



Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

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2020 Senate Ratings

Toss-Up

Collins (R-Maine) Tillis (R-N.C.)
 McSally (R-Ariz.)

Tilt Democratic

Gardner (R-Colo.)

Lean Democratic

Peters (D-Mich.)

Likely Democratic

Solid Democratic

NM Open (Udall, D)
 Booker (D-N.J.)
 Coons (D-Del.)
 Durbin (D-Ill.)
 Markey (D-Mass.)
 Merkley (D-Ore.)
 Reed (D-R.I.)
 Shaheen (D-N.H.)
 Smith (D-Minn.)
 Warner (D-Va.)

Tilt Republican

Lean Republican

KS Open (Roberts, R)
 Daines (R-Mont.)
 Ernst (R-Iowa)
Jones (D-Ala.)

Likely Republican

Cornyn (R-Texas)
 Loeffler (R-Ga.)
 Perdue (R-Ga.)

Solid Republican

TN Open (Alexander, R)
 WY Open (Enzi, R)
 Cassidy (R-La.)
 Capito (R-W.Va.)
 Cotton (R-Ark.)
 Graham (R-S.C.)
 Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.)
 Inhofe (R-Okla.)
 McConnell (R-Ky.)
 Risch (R-Idaho)

Rounds (R-S.D.)

Sasse (R-Neb.)
 Sullivan (R-Alaska)

	GOP	DEM
116th Congress	53	47
Not up this cycle	30	35
Currently Solid	13	10
Competitive	10	2

Takeovers in *Italics*, # moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans

Georgia Senate: The Road to Redemption

By Jacob Rubashkin

Jon Ossoff has been the punchline of an expensive joke for the last three years. But the one-time failed House candidate might get the last laugh in a Senate race that has been out of the spotlight until recently.

Much of the attention around Georgia has focused on whether it's a presidential battleground and the special election to fill the seat left by GOP Sen. Johnny Isakson.

Polls consistently show Joe Biden running even with President Donald Trump, and Biden's emerging coalition of non-white and suburban voters has many Democrats feeling that *this* is the year they turn Georgia blue.

In the race for the state's other seat, appointed-GOP Sen. Kelly Loeffler has been engulfed in an insider trading scandal, and though the FBI has reportedly closed its investigation, it's taken a heavy toll on her image in the state. While she began unknown, she is now deeply unpopular; her abysmal numbers have both Republican and Democratic opponents thinking they can unseat her.

All this has meant that GOP Sen. David Perdue has flown under the radar. But that may be changing now that the general election matchup is set.

The Lay of the Land

Democratic optimism in Georgia surely isn't fueled by victories; the party hasn't won a statewide election since 2006. The last Democratic presidential candidate to win the state was Bill Clinton in 1992, when he barely edged out President George H.W. Bush 43.5-42.9 percent.

But Democrats have slowly gained ground over the past decade. In 2012, President Barack Obama lost the state by 7.8 points to Mitt Romney. In 2014, Michelle Nunn lost her Senate race by 7.7 percent to Perdue. In 2016, Hillary Clinton lost the state by 5 points to Trump, 50-45 percent. And in 2018, Democratic state House Minority Leader Stacey Abrams lost the gubernatorial race to Republican Secretary of State Brian Kemp by just 1.4 points.

The Democratic advances are powered by the nationwide leftward shift in the suburbs accelerated by Trump, as well as the state's growing and diversifying population.

This is particularly evident in suburban Atlanta, where in 2018 Democrats flipped the longtime Republican 6th District and came within 419 votes of flipping the neighboring 7th District.

The CEO Senator

Perdue, 70, was born in Macon and earned both his undergraduate

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Elections Reach Key Moment

By Nathan L. Gonzales

There's still more than four months to go before November, but the 2020 elections are at a critical juncture.

If the election were held today, President Donald Trump would be defeated, Democrats would win control of the Senate and expand their majority in the House. Republicans would get routed. The biggest question is whether this is a valley that Trump and the GOP will climb out of or a deep well that they'll be stuck in for the remainder of the cycle.

Trump's job rating was just 42 percent approve/55 percent disapprove as of Thursday, according to the RealClearPolitics average. It's the president's lowest point in nearly eight months. In a head-to-head ballot test, Joe Biden had an 8.5-point advantage (50.1-42.7 percent), in the RealClearPolitics national average, and a 9.2-point lead (50.5-41.3 percent), according to the newly-released FiveThirtyEight average, through Thursday. And Democrats have an 8.5-point lead in the national generic ballot, which is a wider margin than before the 2018 elections.

Of course we don't have national elections in this country, but the polling in individual states and districts isn't much better.

