**Why Did Georgia Choose to Reorganize Rather Than Rewrite Its Constitution?**

By the 1970s, Georgia’s **1945 Constitution**—itself a revision of the 1877 document—had become cluttered with hundreds of amendments, many of which applied only to specific counties or issues. Despite multiple commissions and proposals since the 1960s, efforts at comprehensive reform had failed. In 1976, state leaders, including **Governor George Busbee**, opted for a strategic shift: **reorganize the constitution article by article** to improve clarity and usability without making controversial policy changes.

This pragmatic approach allowed reformers to standardize structure, simplify language, and remove outdated provisions while avoiding the political resistance that had plagued previous efforts. The **1976 Constitution** was not revolutionary—it did not alter power dynamics or expand rights—but it set the stage for future change. It served as a transitional document that reflected lessons from earlier failures and showed how legal design can evolve incrementally.

**Key Terms and Definitions**

| **Term** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- |
| Georgia Constitution of 1976 | A reorganized version of the 1945 Constitution, designed for clarity and usability without major policy changes. |
| Article-by-Article Revision | A method of constitutional reform where each section is restructured for coherence and organization rather than substance. |
| Governor George Busbee | Georgia’s governor (1975–1983) who championed practical constitutional reorganization. |
| Constitutional Revision Commission | A group of legal, legislative, and civic leaders tasked with proposing constitutional reforms. |
| Incremental Reform | A strategy that makes gradual, non-controversial changes to a legal or political system. |
| Transitional Document | A constitution or law designed to serve as a stepping stone between outdated and more modern frameworks. |

**Orienting Question**

**Why did Georgia choose constitutional reorganization instead of rewriting in 1976, and how did this decision shape future reform?**

**Active Learning Exercises**

**Exercise 1: Policy Memo Simulation**  
**Prompt:**  
As a 1974 advisor to Governor Busbee, draft a 1–2 page memo recommending either a full overhaul or article-by-article reorganization. Address:

* Political and procedural challenges
* Benefits/limitations of incremental reform
* How reorganization could prepare for future changes  
  **Use context from 1963 and 1969 efforts.**

**Objective:**  
To assess competing strategies of constitutional reform in a politically cautious era.

**Exercise 2: Timeline and Analysis Project**  
**Prompt:**  
Create a detailed timeline of Georgia’s constitutional revision efforts (1963–1976), then write a 2-page analysis exploring:

* Patterns in failed/successful efforts
* Role of legal/political constraints
* Strategic shift reflected in the 1976 Constitution

**Objective:**  
To trace Georgia’s reform trajectory and analyze barriers to constitutional change.

**Exercise 3: Comparative Constitutional Critique**  
**Prompt (3–4 pages):**  
Compare the **1945**, **1976**, and **1983** Georgia Constitutions. Analyze:

* Scope of change in each document
* Political/legal contexts
* The value of reorganization vs. substantive reform  
  **Conclusion:**  
  Was 1976 successful reform—or a stepping stone?

**Objective:**  
To evaluate the effectiveness and legacy of the 1976 Constitution in Georgia’s legal evolution.

**Review Questions**

1. What were the primary goals of the 1976 constitutional reorganization?
2. Why did earlier reform efforts in the 1960s and early 1970s fail?
3. What are the advantages and drawbacks of incremental reform?
4. How did the 1976 Constitution lay the groundwork for future change?
5. Should the 1976 Constitution be viewed as a reform or placeholder? Why?