had received campaign contributions from "eight board members, their close relatives or companies they control."**

In March 2007, Sonny Perdue "borrowed $10 million from AgGeorgia." Later that year, in December, "Perdue took out another loan from AgGeorgia, this one for $3 million." On September 26, 2008, Perdue "and his two agricultural businesses" took out a "21 million business loan" and he "repaid the two loans from 2007. The $21 million was due five months later." [Alan Judd, "WATCHDOG: PERSONAL FINANCES; Perdue borrows millions; Governor invokes right to keep details private," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/18/09 and Alan Judd, "Perdue's big loan still a puzzle; He says he paid on time, but no documents from lenders show that," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 05/31/09]

The $21 million loan was " apparently the largest ever to a sitting governor in Georgia." Perdue would not "say in detail why he took out the loan, or how he plan[ned] to pay it off." However, "public records and interviews suggest the governor got the loan under remarkable circumstances." AgGeorgia Farm Credit, a farm credit bank in Perry, GA., "allowed Perdue to put up collateral worth less than 20 percent of the loan's value," which is significantly less than the level insisted on by commercial lenders. [Alan Judd, "WATCHDOG: PERSONAL FINANCES; Perdue borrows millions; Governor invokes right to keep details private," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/18/09, Alan Judd, "Perdue's big loan still a puzzle; He says he paid on time, but no documents from lenders show that," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 05/31/09, and "Perdue must repay $21M business loan by March 1," *Associated Press*, 01/19/09]

For the $21 million-dollar loan, "AgGeorgia lent to Perdue even though his collateral covered just 19 percent of the loan value. The deed that secured the loan shows Perdue put up 13 pieces of real estate --- including his home in Bonaire --- worth about $1.6 million. He also pledged his businesses and all their assets --- another $2.3 million, according to his 2006 financial disclosure." [Alan Judd, "WATCHDOG: PERSONAL FINANCES; Perdue borrows millions; Governor invokes right to keep details private," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/18/09]

AgGeorgia is governed by a "board of 23 farmers and agribusiness owners," eight of whom contributed $6,770 to Sonny Perdue's 2006 reelection campaign, from themselves, "their close relatives or companies they control." When asked for comment in January 2009, William Newberry Jr., the chief executive of AgGeorgia, "declined comment on the loan." [Alan Judd, "WATCHDOG: PERSONAL FINANCES; Perdue borrows millions; Governor invokes right to keep details private," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/18/09]

In May 2009, Sonny Perdue claimed he had paid off the $21 million loan but the status of the loan remained unclear as three months after the due date the lender had "filed no public documents indicating the loan [had] been repaid, or refinanced, or reconciled in any other fashion." Even after claiming he repaid the loan, Perdue "declined…to release documents to verify the loan's payment." [Alan Judd, "Perdue's big loan still a puzzle; He says he paid on time, but no documents from lenders show that," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 05/31/09]

After the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* initially reported about the loan's existence, "several Georgia government watchdogs and newspaper editorials urged Perdue to explain why he borrowed the money and how he planned to pay it back by the due date," but Perdue "stayed silent" on the issue. [Alan Judd, "Perdue's big loan still a puzzle; He says he paid on time, but no documents from lenders show that," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 05/31/09]

In May 2009, Sonny Perdue's spokesman, Bert Brantley, said that even though Perdue "had repaid the loan, he still had an outstanding line of credit with the lender" and that "rising grain prices… necessitated the large amount of credit." [Alan Judd, "Perdue's big loan still a puzzle; He says he paid on time, but no documents from lenders show that," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 05/31/09]

**In the latter half of his governorship, Sonny Perdue and the heads of his companies "tapped the expertise of state workers at the Ports Authority and the departments of economic development and agriculture several times to boost the governor's grain and trucking businesses." Perdue's business associates and other high-level employees met with state officials to discuss "selling as many as 30 shipping containers of grain overseas" and how Perdue's companies could become "'a player'" at the port. Defending the meetings, Perdue's spokesman said that Perdue was "simply gathering information… for his post-gubernatorial business life."**

In the latter half of his governorship, Perdue and his companies' employees "tapped the expertise of state workers at the Ports Authority and the departments of economic development and agriculture several times to boost the governor's grain and trucking businesses**."** [Dan Chapman, "Perdue sparks ethics unease; His companies seek an edge through ports.; Critics question mixing of private, state business by a sitting governor," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 11/14/10]

In April 2008, "AGrowStar president Danny Brown met with state economic development and agriculture employees." In an internal email about Brown's meeting, Heidi Green, the state's No. 2 economic development official, wrote, "'Fyi… this is the Gov's company.'" In the meeting, AGrowStar "wanted help with selling as many as 30 shipping containers of grain overseas." Emails between AGrowStar and state departments of economic development and agriculture "underscore[d] the governor's interest in tapping the huge Chinese grain market." AGrowStar also "seemed interested in selling grain to Cuba." [Dan Chapman, "Perdue sparks ethics unease; His companies seek an edge through ports.; Critics question mixing of private, state business by a sitting governor," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 11/14/10]

In September 2009, Sonny Perdue, and two business associates who ran Perdue Inc., "met in the Georgia Ports Authority in Savannah with a half-dozen state employees." According to an internal memo circulated by a sales manager at the ports, Perdue "'wanted to know if there are any particular services which we feel could help [Perdue Inc.] here." [Dan Chapman, "Perdue sparks ethics unease; His companies seek an edge through ports.; Critics question mixing of private, state business by a sitting governor," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 11/14/10]

Sonny Perdue's business associates met with port officials multiple times between January 2009 and November 2010. One of the port staff said of the meetings, "'of course their main question was how they can become a player here.'" [Dan Chapman, "Perdue sparks ethics unease; His companies seek an edge through ports.; Critics question mixing of private, state business by a sitting governor," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 11/14/10]

A sales manager at the ports said in an August 2010 email, "Perdue's businesses '[were] laying the groundwork so that when the governor leaves office they [would] be in a position to start up an operation.'" Emails obtained through open records requests showed that Perdue's contact "with the ports authority seem[ed] designed to grow his business opportunities abroad, perhaps in China and Cuba." [Dan Chapman, "Perdue sparks ethics unease; His companies seek an edge through ports.; Critics question mixing of private, state business by a sitting governor," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 11/14/10, "Georgia Governor Reported Using GPA for Private Business; Atlanta newspaper cites meetings with port authority for grain, trucking companies," *Journal of Commerce*, 11/18/10, and "Report: Perdue met with Ga. port officials," *Associated Press*, 11/15/10]

Bert Brantley, Sonny Perdue's spokesman, said of the meetings that Perdue was "simply gathering information… for his post-gubernatorial business life" and that "Perdue's interactions with ports and other state officials are no different from those of any businessman seeking information." [Dan Chapman, "Perdue sparks ethics unease; His companies seek an edge through ports.; Critics question mixing of private, state business by a sitting governor," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 11/14/10 and