Taking into account analysis and calculations by *Inside Elections*, RCP, and FiveThirtyEight, Biden has the edge in all of the states Hillary Clinton carried in 2016, and is running ahead of or practically even with the president in Michigan, Florida, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Arizona, North Carolina, Ohio, Georgia, and Iowa. Biden only needs to win three or four of those states (depending on their size) to win.

There's still a dearth of high-quality presidential polling in some individual states, but Trump's inability to match or exceed his 2016 performance is being confirmed by public and private polling in competitive Senate and House races.

Any Republican optimism is rooted in time, messaging, and the belief that there is a systematic polling problem.

It's true that the elections are still months away. But even if Trump's standing improves, the race will only climb back to a knock-down, drag-out, close contest. Republicans are confident in their ability to define and tear down Biden and down ballot Democrats. But Democrats have plenty of money to promote their own perspective. And while polling is imperfect, it's unlikely that dozens of partisan and nonpartisan pollsters are all individually making the same methodological mistake.



2020 Presidential Ratings (Electoral Votes)

Toss-Up (66)			
Arizona (11)	Florida (29)	Nebraska 2nd (1)	North Carolina (15)
Wisconsin (10)			
Tilt Democratic (36)		Tilt Republican (1)	
Michigan (16)	Pennsylvania (20)	Maine 2nd (1)	
Lean Democratic (14)		Lean Republican (22)	
Minnesota (10)	New Hampshire (4)	Georgia (16)	Iowa (6)
Likely Democratic (8)		Likely Republican (56)	
Maine At-Large (2)	Nevada (6)	Ohio (18)	Texas (38)
Solid Democratic (210)		Solid Republican (125)	
California (55)	Alabama (9)	Tennessee (11)	
Colorado (9)	Alaska (3)	Utah (6)	
Connecticut (7)	Arkansas (6)	West Virginia (5)	
Delaware (3)	Idaho (4)	Wyoming (3)	
D.C. (3)	Indiana (11)		
Hawaii (4)	Kansas (6)		
Illinois (20)	Kentucky (8)		
Maine 1st (1)	Louisiana (8)		
Maryland (10)	Mississippi (6)		
Massachusetts (11)	Missouri (10)		
New Jersey (14)	Montana (3)		
New Mexico (5)	Nebraska At-Large (2)		
New York (29)	Nebraska 1st (1)		
Oregon (7)	Nebraska 3rd (1)		
Rhode Island (4)	North Dakota (3)		
Vermont (3)	Oklahoma (7)		
Virginia (13)	South Carolina (9)		
Washington (12)	South Dakota (3)		
270 needed to win		GOP	DEM
		2016 Results	304 227
# moved benefiting Democrats,		2020 Ratings	204 268
* moved benefiting Republicans		Toss-up	66



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Report Shorts

Colorado Senate, Cory Gardner, R, elected 48%. It's been a rough couple of weeks for former Gov. John Hickenlooper, the likely Democratic nominee. He was forced to pay a \$2,750 fine after the state's Independent Ethics Commission found him guilty of accepting two illegal gifts on trips he took as governor, he was found to be in contempt after previously refusing to appear on video for testimony earlier in the hearings, video surfaced of him from six years ago comparing the pressure on politicians from schedulers to slaves being whipped in the galley of an ancient ship, and he defined the Black Lives Matter movement in a way that's rejected by most black activists. And Republicans are now on television with ads highlighting Hickenlooper's past statements about not wanting to be a senator.



John Hickenlooper

Caroline Brehman/CQ Roll Call

The big question is whether any of the Hickenlooper hits affect his standing. He has been the frontrunner in the June 30 primary and Nov. 3 general elections, while Gardner has trailed since the former governor entered the race. If the negative headlines and GOP attacks ads don't change the dynamic of the race over the next couple of weeks, then Gardner is even more vulnerable than we previously thought. Current rating: Tilt Democratic.

Georgia Senate, David Perdue, R, elected 53%. The question in this race was not if Jon Ossoff would come in first, but if he would clear the 50 percent threshold he needed to avoid a costly, time-consuming runoff, no easy feat running against two credible opponents. But after failing twice to get to 50 percent plus one in his 2017 bid for Georgia's 6th Congressional District, Ossoff (52 percent) narrowly made the mark against former Columbus Mayor Teresa Tomlinson (16 percent) and 2018 Lt. Gov. nominee Sarah Riggs Amico (12 percent). Now he'll turn his attention to GOP Sen. David Perdue, who awaits with a \$9.4 million war chest as of May 20. Early polling shows this race could be competitive, but it hasn't cracked the top tier for either party yet. Current rating: Likely Republican.

Georgia's 7th District (Northeastern Atlanta suburbs), Rob Woodall, R, not seeking re-election. The general election is nearly set in one of the most competitive races in the country. Emergency room physician/Afghanistan war veteran Rich McCormick secured the GOP nomination with 51 percent in a victory over state Sen. Renee Unterman (18 percent) and others. On the Democratic side, 2018 nominee Carolyn Bourdeaux barely avoided a runoff, winning 53 percent of the vote in a race that took six days to call. State Rep. Brenda Romero was a distant second with 13 percent. Bourdeaux can now turn her attention to November, where she'll look to win this seat after falling just 419 votes short in 2018. Current rating: Toss-up.

Georgia's 9th District (Northeastern Georgia), Doug Collins, R, running for Senate. In this deep-red district where Hillary Clinton could

not even get 20 percent of the vote, the GOP primary is the de facto general election. But we won't know who the next member of Congress is just yet, because none of the nine candidates received a majority of the vote. State Rep. Matt Gurtler and gun store owner Andrew Clyde finished first and second, with 22 percent and 19 percent, respectively, and will face off in an August 11 runoff. Former Rep. Paul Broun finished fourth in his comeback bid. Current rating: Solid Republican.

Georgia's 14th District (Northwestern Georgia), Tom Graves, R, not seeking re-election. Nine Republicans are running to replace Graves, and none reached the 50 percent threshold to avoid a runoff. Marjorie Taylor Green, who came in first with 41 percent, will face physician John Cowan, who finished in second with 20 percent, in the August 11 runoff that will determine the next member of Congress for this heavily Republican district. Greene, who is endorsed by Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, is a promoter of the QAnon conspiracy theory, has posted photos on social media with a former KKK leader who calls her a friend, and has suggested school shootings could be false flags or caused by demonic possession. And after *Politico* uncovered hours of videos Greene posted to social media in which she espouses racist, Islamophobic, and anti-Semitic views, House GOP leadership quickly signalled their support for Cowan. The Democratic nominee is financial technology professional Kevin Van Ausdale, who was unopposed in the primary and had \$1,123 in his campaign account on May 20. Current rating: Solid Republican.

Nevada's 3rd District (Southern Las Vegas suburbs), Susie Lee, D, elected 52%. Former WWE wrestler Dan Rodimer won a nasty GOP primary 47-29 percent against former state Treasurer Dan Schwartz. Rodimer, the preferred candidate of some GOP strategists, now faces



Dan Rodimer

Courtesy Rodimer for Congress

freshman Rep. Susie Lee, who had a 10-to-1 financial advantage over Rodimer on May 20. During the primary, Schwartz was on TV highlighting Rodimer's arrest, investigations for assault, and lawsuits against him for fraud,

forgery, and not paying workers, as well as fines owed. Democrats will undoubtedly pick up those themes. Current rating: Likely Democratic.

Nevada's 4th District (Northern Las Vegas suburbs and rural central Nevada), Steven Horsford, D, elected 52%. This race was thrown for a twist when Horsford admitted to a long-term extramarital affair with a woman he met while she was an intern in then-Sen. Harry Reid's office. But it's not clear Horsford is in serious trouble. He'll face GOP primary winner Jim Marchant, a former state assemblyman, in the fall, and begins with advantages in fundraising and the partisan lean of this district, which voted for Hillary Clinton by 5 points. Current rating: Solid Democratic.

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North Carolina Governor, Roy Cooper, D, elected 49%. Cooper began this cycle as a top target for Republicans. North Carolina has a tendency for close elections, including Cooper's 0.2 percent victory in 2016, but the incumbent has positioned himself well for re-election, maintaining strong approval ratings overall and on his handling of the coronavirus. His GOP opponent, Lt. Gov. Dan Forest, has struggled to fundraise, reporting just \$754,000 on hand in his latest quarterly filing (Feb. 15), while Cooper had amassed \$9.4 million by that time. And Cooper has led in each of the dozen polls of the race since the March 3 primary, by margins from 8 to 20 points. While there's still time for Forest to kick his campaign into high gear, the national environment favors Democrats right now, and between coronavirus, the George Floyd protests, and the onset of hurricane season, Cooper will command a significant spotlight as sitting governor. With his meager financial resources, it is hard to see how Forest will break through to voters. Move from Tilt Democratic to Lean Democratic.

South Carolina's 1st District (Charleston and coastal South Carolina), Joe Cunningham, D, elected 51%. This coastal district will see one of the most competitive races this fall. Cunningham won an upset victory over state Rep. Katie Arrington in 2018, and since then has worked hard to develop a moderate, independent image in the district, as well as a substantial war chest. He'll face state Rep. Nancy Mace, the first woman to graduate from The Citadel, in the general election after she won the multi-candidate GOP primary by more than 30 points with 58 percent. Current rating: Toss-up.