**In April 2011, shortly after he left the governorship, Sonny Perdue created "Perdue Partners, LLC" which was a "'a global exporting business focusing on importing, exporting and trucking operations through the port' of Savannah."**

In April 2011, four months after he left the governorship, Sonny Perdue "created Perdue Partners, LLC 'a global exporting business focusing on importing, exporting and trucking operations through the port' of Savannah." The other partners of Perdue Partners are David Perdue, Trey Childress and Heidi Green. [Kathy Gill, "[Will Georgia Voters Embrace Political Corruption on Tuesday](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathy-gill/political-corruption-on-t_b_6090426.html)?" *Huffington Post*, 11/03/14, and "[Governor Sonny Perdue Launches Perdue Partners, LLC](http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110418006352/en/Governor-Sonny-Perdue-Launches-Perdue-Partners-LLC)," *BusinessWire*, 04/18/11]

**Sonny Perdue appointed the other three members of Perdue Partners to political office while he was Governor of Georgia, including appointing his cousin David Perdue "to the Georgia Port Authority board of directors," where David Perdue "took votes on tens of millions of dollars worth of infrastructure improvements designed to streamline and improve transportation at the busy gateway." Sonny Perdue also visited China three times while he was governor, with his most recent trip focusing "'on the ports.'"**

Sonny Perdue "in preparation" for his "post-governorship private business venture" of Perdue Partners, appointed David Perdue, Trey Childress and Heidi Green, to political office while he was Governor. [Kathy Gill, "[Will Georgia Voters Embrace Political Corruption on Tuesday](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathy-gill/political-corruption-on-t_b_6090426.html)?" *Huffington Post*, 11/03/14]

Sonny Perdue, in July 2007, "appointed Trey Childress as director of the Office of Planning and Budget, which made him a member of the governing board of OneGeorgia Authority." OneGeorgia Authority "provides grants and loans for economic development activities in the state." [Kathy Gill, "[Will Georgia Voters Embrace Political Corruption on Tuesday](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathy-gill/political-corruption-on-t_b_6090426.html)?" *Huffington Post*, 11/03/14]

In July 2010, Sonny Perdue appointed Heidi Green "as head of the state Department of Economic Development." Green "had been serving as deputy director." [Kathy Gill, "[Will Georgia Voters Embrace Political Corruption on Tuesday](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathy-gill/political-corruption-on-t_b_6090426.html)?" *Huffington Post*, 11/03/14]

Also in July 2010, Sonny Perdue appointed his cousin David Perdue "to the Georgia Port Authority board of directors," where he "took votes on tens of millions of dollars worth of infrastructure improvements designed to streamline and improve transportation at the busy gateway." Board appointees "have the power to approve bids, contracts, [and] leases." The appointment "raised suggestions of nepotism." Less than three years later, in February 2013, a trucking company owned by Perdue Partners started hauling cargo "at the port while David was on the board making important decisions about the port’s operation." A Georgia watchdog group said the Perdues' business was "'benefitting from votes'" that David Perdue took on the board. In addition to David Perdue, Sonny Perdue "appointed or reappointed every member of the Georgia Ports Authority board" during his time as governor." [Kathy Gill, "[Will Georgia Voters Embrace Political Corruption on Tuesday](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathy-gill/political-corruption-on-t_b_6090426.html)?" *Huffington Post*, 11/03/14, Shannon McCaffrey, "[Perdue’s trucking business overlapped with ports tenure](http://www.myajc.com/news/perdue-trucking-business-overlapped-with-ports-tenure/UZo0IRPqhr40tiLXt5wRbO/#f955bd08.3495384.735424)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 07/10/14 and "Report: Perdue met with Ga. port officials," *Associated Press*, 11/15/10]

While he was Georgia Governor, Sonny Perdue made three visits to China "on the taxpayer dime." His most recent trip as governor, in September 2010, "'focused on the ports.'" Later, Perdue Partners "promoted Sonny Perdue’s international contacts, including his work opening state offices for Georgia in Hong Kong and Beijing while he was governor." [Kathy Gill, "[Will Georgia Voters Embrace Political Corruption on Tuesday](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathy-gill/political-corruption-on-t_b_6090426.html)?" *Huffington Post*, 11/03/14, and Shannon McCaffrey and Aaron Gould Sheinin, "[For Sonny and David Perdue, trucking venture crashed](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/for-sonny-and-david-perdue-trucking-venture-crashed/BE7PulkqoFGLgxLAlg5EyH/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/12/17]

**In December 2012, Perdue Partners LLC acquired trucking company Benton Express, and renamed it Benton Global. Many of Benton Global's contacts were in China, "where Sonny Perdue had contacts." Benton Global went out of business in early 2015. The Trump Administration has said Benton Global went out of business because "Benton's top customers unexpectedly went bankrupt," but independent financial analysts have said that Benton's closure was the result of "bad leadership," and particularly "'the result of poor management that manifested in low pay and aging equipment.'"**

In December 2012, Perdue Partners LLC "acquired Benton Express, a family-owned regional trucking company that had been in business for 78 years, and renamed it Benton Global." Records "show that a Sonny Perdue holding company had a $1 million stake in Benton, which was run by two top former Perdue aides who later became his business partners." [Shannon McCaffrey and Aaron Gould Sheinin, "[For Sonny and David Perdue, trucking venture crashed](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/for-sonny-and-david-perdue-trucking-venture-crashed/BE7PulkqoFGLgxLAlg5EyH/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/12/17, and Shannon McCaffrey, "[Perdue's Trucking Business Overlapped with Ports Tenure](http://www.myajc.com/news/perdue-trucking-business-overlapped-with-ports-tenure/UZo0IRPqhr40tiLXt5wRbO/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 7/10/14]

In February 2013, "the newly-renamed Benton Global began hauling cargo directly from the port. Many of the clients are companies from China, where Sonny Perdue had contacts." [Shannon McCaffrey, "[Perdue's Trucking Business Overlapped with Ports Tenure](http://www.myajc.com/news/perdue-trucking-business-overlapped-with-ports-tenure/UZo0IRPqhr40tiLXt5wRbO/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 7/10/14]

Benton Global went out of business in early 2015. The Trump Transition team has said that "Benton's top customers unexpectedly went bankrupt and the company never recovered." [Shannon McCaffrey and Aaron Gould Sheinin, "[For Sonny and David Perdue, trucking venture crashed](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/for-sonny-and-david-perdue-trucking-venture-crashed/BE7PulkqoFGLgxLAlg5EyH/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/12/17]

However, independent financial analysts have said that Benton's failure was the result of "bad leadership," and that "'Benton's closure appears to have been the result of poor management that manifested in low pay and aging equipment, among other things, while the industry has just enjoyed two prosperous years.'" [Shannon McCaffrey and Aaron Gould Sheinin, "[For Sonny and David Perdue, trucking venture crashed](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/for-sonny-and-david-perdue-trucking-venture-crashed/BE7PulkqoFGLgxLAlg5EyH/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/12/17]

**According to Benton Global's bankruptcy paperwork, Benton "closed its doors with 577 unsecured creditors," owing some creditors "tens of thousands of dollars." Benton Global had two secured creditors, AloStar Bank of Commerce and Perdue Holdings LLC, Sonny Perdue's holding company. As of February 2017, AloStar Bank had been repaid, but Perdue Holdings had yet to be repaid. Benton Global also "still has unpaid tax liens totaling several thousand dollars."**

When Benton Global filed for bankruptcy in March 2015, it listed two secured creditors, meaning they were the creditors "first among all creditors to be paid." The two secured creditors were the AloStar Bank of Commerce and Perdue Holdings LLC, a holding company owned by Sonny Perdue. As of February 2017, AloStar Bank had been repaid, but Perdue Holdings had yet to be repaid. Benton "closed its doors with 577 unsecured creditors. Some were owed less than $100, and some were owed tens of thousands of dollars, court records show." [Shannon McCaffrey and Aaron Gould Sheinin, "[For Sonny and David Perdue, trucking venture crashed](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/for-sonny-and-david-perdue-trucking-venture-crashed/BE7PulkqoFGLgxLAlg5EyH/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/12/17]

Additionally, Benton Global "still has unpaid tax liens totaling several thousand dollars with Fulton County, the city of Atlanta and the state of Mississippi. There is also a lien pending with the state of Tennessee, although officials there would not provide details, citing taxpayer privacy protections. The Trump spokeswoman said Tennessee officials have acknowledged Benton actually had a credit with the state after a miscalculation." [Shannon McCaffrey and Aaron Gould Sheinin, "[For Sonny and David Perdue, trucking venture crashed](http://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/for-sonny-and-david-perdue-trucking-venture-crashed/BE7PulkqoFGLgxLAlg5EyH/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/12/17]

**LAND AND RELATED ISSUES**

**Sonny Perdue has praised land conservation efforts, saying that he wants to conserve land, water, energy, and "all of our resources" for "future generations," and that "consuming less means we'll have more to pass along to [future] generations." Conservation groups have had "warm words" to say about Perdue following his nomination for Secretary of Agriculture. However, Perdue has "not offered a vision for overseeing federal lands."**

Sonny Perdue, in 2008, said "I'm a fiscal conservative. I believe in conserving the money first. And then the land, energy, and water, and all of our resources of our state for future generations. I want to make conservation a very positive word in so many ways. I don’t want just to think of it as sacrificially in any of those areas. Consuming less means that we'll have more to pass along to generations, and I really believe that's the way our parents' generations thought of that, and they wanted a land and an opportunity for Georgians for generations to come to have plenty." [Sonny Perdue, "[Silver Lake meeting with Gov. Sonny Perdue](https://vimeo.com/937849)," Vimeo, 2008, accessed 03/01/17, 01:05]

In 2009, Sonny Perdue said, "This culture of conservation is the future of where we are, not only in water, energy, and land. We've become all too acutely aware of the fact that these wonderful, abundant resources in Georgia are abundant but not infinite, and frankly we need to treat them as such." [Sonny Perdue, "[Governor Sonny Perdue thanks Georgia's Green Industry Professionals](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmITehzUCUA)," YouTube, 06/10/09, (02:20)]

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership had "warm words" for Sonny Perdue, praising him for being "an avid quail hunter." In a statement, TRCP said, "'We're happy to see that a true sportsman is a candidate for this position, especially one who worked to create a culture of conservation during his tenure as governor.'" [Ben Long, "[Sportsmen Voice Optimism Over Trump's Department of Ag Pick](http://www.outdoorlife.com/open-country-challenge-to-public-trails-in-crazy-mountains)," *Outdoor Life Magazine*, 01/29/17]

Sonny Perdue has supported "preservation of state lands and waterways" but "has not offered a vision for overseeing federal lands." [Jasper Craven, "[State's Federal Lands May face New Pressures From Washington](https://vtdigger.org/2017/01/25/states-federal-lands-may-face-new-pressures-from-washington/)," *Vermont Digger*, 1/25/17]

**In 1998, as a Democratic state senator, Sonny Perdue supported a tax increase "to buy public land for recreation, wildlife protection and conservation." In 2004, he praised a proposal from President George W. Bush to add 8090 acres of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest to wilderness designation.**

Sonny Perdue, in 1998 when he was a Democratic state senator, supported a tax increase "to buy public land for recreation, wildlife protection and conservation." The tax increase was voted down by Georgia voters, 53 percent to 47 percent. [Stacy Shelton, "Green Space: Perdue Careful; Study Panel Reminded that Money is Tight," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 08/23/04]

Sonny Perdue, in 2004, praised a proposal from President George W. Bush to add 8,090 acres of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest to wilderness designation, saying "'this pristine forest land will now be protected for generations of Georgians to enjoy.'" [Press Release, "[Bush Administration to Recommend New Wilderness Designation in USDA Celebrates 40th Anniversary of Wilderness Act](https://www.fs.fed.us/news/releases/bush-administration-recommend-new-wilderness-designation-georgia-usda-celebrates-40th)," U.S. Forest Service, 09/03/04]

**Even though he has claimed to support land conservation, as Governor, Sonny Perdue "killed" the previous administration's land conservation program and "replaced it with one that allowed continued harvesting of trees on rural lands where the state had bought development rights." In his time as Governor he also appointed the president of a lumber company to the Georgia Forestry Commission, a state board that aims to "'provide leadership, service, and education in the protection and stewardship of Georgia's forest resources,'" and he proposed a budget that eliminated a quarter of the Georgia Forest Commission's foresters.**

Sonny Perdue "killed" former Governor Roy Barne's "'green space program,'" and "replaced it with one that allowed continued harvesting of trees on rural lands where the state had bought development rights." In 2008, Perdue signed the "Forest Land Protection Act" which "lowered the taxes on owners of large tracts of forest, including corporations." Under the previous law, "only those who owned 2,000 acres could qualify for the tax relief," which had prompted big timber companies, including Georgia-Pacific and Weyerhaeuser "to sell off their Georgia plantations." Forest conservation advocates have said that Perdue's actions are part of the larger trend of "'turning our forests into an industrial crop being grown for Big Timber.'" [Georgina Gustin, "[Sonny Perdue, Trump’s Agriculture Pick, Could Roll Back Forest Protections](https://insideclimatenews.org/news/06022017/sonny-perdue-georgia-usda-agriculture-secretary-national-forest-service-climate-change)," *Inside Climate News,* 02/07/17]