Nancy Mace

Courtesy Nancy Mace for Congress

Vermont Governor, Phil Scott, R, re-elected 55%. The biggest question was whether the governor would seek another two-year term. Now that Scott has filed for re-election, the race is all-but-over. Even though Trump received less than 30 percent of the vote in 2016, the governor had an 82 percent job approval rating, according to We Ask America as of June 3. Democrats won't have a nominee until after the Aug. 11 primary, but either Lt. Gov. David Zuckerman or former state Education Secretary Rebecca Holcombe would need a miracle or two to have a chance against the beloved Scott. Rating: Move from Likely Republican to Solid Republican.

Virginia's 5th District (Charlottesville and South-central Virginia), Open; Denver Riggleman, R, lost renomination. Riggleman became the third incumbent to lose renomination this cycle when he was toppled by former Liberty University associate athletic director Bob Good in a drive-up district convention conducted in the parking lot of the challenger's church.

Even with the high-profile loss by the incumbent, the underlying district is very Republican. In 2018, Republican former county supervisor Corey Stewart won the 5th by 2 points even though he lost by 16 points statewide and was jettisoned by national Republicans. Riggleman won his initial race with 53 percent, but the margin was a considerable 7 points in a good Democratic year. In 2017, Republican Ed Gillespie lost the gubernatorial election by 9 points but won the 5th by 9 points. And, similar to Riggleman's initial win, Trump won with 53 percent, but by an 11-point margin, in 2016. Current rating: Solid Republican.

Virginia's 7th District (Suburban Richmond), Abigail Spanberger, D, elected 50%. Nick Freitas is the frontrunner in the crowded primary but failed to file the proper paperwork to qualify for the general election ballot. GOP strategists are confident that he'll be on the ballot, but that is not certain yet. Freitas had problems getting on the ballot in his 2017 bid for re-election and won that race as a write-in candidate. But now he would face a well-financed Democratic incumbent. Current rating: Tilt Democratic.

West Virginia Governor, Jim Justice, R, elected (as a Democrat) 49%. Justice, the wealthiest man in West Virginia, switched parties in 2017 and embraced President Trump, but that didn't stop him from facing a spirited primary challenge from his own former commerce secretary, Woody Thrasher. Justice prevailed in the primary with 63 percent. On the Democratic side, Kanawha County Commissioner Ben Salango won a close victory with 39 percent; Elizabeth Warren-endorsed Stephen Smith finished second with 33 percent, and state Sen. Ron Stollings placed a distant third. Current rating: Solid Republican.

West Virginia Senate, Shelley Moore Capito, R, elected 62%. Unsurprisingly, GOP Sen. Shelley Moore Capito was renominated with 83 percent. On the Democratic side, Paula Jean Swearengin leveraged the 30 percent she received in her 2018 primary challenge from the left to Sen. Joe Manchin into a first-place primary victory this year. Swearengin received 38 percent, ahead of former state senator Richard Ojeda (33 percent) and Richie Robb (29 percent). Ojeda burst onto the national scene in 2018 as one of the most intriguing Democratic House challengers in the country. Two years later, he has losses for the House, president, and Senate on his resume. Current rating: Solid Republican.

2020 Gubernatorial Ratings

Toss-Up		
MT Open (Bullock, D)		
Tilt Democratic	Tilt Republican	
Lean Democratic Cooper (D-N.C.)#	Lean Republican Sununu (R-N.H.)	
Likely Democratic	Likely Republican Parson (R-Mo.)	
Solid Democratic Carney (D-Del.) Inslee (D-Wash.)	Solid Republican UT Open (Herbert, R) Burgum (R-N.D.) Holcomb (R-Ind.) Justice (R-W.V.) Scott (R-Vt.)*	
	GOP	DEM
Current Governors	26	24
Not Up This Cycle	19	20
Currently Solid	5	2
Competitive	2	2

Takeovers in Italics, # moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans



Continued from page 1

degree in industrial engineering (1972) and a masters in operations research (1975) from Georgia Tech.

Before running for Senate, Perdue enjoyed a successful business career that took him to Hong Kong as a senior vice president for Asian operations for Sara Lee, and eventually led to stints as CEO at sports apparel giant Reebok (1998-2002), textile firm Pillowtex (2002-03), and Dollar General (2003-2007).