While he was Governor, Sonny Perdue appointed "Robert William Pollard Jr., president of Pollard Lumber Co., to the Georgia Forestry Commission, whose mission is 'to provide leadership, service, and education in the protection and stewardship of Georgia's forest resources.'" Perdue's critics accused him of appointing "a man who cuts down trees for a living to a board whose aim is to protect Georgia’s forests." At the time he was appointed, Pollard, his company, and his employees had "given $13,000 in contributions to political candidates, mostly Republicans." [Michael Wall, "[Perdue's picks](http://www.clatl.com/news/article/13017249/perdues-picks)," *Creative Loafing*, 02/23/05]

In his first years as Governor, one of Sonny Perdue's proposed budgets eliminated "a quarter" of the Georgia Forestry Commission’s 43 foresters. [S. Heather Duncan, "Not Cut And Dried: Georgia's Timber Policies Give Leeway To Loggers," *Macon Telegraph*, 12/22/04]

**Sonny Perdue, in his 2004 budget, "hijacked" funding for the Hazardous Waste Trust Fund. The fund was set up to clean up "leaking landfills" that were contaminating groundwater in Georgia.**

Sonny Perdue, in his 2004 budget, "hijacked" funding for the Hazardous Waste Trust Fund. The fund was set up to clean up "leaking landfills" that were contaminating groundwater; at the time, 124 of Georgia's landfills had "caused enough pollution to violate federal safe drinking water standards." Perdue's budget shifted "user fees collected for the cleanups to the general fund." [Stacy Shelton, "Budget drains landfill cleanup; Perdue proposes $9 million raid on hazardous waste fund," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/23/04]

**Sonny Perdue has expressed skepticism about the impact of climate change, saying that liberals and "the mainstream media" have "lost all credibility when it comes to climate science because their arguments have become so ridiculous and so obviously disconnected from reality." He has also questioned "how scientists can reliably forecast global temperatures into the next century if 'we can't even predict what the weather will be like later this afternoon.'"**

In May 2014, Sonny Perdue lamented, "some on the left or in the mainstream media explain every deviation in weather as a consequence of climate change." He continued, "Climate change, we’re told, is responsible for heavy rains and drought alike. Whether temperatures are unseasonably low or high, global warming is the culprit. Snowstorms, hurricanes, and tornadoes have been around since the beginning of time, but now they want us to accept that all of it is the result of climate change." According to Perdue, the left's belief that weather fluctuates because of global warming has become "a running joke among the public" and "liberals have lost all credibility when it comes to climate science because their arguments have become so ridiculous and so obviously disconnected from reality." [Sonny Perdue, "[The Common Core Blame Game](http://www.nationalreview.com/article/377495/common-core-blame-game-sonny-perdue)," *National Review*, 05/08/14]

In 2009, at a meeting of the Southern Governors Association, Sonny Perdue asked "how scientists can reliably forecast global temperatures into the next century if 'we can't even predict what the weather will be like later this afternoon.'" [Scott Harper, "[Southern Governors Discuss Climate Change, Energy](http://pilotonline.com/news/southern-governors-discuss-climate-change-energy/article_a32690f6-0183-5564-926b-1d6846c741d3.html)," *The Virginian-Pilot*, 08/23/09]

**Sonny Perdue, in 1996, killed a natural gas bill that would have protected consumers, and the following year sponsored a natural gas deregulation bill that was a "sweet deal" for both the natural gas and textile industries. Perdue has been described as the "textile industry's pet legislator" and has taken at least $27,000 in campaign donations from the natural gas industry.**

Sonny Perdue, in 1995, authored SR 518, legislation to create a Competitive Natural Gas Service Study Committee. [SR 518, Senate Vote [02/27/96](http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/Archives/19951996/leg/fulltext/sr518.htm)]

In Georgia in the 1990s, "textile mills and other heavy manufacturers that use[d] lots of gas for generators [were] pressing" Georgia natural gas companies "for deep discounts." Sonny Perdue, who was described as "the textile industry's pet legislator," in 1996, "bottled up" a natural gas bill that "tilted toward little-guy consumers." In 1997, Perdue was the "sponsor of a new deregulation measure" that was written by "heavy industry" and lawyers for Atlanta Gas, the company that ran the Georgia Natural Gas and Savannah Gas Company. The bill was a "sweet deal" for both the natural gas and textile industries. [Frank LoMonte, "Too late to stop deregulation bill?" *Florida Times-Union*, 02/17/97 and Page 46 of 2002 Book]

Even though Sonny Perdue authored a bill to deregulate the natural gas industry, while campaigning for Governor in 2001, he said that he planned "to reregulate the natural gas market" because "'consumers are not being served.'" [Skippy Davis, "Perdue Seeks To Reregulate Gas Market," *Macon Telegraph*, 10/12/01]

Sonny Perdue has taken in at least $27,300 in campaign donations from the natural gas industry and natural gas lobbyists. [National Institute on Money in State Politics search for [Sonny Perdue](https://www.followthemoney.org/show-me?c-t-eid=6416704&d-cci=33#%5B%7B1%7Cgro=d-id,f-eid), accessed 03/20/17]

**Sonny Perdue, in 1992, sponsored a bill that that restricted the ability of local governments to regulate pesticides.**

Sonny Perdue, in 1992, sponsored a bill to limit the ability of local governments to regulate pesticide use so that local governments could not "adopt or continue in effect any ordinance, rule, regulation, or resolution relating to pesticide use, sale, distribution, storage, transportation, disposal, formulation or labeling, registration, or manufacture." [[Journal of the Senate](https://readux.library.emory.edu/books/emory:8xsqd/pdf/#page=2)), March 5, 1992, p. 1583-1584]

**POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST RELATED TO THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICTULTURE**

**Sonny Perdue, over the course of his "seven successful campaigns in Georgia politics," has received "a total of $328,328 in donations from agribusiness interests." His connection to "big agribusiness" has concerned environmental groups.**

Sonny Perdue, "over his seven successful campaigns in Georgia politics," has received "a total of $328,328 in donations from agribusiness interests, including $21,000 from Gold Kist, a large Georgia-based chicken-processing company that was later taken over by chicken giant Pilgrim's Pride. Other major Perdue donors include Coca-Cola ($26,100) and beer giant Anheuser-Busch." [Tom Philpott, "[UPDATED: Trump's USDA Pick Just Loves the Confederacy](http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2017/01/sonny-perdue-usda-trump)," *Mother Jones,* 01/04/17]

Environmental groups have expressed concern that, if confirmed to be Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue "'will use his position at the USDA to prioritize the profits of big agribusiness and trade over the interests of American farmers, workers and consumers.'" [Alan Bjerga and Marvin G. Perez, "[Trump to Nominate Sonny Perdue as Agriculture Secretary](https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-01-19/trump-said-to-nominate-sonny-perdue-as-agriculture-secretary)," *Bloomberg*, 01/18/17]

**Sonny Perdue, between 1995 and 2004, received $278,679 in federal farm subsidies.**

Sonny Perdue, "between 1995 and 2004," received $278,679 in United States Department of Agriculture subsidies, but he "hasn’t received any since then." Environmentalists have criticized Perdue for receiving "hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal farm subsidies that help chemical companies and large agriculture conglomerates at the expense of small farmers and the environment." [Philip Brasher, "[Trump Picks Perdue For Agriculture Secretary, Ending Historically Long Search](http://www.agriculture.com/news/business/trump-picks-perdue-for-agriculture-secretary-ending-historically-long-search)," *Agri-Pulse Communications*, 01/18/17, and Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Maggie Haberman, "[Sonny Perdue Is Trump’s Choice for Agriculture Secretary](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/18/us/politics/sonny-perdue-agriculture-secretary.html?_r=0)," *New York Times*, 01/18/17]

Even though Sonny Perdue has received hundreds of thousands of dollars of federal farm subsidies, when he was in the State Senate, he cosponsored SB 104, a bill to cut off "welfare benefits after four years for citizens and one year for legal immigrants." [[Journal of the Senate of the State of Georgia](https://readux.library.emory.edu/books/emory:8xqbp/pdf/#page=2), Regular Session 1997 Volume One and "HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED UNDER THE GOLD DOME," Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 03/30/97]

**In 2008, AGrowStar, one of Sonny Perdue's companies,** "**became a U.S. Department of Agriculture-authorized grain exporter."**

One of Sonny Perdue's companies, AGrowStar, "became a U.S. Department of Agriculture-authorized grain exporter in 2008." ["Report: Perdue met with Ga. port officials," *Associated Press*, 10/15/10]

**FIASCOS DURING PERDUE'S GOVERNORSHIP**

**In 2003, Sonny Perdue proposed "tax increases on liquor and tobacco to help balance the budget." Critics suggested tobacco company Brown & Williamson's fled Macon after Perdue pushed through a tax increase of 37-cents per pack.**

Sonny Perdue, in 2003, proposed "tax increases on liquor and tobacco to help balance the budget, along with steps that might have led to a property tax increase through a reduced program of state tax relief." He proposed "raising cigarette taxes from 12 cents per pack to 58 cents" to help Georgia recover from the recession. His proposal "fell flat with fellow Republicans and with Democrats, though he eventually managed to secure a modest tobacco increase" of "a quarter-per-pack increase, making the total tax 37 cents per pack." [Dick Pettys, "A divided Legislature's legacy is a checkered record, pointing fingers," *Associated Press*, 04/07/04, Kristina Torres and James Salzer, "Cigarette tax hike studied; Georgia State analysis says state could reap $585M more next year," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/14/15, and Andy Peters and Gray Beverley, "Democrats Point Finger At Tobacco Tax; GOP State Senators Disputes Accusations Against Perdue," *Macon Telegraph*, 10/28/03]

In 2003, Georgia tobacco company Brown & Williamson's left Georgia. Some Democrats said that Sonny Perdue "'messed up Brown and Williamson Tobacco'" and that it was "'quite obvious'" that businesses were leaving because of the tax increase. [Andy Peters and Gray Beverley, "Democrats Point Finger At Tobacco Tax; GOP State Senators Disputes Accusations Against Perdue," *Macon Telegraph*, 10/28/03]

**Education in Georgia's public schools "lag[ged]" while Sonny Perdue was governor; critics have said that Perdue didn't do enough to help Georgia's "struggling public schools" and that he refused to "'make education a top priority.'"**

While Sonny Perdue "created additional opportunities for charter schools and private schools," under his leadership, "K-12 test scores, graduation rates and comparative Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) scores… lag[ged] behind." [Bill Crane, "[Sonny Perdue's Non-Legacy](http://www.georgiatrend.com/January-2011/Georgia-View-Sonny-Perdues-Non-Legacy/" \t "_blank)," *GeorgiaTrend Magazine*, 01/11]

Critics said that during his governorship Sonny Perdue failed "to tackle some of Georgia’s biggest problems, such as struggling public schools." ["[Trump picks former Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue for agriculture secretary](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-sonny-perdue-former-georgia-governor-agriculture-secretary/)," *CBS News*, 01/18/17]

In 2006, Sonny Perdue's Democratic opponent, Mark Taylor, said, "'These low test scores reflect on Gov. Perdue's refusal to make education a top priority. Our scores in reading and math have dropped or stayed the same, while education is still not made a priority.'" ["Georgia 2006; The Issues: Where they stand; Georgia's major party candidates for governor answered Atlanta Journal-Constitution reporters' questions on a series of issues," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 11/05/06]

**In January 2007, Sonny Perdue proposed a "$30 million Go Fish program" in an effort to turn Georgia "into a bass-fishing mecca." The center, which as of 2015 was still struggling to attract "one-tenth of the visitors officials originally expected," has become a symbol for "wasteful spending" in Georgia.**

Sonny Perdue, in January 2007, proposed a "$30 million Go Fish program" "as a way to promote fishing tourism and attract major bass tournaments." Perdue, who wanted to turn Georgia "into a bass-fishing mecca," announced that the Go Fish Education Center "would be built in his home county." Legislators "some of whom would benefit by seeing new large-scale boat ramps with extra parking and piers in their districts – readily approved Perdue’s plan." At the same time, some lawmakers "ridiculed the idea of building the facility at all, let alone in a small town along a relatively rural stretch of I-75. Others called it political pork." [James Salazar "[Five years in, Perdue’s ‘Go Fish Center’ costing millions, attracting few visitors](http://investigations.blog.ajc.com/2015/10/27/five-years-in-perdues-go-fish-center-costing-millions-attracting-few-visitors/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 10/27/15]

The center opened in October 2010; the state borrowed "millions" of dollars to build the facility, and Georgia taxpayers will be paying off the cost "until December 2027." Once it opened, Go Fish "struggled to attract the crowds local boosters envisioned." As of Fiscal Year 2015, the center "generated $102,077 in revenue, or about 11 cents for every dollar it cost to run the center in years past" and it was "still having a hard time attracting one-tenth of the visitors officials originally expected." [James Salazar, "[Five years in, Perdue’s ‘Go Fish Center’ costing millions, attracting few visitors](http://investigations.blog.ajc.com/2015/10/27/five-years-in-perdues-go-fish-center-costing-millions-attracting-few-visitors/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 10/27/15]

After the museum opened, "'Go Fish'" became "shorthand in state political circles for wasteful spending," and "a cautionary tale about the long-term ramifications of prerecession decisions." Both Republicans and Democrats "groaned over $1.6 million a year in bond payments and operating costs." Perdue's project even received criticism from the conservative members of his base: Georgia Tea Party leaders have said, "'When you want to talk about wasteful spending in Georgia, the first thing everyone brings up is Go Fish.'" [Robbie Brown, "[Fishing Museum Is Symbol of Waste in Georgia](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/18/us/18fishing.html)," *New York Times*, 01/17/11]