Perdue's time in business made him wealthy — *Roll Call* estimates that he is the seventh-wealthiest Senator — but was not without controversy. Perdue was hired by Pillowtex to turn the 100-year-old North Carolina mainstay around, but left after just nine months and \$1.7 million in compensation, and the company folded soon after, resulting in thousands of lost jobs across the country. The issue — and comments Perdue made in a 2005 deposition about his role outsourcing jobs — were litigated by Perdue's primary and general election opponents in 2014. The then-candidate argued that the company's issues were longstanding, and likened his time at the helm to "running into a burning building."

In 2014, Perdue, whose cousin Sonny Perdue is the former governor of Georgia and current Secretary of Agriculture, announced his bid for Senate. He placed first in the GOP primary with 31 percent but was forced into a runoff, where he defeated Rep. Jack Kingston 51-49 percent.

In the general election against Nunn, Perdue ran as a job creator and spent more than \$4 million of his own money on the way to a 53-45 percent victory.

In the Senate, Perdue serves on the Armed Services, Banking, Budget, Foreign Relations, and Aging committees, and since 2017 has positioned himself as a close ally to President Trump.

Perdue's campaign team includes general consultant Paul Bennecke of Connect South, media consultant Fred Davis of Strategic Perception, pollster Chris Perkins of Ragnar Research, and campaign manager Ben Fry, who was previously Perdue's state director.

The Resistance Hero

Jon Ossoff, 33, burst onto the political scene in early 2017, in the aftermath of Trump's victory. The unknown investigative journalist, who had graduated from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service with a B.S. just eight years prior and had received a masters from the London School of Economics in 2013, announced he would run for Congress to fill the vacancy left by Rep. Tom Price, who had resigned to become Secretary of Health and Human Services.

The special election for Price's district, Georgia's 6th, drew massive nationwide attention, as the nascent "Resistance" to Trump began to search for ways to fight back against the new administration. The suburban Atlanta seat had once been a Republican stronghold, but Trump in the Oval Office sparked a backlash against the GOP among suburban voters.

Mitt Romney won the district by 23 points, but Trump had carried it by just 1.5 percent, and when Price left Congress, Democrats smelled blood. The national party quickly coalesced around Ossoff, who had earned early support from two key Georgia Democrats, Reps. John Lewis and Hank Johnson. Ossoff had interned for Lewis while in high school, and had been a staffer in Johnson's office after college.

Hungry for a win, Democrats across the country poured tens of millions of dollars into the race, propelling Ossoff to 48 percent and a first-place finish in the initial April election, when all candidates from both parties ran on the same ballot. But he failed to break 50 percent

and was forced into a runoff with Republican Karen Handel, the former Georgia Secretary of State.

Republicans, fearful of losing a seat they had held for 40 years, put their own resources behind Handel.

It became the most expensive House race in history. Ossoff raised \$30 million while Handel pulled in \$6.2 million, and outside groups spent tens of millions more.

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2020 House Ratings

Toss-Up (2R, 4D)

GA 7 (Open; Woodall, R)

NY 11 (Rose, D)

IA 3 (Axne, D)

OK 5 (Horn, D)

IL 13 (Davis, R)

SC 1 (Cunningham, D)

Tilt Democratic (10D, 1R)

Tilt Republican (6R)

CA 21 (Cox, D)

MN 1 (Hagedorn, R)

CA 25 (Garcia, R)

NJ 2 (Van Drew, R)

GA 6 (McBath, D)

PA 1 (Fitzpatrick, R)

IA 1 (Finkenauer, D)

PA 10 (Perry, R)

IA 2 (Open; Loeb sack, D)

TX 22 (Open; Olson, R)

ME 2 (Golden, D)

TX 24 (Open; Marchant, R)

MN 7 (Peterson, DFL)

NM 2 (Torres Small, D)

NY 22 (Brindisi, D)

UT 4 (McAdams, D)

VA 7 (Spanberger, D)

	GOP	DEM
116th Congress	201	233
Currently Solid	174	202
Competitive	27	31
Needed for majority	218	

Lean Democratic (8D, 1R)

Lean Republican (6R, 1L)

CA 48 (Rouda, D)

MI 3 (Open; Amash, L)

IL 14 (Underwood, D)

MO 2 (Wagner, R)

KS 3 (Davids, D)

NE 2 (Bacon, R)

NJ 3 (Kim, D)

NY 2 (Open; King, R)

NJ 7 (Malinowski, D)

NY 24 (Katko, R)

TX 7 (Fletcher, D)

OH 1 (Chabot, R)

TX 23 (Open; Hurd, R)

TX 21 (Roy, R)

TX 32 (Allred, D)

VA 2 (Luria, D)

Likely Democratic (9D, 2R)

Likely Republican (9R)

AZ 1 (O'Halleran, D)

AZ 6 (Schweikert, R)