**In 2007, in response to a "withering drought," Sonny Perdue "held a prayer rally in front of the Capitol in Atlanta to pray for rain."**

In November 2007, "when a withering drought gripped Georgia and neighboring states," Sonny Perdue, who is a "devout Southern Baptist," "held a prayer rally in front of the Capitol in Atlanta to pray for rain." Perdue, who has expressed skepticism over the impact of climate change, said at the prayer rally that it was "'time to appeal to Him who can and will make a difference.'" ["[Trump picks former Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue for agriculture secretary](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-sonny-perdue-former-georgia-governor-agriculture-secretary/)," *CBS News*, 01/18/17, "[Dry Georgia Rallies, and Prays, for Rain](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/21767716/#.WMSp4RLyuCR)," *Associated Press*, 11/13/17 and Sonny Perdue, "[The Common Core Blame Game](http://www.nationalreview.com/article/377495/common-core-blame-game-sonny-perdue)," *National Review*, 05/08/14]

**Sonny Perdue, because he was "'confident the bioenergy industry and sector'" was "'going to be a cornerstone of the new Georgia,'" provided "more than $6 million in state subsidies" to Range Fuels, a "wood-to-ethanol factory in southeastern Georgia." The factory closed in 2011 before it produced any ethanol.**

Sonny Perdue, in 2007, said, "'I'm confident the bioenergy industry and sector is going to be a cornerstone of the new Georgia.'" Perdue "provided more than $6 million in state subsidies" for Range Fuels, a "wood-to-ethanol factory in southeastern Georgia." Perdue "boasted that 'Range Fuels represents a new future for our country.'" Range Fuels ended up costing "U.S. taxpayers $64 million and Georgia taxpayers another $6.2 million." The factory closed in 2011 before producing any ethanol. [Dan Chapman, "Your Tax Dollars; Georgians on the hook for failed ethanol facility," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 01/05/12 and Timothy Carney, "[Sonny Perdue's failed green-energy subsidy boondoggle](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/sonny-perdues-failed-green-energy-subsidy-boondoggle/article/2612298)" *Washington Examiner*, 01/19/17]

**RACISM AND OTHER EXTREME VIEWS**

**Sonny Perdue has a "disturbing nostalgia for the Confederacy." In 2003, he authorized a referendum allowing Georgia residents to choose "whether to base a new state flag on the first Confederate flag," and in 2007 he "opposed an effort by African-American state legislators to pass a resolution to issue a public apology for Georgia’s role in the slave trade." Most recently, in 2010, he signed a law declaring April "Confederate History and Heritage Month" while not mentioning anything about slavery.**

Sonny Perdue, when he ran for governor in 2002, "pledged to have a vote to bring back the state's old battle flag with its large Confederate symbol, which was established in 1956 and removed in 2001. After he won the election, Perdue authorized a referendum in 2003," allowing Georgia residents to choose "whether to base a new state flag on the first Confederate flag." [Leanna Garfield, "[Trump's Agriculture Secretary Nominee Supported a Vote to Bring the Confederate Symbol Back to Georgia's Flag](http://www.businessinsider.com/trumps-agriculture-secretary-who-is-sonny-perdue-confederate-flag-2017-1)," *Business Insider*, 01/19/17, and Helena Bottemiller Evich, Ian Kullgren, Jenny Hopkinson, Catherine Boudreau, Josh Dawsey and Alex Isenstadt, "[Trump to announce Sonny Perdue for Agriculture](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/01/trump-will-pick-sonny-perdue-to-lead-agriculture-233820)," *Politico*, 01/18/17]

Sonny Perdue, in 2007, "opposed an effort by African-American state legislators to pass a resolution to issue a public apology for Georgia’s role in the slave trade." [Helena Bottemiller Evich, Ian Kullgren, Jenny Hopkinson, Catherine Boudreau, Josh Dawsey and Alex Isenstadt, "[Trump to announce Sonny Perdue for Agriculture](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/01/trump-will-pick-sonny-perdue-to-lead-agriculture-233820)," *Politico*, 01/18/17]

Sonny Perdue has a "disturbing nostalgia for the Confederacy." In 2010, he "signed a law declaring April to be permanently recognized in the state as "'Confederate History and Heritage Month' in a proclamation that neglected to mention slavery." His proclamation said that Georgia "has long cherished her Confederate history and the great leaders who made sacrifices on her behalf" and that it is "important that Georgians reflect upon our state’s past and honor and respect the devotion of her Confederate leaders, soldiers and citizens." [Tom Philpott, "[Trump's USDA Pick Just Loves the Confederacy](http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2017/01/sonny-perdue-usda-trump)," *Mother Jones*, 01/4/17, and James W. Loewen & Edward H. Sebesta, "[*The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader: The 'Great Truth' about the 'Lost Cause'*](https://books.google.com/books?id=QWKzf8j2yPoC&pg=PA383&lpg=PA383&dq=%22April+is+the+month+in+which+the+Confederate+States+of+America+began+a+four-year+conflict%22&source=bl&ots=j-m_y576fP&sig=6qu1iGvKYtV_r5JTn8AlfJz28AY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjg3s)," University Press of Mississippi, 2011]

**In 1998, Sonny switched from being a Republican to a Democrat because Perdue's "'values stopped jibing,'" with the Democratic Party, and "'race play[ed] a factor'" in this split. A few years later, on the night he was elected Governor, Perdue "describe[ed] his joy" at "ending 130 years of Democratic governors in Georgia" by quoting the Reverend Martin Luther King, saying, "'Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, free at last.'"**

Sonny Perdue switched from being a Democrat to a Republican in 1998 because, he said, "'those of us who were compliant children, we did as our parents did – we voted Democratic. But over time our national party and our values stopped jibing… I think race plays a factor in this,' Perdue said. It's a point that normally goes unspoken, but some former Democrats believe the party of their forefathers caters to minorities, not them." [Ron Fournier, "Pragmatism, necessity, drive decisions to change party affiliations," *Associated Press*, 09/07/98]

In 2002, on the night he was elected Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue "describ[ed] his joy" at "ending 130 years of Democratic governors in Georgia" by quoting the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., and saying "'Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, free at last.'" Perdue's remarks "provoked puzzled and often angry reactions." Some black Georgians said that they were "'disgusted'" that Perdue made the "'comparison between the crimes and horrors that African-Americans suffered and a politician getting elected governor,'" and that his use of the Dr. King quote "'was like a slap in the face.'"