CA 39 (Cisneros, D)

FL 15 (Spano, R)

FL 26 (Mucarsel-Powell, D)

IN 5 (Open; Brooks, R)

NH 1 (Pappas, D)

MI 6 (Upton, R)

MI 8 (Slotkin, D)

MT AL (Open; Gianforte, R)

MI 11 (Stevens, D)

NC 8 (Hudson, R)

NC 2 (Open; Holding, R)

NY 1 (Zeldin, R)

NC 6 (Open; Walker, R)

TX 10 (McCaul, R)

NV 3 (Lee, D)

WA 3 (Herrera-Beutler, R)

PA 8 (Cartwright, D)

PA 17 (Lamb, D)

moved benefiting Democrats, * moved benefiting Republicans Takeovers in Italics

Continued from page 5

During that race, Republicans attacked Ossoff's youth and lack of experience, airing ads that used footage of him from college singing Billy Joel and dressing up as Han Solo, and accusing him of exaggerating his responsibilities as a junior national security aide in Congress. They also repeatedly tied him to then-Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi.

Ossoff lost the July runoff by 4 points, 52-48 percent, an 18-point improvement over the previous Democrat's 24-point loss to Price eight months earlier.

The loss demoralized Democrats, but the party found redemption in the fall of 2018, when it gained 40 seats and the House majority. They even won Georgia's 6th, where Lucy McBath defeated Handel 50.5-49.5 percent.

And they did it without Ossoff, who seemed consigned to be a footnote in the history of the Trump era.

Primary Colors

Ossoff announced his bid for Senate in September of 2019, once again securing the early endorsements of Rep. Johnson and Rep. Lewis, who features prominently in Ossoff's advertising.

In the Democratic primary, he faced former Columbus, Ga., Mayor Teresa Tomlinson, who also had substantial support from the Georgia political establishment, and 2018 Lt. Gov. nominee Sarah Riggs Amico. Due to coronavirus, the primary was delayed by a month and consolidated with the state's presidential contest on June 9.

Ossoff narrowly avoided a runoff, winning 53 percent of the record 1.1 million votes cast; the race took a day to call due to the high number of mail-in votes, which put Ossoff over the edge. Tomlinson came in second with 16 percent.

Ossoff's campaign team includes media consultant Jon Vogel of MVAR for TV, pollster Fred Yang of Garin-Hart-Yang, Mission Control for direct mail, and manager Ellen Foster, who previously managed Anthony Brindisi's campaign in New York's 22nd District,

How It Plays Out

Republicans didn't waste any time diagramming their attacks against Ossoff. Following the primary, the National Republican Senatorial

Television Markets in Georgia

Source: Media Strategies & Research



Committee tweeted out three bullet points that form the basis of their messaging on the Democrat: "unprepared and unaccomplished, resume embellisher, liberal insider."

Republican attacks on Ossoff have focused on authenticity since the House special election, when they painted him as a puppet of California liberals such as Pelosi, and said he exaggerated his national security credentials.

In the runup to the Senate race, the NRSC resurfaced the Han Solo footage and even made a fake campaign site and LinkedIn page mocking Ossoff as a lightweight.

Multiple Republican strategists described Ossoff as an "empty suit" who has never held a "real job" and doesn't have a clearly articulated

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reason for running for office, or a case for why he's the best candidate beyond losing a highly watched special election ("he'll say anything to get elected"). They also believe he underperformed in the primary against two sub-par opponents.

While Republicans acknowledge that with Biden at the top of the ticket rather than Bernie Sanders, it will be more difficult to tie Ossoff to the most liberal elements of the Democratic Party, they will still attempt to do so. One GOP strategist pointed out that a prominent Ossoff backer, former Clarkston Mayor Ted Terry, supports defunding the police, and the Georgia state GOP has already begun attacking Ossoff over Terry's stance.

Mainly, Perdue will try to contrast his long history in business with Ossoff's youth and perceived inexperience.

According to Perdue's public statements and Republican strategists involved in the race, the senator will run a race similar to 2014, focusing on his experience as a job creator and his private sector know-how.

Perdue will attempt to run again as an outsider — his campaign refers to him as "the original outsider" — but unlike in 2014, he is now an incumbent senator with six years in Washington under his belt.

Republican strategists say that Perdue has consciously tied himself closely to Trump, and will highlight his relationship with the president and his role in "Trump's pre-coronavirus economic recovery" throughout the campaign. He will also position himself as the best candidate to lead Georgia out of the coronavirus recession, drawing on his experience as a former Fortune 500 CEO.