[Mia Taylor, "Activists take offense at Perdue's use of King quotation," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 11/07/02, and Lyle V. Harris, "MIDTERM ELECTIONS: Use of King quote strikes a raw nerve," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 11/10/02]

**Sonny Perdue, in 2012, made racially insensitive charged to the Chinese Business Association of Atlanta, describing Chinese and Asian people in broad generalities, and telling them, "I'm not sure you all blush like we Caucasians do."**

Sonny Perdue, in 2012, when addressing the Chinese Business Association of Atlanta, said "I'm not sure you all blush like we Caucasians do." [Sonny Perdue, "[佐治亚州前州长，索尼。普度（Hon. Sonny Perdue）先生做主題演講](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y15pQ-UongE)," YouTube, 01/08/12, (02:50)]

In 2012, Sonny Perdue said he feels "energy" when he is in "Asian groups" because "your spirit, your industry, your enthusiasm, and your friendliness could rub off on some of your American neighbors here from time to time, because we unfortunately, I think, have lost much of what you all have and display and a group, as a community." [Sonny Perdue, "[佐治亚州前州长，索尼。普度（Hon. Sonny Perdue）先生做主題演講](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y15pQ-UongE)," YouTube, 01/08/12, (03:05)]

Sonny Perdue, in 2012, said of Georgia's high school valedictorians, "although the percentage of students of Asian descent would be a small minority, typically about 20 to 30 percent of the valedictorians coming through would be of Asian descent. That shows that you as a community, as a culture, still value and understand the value of education… One of the biggest problems that we have in our educational society today is that US parents don't care… you all know that that's really the future. I was always impressed by the percentage of very bright, smart, polite, well-mannered young Asian students coming in." [Sonny Perdue, "[佐治亚州前州长，索尼。普度（Hon. Sonny Perdue）先生做主題演講](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y15pQ-UongE)," YouTube, 01/08/12, (06:35)]

Sonny Perdue, in 2012, when addressing the Chinese Business Association of Atlanta said of Asians and Asian-Americans, "You all have desire. That's why we see those valedictorians coming across the stage. You want a better future. You understand what it takes. It takes hard work and it takes an industry and a business to be good in business." [Sonny Perdue, "[佐治亚州前州长，索尼。普度（Hon. Sonny Perdue）先生做主題演講](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y15pQ-UongE)," YouTube, 01/08/12, (11:00)]

**In 2016, Sonny Perdue gave a sermon in which he categorized non-Christians as "bad guys" who are "winning" against Christians, who Perdue calls "good guys." Perdue said that in America today things are "just flipped over entirely " and that "Christians better be prepared and look at examples of how to live in Babylon."**

In a sermon he gave in 2016, Sonny Perdue said, "I've played sports. I've played in away games with really hostile crowds. It feels like today, as Christians, we're playing an away game, coach, in a hostile crowd. And they're screaming and we're in the Death Valley or the swamp or somewhere like that, where we're not used to. Growing up as Christians, we were always the good guys, right? In America? We were the good guys. And yet it feels like we're playing an away game today, and the tide has turned. The momentum has swung, and the other team, the bad guys, are winning." [Sonny Perdue, "[How Do We Live In The World We Are In?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaJQgk7G_9k&t=114s)," YouTube, 08/15/16, (04:28)]

In the same sermon he gave in 2016, Sonny Perdue said, "Can God give America over? I think we see the answer here. I don't know how long God's patience is, and I'm not predicting that's what's going to happen, but I'm telling you we as Christians better be prepared and look at examples of how to live in Babylon if that's what America comes to. And from the signs we see of things being – they were up, being down, and things down being up, and just flipped over entirely, within the last few years even, how quickly things have changed. How Christianity was embraced, we feel like the United States was a great experiment founded upon Christian principles… and God has blessed us so as a nation, but yet, have we squandered that? As Christians, as a Christian nation, have we squandered the right to continue?" [Sonny Perdue, "[How Do We Live In The World We Are In?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaJQgk7G_9k&t=114s)," YouTube, 08/15/16, (05:20)]

Sonny Perdue, in the same sermon in 2016, continued, "For most of mankind's history, Christians have been a persecuted minority. We've kind of lived in a golden era, protected by the bill of rights. But for most of mankind's history, Christians have been a persecuted minority. And we know, factually, that Christians are dying for their faith worldwide right today. They're being persecuted, they're being martyred, they're being slaughtered for their faith… Christians have been persecuted by everyone." [Sonny Perdue, "[How Do We Live In The World We Are In?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaJQgk7G_9k&t=114s)," YouTube, 08/15/16, (24:10)]

**Sonny Perdue, in 2006, when asked a question he didn't like at a press conference, called a female reporter "dear" and suggested that she move to another town.**

Sonny Perdue, in response to a reporter whose question he didn't like, said, "You might want to think about some other markets like Chattanooga and Columbia and Tallahassee and those kind of things." He reiterated, "I'm sorry, dear, if you can't get answers, you might want to think about another market." [Sonny Perdue, "[Sonny Perdue says, if you've got questions, move](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvN2ViDZ5Rw)," YouTube, 09/28/06, (0:10)]

**POLITICAL INSIDER**

**Sonny Perdue is a Republican political insider, who first endorsed Jeb Bush in the 2016 Republican Primary, and then, after Donald Trump became the Republican nominee, became "an original member of Trump’s agricultural advisory team."**

Sonny Perdue endorsed Jeb Bush in the 2016 presidential primary. In a statement, Perdue said, "'Jeb knows what it takes to govern in a state that is a microcosm of the United States of America. Jeb is a policy innovator with comprehensive plans to tackle the tough issues our country faces.'" [Jim Galloway, "[Sonny Perdue Endorses Jeb Bush in GOP Presidential Contest](http://politics.blog.ajc.com/2016/02/04/sonny-perdue-endorses-jeb-bush-in-gop-presidential-contest/)," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 02/04/16]

Sonny Perdue was "an original member of Trump’s agricultural advisory team." ["[Trump Picks Perdue For Agriculture Secretary, Ending Historically Long Search](http://www.agriculture.com/news/business/trump-picks-perdue-for-agriculture-secretary-ending-historically-long-search)," *Agri-Pulse Communications*, 01/18/17]

**OTHER ISSUES**

**Sonny Perdue, in 1997, bothered Bonaire residents when, by leaving "rotten, organic matter" out "as fertilizer for his wheat and soybean farm," he caused a "housefly infestation" in Bonaire. Residents who lived close to Perdue's farm complained that the infestation was so bad that they had to stay indoors and that "you would think we were living at the county dump."**

In 1997, Sonny Perdue was paid by a processing company that made preprepared salads to "lettuce, carrots and onion byproducts… away in trailer loads." Perdue would use the excess produce as feed for his fairy farm, and when he could not use the excess produce as feed, would use the "rotten, organic matter as fertilizer for his wheat and soybean farm." His neighbors complained of a "housefly infestation" and a "stench that would settle over parts of the Houston County community in the evenings and early mornings."