One Republican operative specifically cited Perdue's role in lobbying Trump on the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project, which would receive full funding under the president's proposed budget, and Perdue's work with Democratic Rep. David Scott, also of Georgia, on funding for HBCUs, as state-specific achievements the senator will tout during the campaign.

For his part, Ossoff will not shy away from his youth, and multiple Democratic strategists argued that it will be an advantage in the race, which Ossoff will try to make about the staid politics of Washington's good ole boys versus the energy of a fresh face.

In his 2017 congressional run, Ossoff struggled to define his campaign, shifting between an explicitly anti-Trump message and a more boilerplate message of technocratic competency. This allowed Republicans to tar him as gauzy and insubstantial, a charge aided by the fact that Ossoff didn't live in the district, but rather a few miles outside (in a statewide race, this is not an issue).

This year, Ossoff is leaning into anti-corruption as the defining issue of his campaign, in addition to the bread and butter Democratic messages of protecting Obamacare and people with pre-existing conditions, and repealing the Trump tax cuts.

Unlike in 2014, Perdue now has a legislative record on healthcare, taxes, and more, which will be subject to scrutiny — and Ossoff is the one without the burden of a legislative voting record.

The candidate and those around him have highlighted Ossoff's work as an investigative journalist, in particular his work on documentaries about women in the fight against ISIS, uncovering corruption in FIFA, and China's growing influence in Africa.

Ossoff has incorporated the killing of Ahmaud Arbery in Glynn County, Ga., into his messaging as well, decrying local law enforcement's lackluster response as corruption in a TV ad, and emphasizing his support for a new Civil Rights Act and criminal justice reform.

He has also seized on the long lines and unsent absentee ballots that

plagued the Georgia primaries as a rallying cry for a new Voting Rights Act, and participated in a protest at the state capitol.

And Ossoff will try to paint Perdue as personally corrupt and out of touch, drawing attention not just to his comments about outsourcing — which Perdue has long maintained were cherry-picked and misconstrued — but the questions that arose from Perdue's financial transactions earlier this year at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

In particular, Democrats point to Perdue's purchase of stock in DuPont, a chemical company that produces PPE, on the same day as a senators-only briefing on coronavirus. A digital Ossoff ad draws a direct link, but Perdue's team vehemently denies any wrongdoing on the senator's part, saying that Perdue was not even present at the briefing.

Perdue has since announced his advisers will no longer trade individual stocks.

But the issue of financial impropriety will hang over this race regardless of whether voters take issue with Perdue's actions, because Sen. Kelly Loeffler, also on the ballot if she continues to seek election



Caroline Brehman/CQ Roll Call

David Perdue

to the remainder of Isakson's term, will continue to be scrutinized for her much larger trades that sparked a now-closed FBI investigation. Republicans acknowledge that Democrats may go for a "bank shot"

by using Loeffler's issues to weigh down the rest of the ticket; so even if Perdue is kosher, the appearance of impropriety gives Democrats a window of opportunity to weaponize Loeffler's image.

In order to win outright in November, either Perdue or Ossoff has to win a majority — not a guaranteed outcome with several minor candidates also on the ballot. If neither do, the two will advance to a January 5 runoff. If that happens, they'll have company; the concurrent special election, with five major candidates, is almost certainly going to a runoff.

Democrats have a terrible record in Georgia statewide runoffs. The party hasn't won one in at least 30 years, and Democrats typically underperform relative to November. Some Democratic strategists say that may be changing. They point to former Rep. John Barrow's run for secretary of state in 2018, in which he only saw a 0.6 percent dropoff from November to the runoff despite not sharing a ticket with Abrams in the second round, as evidence that Democrats are becoming more competitive.

But Democrats have yet to show they can *improve* their margins in overtime. So while it is possible for Ossoff to win in January, his better shot is in November, when he has the full weight of the national environment behind him.

Ossoff's Cash Crashes Back to Earth

Despite raising \$30 million for his congressional campaign in 2017, Ossoff has raised just \$3.5 million this cycle, plus \$500,000 leftover from 2017 and a \$450,000 personal loan (Ossoff comes from family wealth). In

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his pre-primary report ending May 20, he had just \$950,000 cash on hand.

Perdue begins the general election with a massive financial advantage. On May 20 he reported \$9.4 million in the bank. Perdue also has the ability to write a check of his own, having poured \$3.6 million of his own money into his 2014 campaign.

Democrats believe that Ossoff will be able to raise the money he needs to compete, and point to his 2017 haul as evidence. But they also acknowledge he is unlikely to replicate the record numbers he put up in that race, when it was the focus of the entire country.

Demographic Doom for the GOP?

There are a few trends that should be troubling for Georgia Republicans.

The first is the influx of new voters, a combination of transplants and young people attaining voting age. More than 700,000 new voters have registered since the 2018 election, and they skew younger and more diverse than the Georgia population as a whole, leading Democrats to believe they will on balance bolster Democratic numbers. (In 2018, Abrams won voters age 18-29 by 29 points, 64-35 percent; Black voters by 87 points, 93-6 percent; and Hispanic voters by 25 points, 62-37 percent.)



Jon Ossoff

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

The second is the Democratic shift in Atlanta and its suburbs. In 2014, Republican Nathan Deal won Gwinnett and Cobb Counties with 56 and 57 percent, respectively, a comfortable margin that mirrored John McCain's and Romney's marks in 2008 and 2012, but less than the 60+ percentage mark attained by George W. Bush in 2000 and 2004. In 2016, Hillary Clinton became the first Democrat to win either county since 1976, with 50 percent in Gwinnett and 48 percent in Cobb.

In 2018, Abrams carried Gwinnett with 57 percent and Cobb with 54 percent, while improving on Clinton's already massive margins in Fulton and DeKalb Counties (Atlanta proper) showing that there are still additional Democratic votes to be won in those strongholds. She also loosened the GOP's stranglehold on wealthy Forsyth County, part of the Atlanta suburbs and exurbs; she won 28 percent of the vote there, which was 10 points better than Democratic gubernatorial nominee Jason Carter in 2014 and 4 points better than Clinton.

One data point cited by numerous Democratic strategists as evidence that this year is different was the record turnout in this year's primary, which saw more than 1.1 million votes cast. The previous record for a Democratic primary was 1.06 million in the 2008 presidential primary, and just 550,000 voted in the competitive 2018 gubernatorial primary between Abrams and Stacy Evans. Just under 1 million voters participated in the Republican primary, though there was no statewide contested race.

But in the battleground of Georgia's 7th District (parts of Forsyth and Gwinnett), there were contested primaries on both sides. Of the roughly 150,000 total votes cast, roughly 85,000, or 57 percent, were in the Democratic primary, a 14 percent increase from 2018.

The Early Polling

For a race that until very recently was not set, there has been substantial general election polling over the past several months. The influx — five polls, including three Republican polls — stems largely from competing Republican interests in the state. Interests aligned with both Loeffler and GOP Rep. Doug Collins, who is also running in the Senate special election, have released polling showing their preferred candidate doing well, and Kemp's allies at the Republican State Leadership Committee have released polling supporting his actions on coronavirus.

All five polls included a general election ballot test for the Perdue race, and they show a competitive contest.

A Cygnal poll taken April 25-27 for Collins ally / Georgia House Speaker David Ralston showed Perdue up 45-39 percent on Ossoff. A Public Opinion Strategies poll taken May 4-7 for the Loeffler campaign showed Perdue up just 43-41 percent over Ossoff. A BK Strategies survey commissioned by the RSLC taken May 11-13 had Perdue up 46-41 percent, and a Civiqs / Daily Kos (D) survey found Ossoff leading Perdue 47-45 percent. Ossoff also led, 45-44 percent, in a PPP (D) poll taken June 12-13.

At this point in 2014, polls also showed a close race between Perdue and Nunn, with Perdue leading an early-May NBC / Marist poll 45-41 percent, and Nunn leading a PPP (D) poll 48-46 percent in late May.

The Bottom Line

This race is not a must-win for Democrats looking to take back the Senate, and it has been so long since a Democrat won statewide that it does not occupy the same space in the imagination as Kansas, Montana, and Iowa.

But between a tight presidential race, a scandal-tinged special election, and two top-tier House races in the Atlanta suburbs, it would be a mistake not to give this race the attention it deserves.

Republicans truly believe that Ossoff is a particularly weak candidate against whom Perdue will be able to make a clear and effective contrast. But even they do not deny that the race will be competitive due to Georgia's changing population and the explosion of Democratic votes in the suburbs.

If the presidential race continues on its current trajectory, the contrast between candidates may not matter as much as Republicans hope. A national Biden win of high single digits or low double digits — a margin not seen since the 1990s but indicated by current polling — could drag down GOP candidates across the board, including Perdue.

But if Trump's standing improves and the presidential race in Georgia looks more like the president's 5-point win in 2016, Perdue can more easily make this race a contrast between himself and Ossoff. It's a surer path to victory than worrying about becoming collateral damage from an unpopular president's landslide loss. **IE**

CALENDAR

Sept. 29	First Presidential Debate (Indiana)
Oct. 7	Lone Vice Presidential Debate (Utah)
Oct. 15	Second Presidential Debate (Michigan)
Oct. 22	Third Presidential Debate (Tennessee)
Nov. 3	Election Day