In July 1997, the "Houston County Health Department and the state Environmental Protection Division confirmed" that Perdue's farm was the source of the "housefly infestation" and "worked with Perdue to solve the problems." Perdue said he began "spreading out the compost piles" which "helped the situation." However, even after this "solution," Bonaire residents "remain[ed] skeptical" but were "hesitant to talk about the source of the fly problem because of Perdue's political position." Residents reported being kept indoors because of the fly problem, and one of Perdue's neighbors said "'You would think we were living at the county dump.'" Perdue did not live on the farm at the time but his father did. ["Causing a Stink," *Macon Telegraph*, 08/01/97]

**In 2008, while Sonny Perdue was governor of Georgia, a Pew Charitable Trusts report "credited Perdue" with a Georgia initiative "to recruit top private-sector representatives to a commission that recommended improvements in state services."**

The Pew Charitable Trusts, in 2008, "gave Georgia's state government a grade of B+." The report "credited Perdue with an initiative to recruit top private-sector representatives to a commission that recommended improvements in state services. The commission resulted in 'an intense focus on customer service and on managing for results.'" ["[Trump Picks Perdue For Agriculture Secretary, Ending Historically Long Search](http://www.agriculture.com/news/business/trump-picks-perdue-for-agriculture-secretary-ending-historically-long-search)," *Agri-Pulse*, 01/18/17]

**Sonny Perdue softened his rhetoric on immigration at the end of his governorship, even though as governor oversaw "some of the nation's toughest measures targeting illegal immigrants" and "vowed a statewide crackdown on document fraud." So many people were deported from one Georgia town that it became "abandoned."**

Referring to immigration, Sonny Perdue in 2010 said that the GOP "needs to avoid 'a gang-type' mentality' that could be harmful to those 'who want the American dream.'" He elaborated, "'The Republican party needs to be very, very careful that it maintains the golden rule in its rhetoric regarding immigration policy.'" He also said that the issue of immigration "'sometimes gets us out there where our hearts really aren't.'" ["[Perdue Emphasizes Empathy](http://chronicle.augusta.com/elections-georgia-elections-georgia-governor/2010-12-23/perdue-emphasizes-empathy)," *Associated Press*, 12/23/10]

Sonny Perdue, in 2010, said that "over the long term that could pose a problem for the Republican Party" that every one of its governors since Reconstruction has been a white male because in Georgia, "minority populations are on the rise." ["[Perdue Emphasizes Empathy](http://chronicle.augusta.com/elections-georgia-elections-georgia-governor/2010-12-23/perdue-emphasizes-empathy)," *Associated Press*, 12/23/10]

Georgia, while Sonny Perdue was governor, "passed some of the nation's toughest measures targeting illegal immigrants" and Perdue "vowed a statewide crackdown on document fraud." Deportations were so severe in the state that a poultry plant in Stillmore, Georgia, was left "scrambling to replace more than half its workforce" which led to the town becoming "little more than a ghost town since Sept. 1, (2006) when federal agents began rounding up illegal immigrants." ["[Georgia Town Abandoned After Immigration Raid](http://www.foxnews.com/story/2006/09/15/georgia-town-abandoned-after-immigration-raid.html)," *Associated Press*, 09/15/06]

**As Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue "led international trade missions to China, Cuba, and South America."**

Sonny Perdue, as Governor of Georgia, "led international trade missions to China, Cuba, and South America. The port of Savannah also rose from the 24th busiest U.S. port to the sixth busiest during Perdue's tenure." ["Trump Taps Former Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue to Head Agriculture Dept.," *Inside U.S. Trade*, 01/20/17]

**In 2010, when he was leaving the Georgia governorship, Sonny Perdue said that he didn't know if he would feel the "'itch'" to pursue politics again and that he "'literally'" had "'no plans for future public service.'"**

On discussing whether he wanted to continue to pursue politics after being Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue, in 2010, said "'I don’t know that I’ll feel an itch again… I literally have no plans for future public service.'" [Travis Fain, "Perdue’s business deals have raised some eyebrows," *Macon Telegraph*, 12/26/10]

**Sonny Perdue has been on the Board of Directors of the Georgia Agribusiness Council since 2013. He has been Secretary of the Georgia Agribusiness Council since 2015. In his time on the Board, the Georgia Agribusiness Council has advocated to change swine farming regulations put in place by the EPD and has also advocated for immigration reform.**

Sonny Perdue, in 2013, was "elected to serve a three-year-term" on the Georgia Agribusiness Council. He has been Secretary of the Georgia Business Council since 2015. ["[Inside Agriculture](http://www.ga-agribusiness.org/index.cfm?show=10&mid=232)," Georgia Agribusiness Council Inc., 02/08/13, and Sonny Perdue, [OGE Form](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/5D6D47C0C5AE5048852580E1002C818A/$FILE/Perdue,%20George%20E.%20%20final278.pdf), 03/17]

In 2013, while Sonny Perdue sat on the Board of Directors of the Georgia Agribusiness Council, the Council sent a letter to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources which supported changing swine farming regulations put in place by the Environmental Protection Division. The GAC suggested "changing the threshold for the applicability of swine feeding operation rules at 5000 animal units." The letter asserted the GAC's "concerns about the unfair arbitrary regulations placed on swine facilities with more than 3000 animal units." The group argued that these "arbitrary" regulations on swine farmers hurt them economically. The regulations were put in place by the Environmental Protection Division. [[Georgia Agribusiness Council to Board of Natural Resources](http://www.ga-agribusiness.org/images/E0191701/GAEPD_CAFOSwine_CommentsGAC.pdf), 08/21/13]

In 2014, while Perdue was on the Board of Directors for the Georgia Agribusiness Council, the President wrote an editorial stating that the Council was in favor of immigration reform. The editorial said that "foreign workers" view agricultural jobs "as opportunities to provide for themselves and their families," and warned of the "economic harm caused by our nation's outdated immigration system." [Bryan Tolar, "Farm labor shortage costly to state," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 06/18/14]

**Environmentalists have been skeptical that Sonny Perdue, "'a former fertilizer salesman,'" will "'tackle the unregulated farm pollution that poisons our drinking water, turns Lake Erie green, and fouls the Chesapeake Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.'"**

Environmentalists have been skeptical that Sonny Perdue, "'a former fertilizer salesman,'" will "'tackle the unregulated farm pollution that poisons our drinking water, turns Lake Erie green, and fouls the Chesapeake Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.'" [Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Maggie Haberman, "[Sonny Perdue Is Trump’s Choice for Agriculture Secretary](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/18/us/politics/sonny-perdue-agriculture-secretary.html?_r=0)," *New York Times*, 01/18/17]

**After being nominated for Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue was concerned about what "critics might dig up" if his nomination lingered in the Senate.**

Sonny Perdue, in February 2017, was "concerned about his lack of contact with White House chief of staff Reince Priebus and his office" since his nomination for Secretary of Agriculture had been announced. He was also concerned about what "critics might dig up" if his nomination lingered "in the Senate for weeks amid slow-walking by Democrats." [Tara Palmeri and Andrew Restuccia, "[Trump’s nominees gripe the White House isn’t protecting them](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/02/trump-nominees-confirmation-cabinet-235157)," *Politico*, 02/21/17]