

Inside Elections

with

Nathan L. Gonzales

Nonpartisan Analysis

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Georgia Senate Runoffs: Policy Agendas, Outside Spending, and Polls

By Jacob Rubashkin

On January 5, 2021, voters in Georgia will head to the polls to participate in the most consequential Senate runoffs in modern history, the outcomes of which will decide which party controls the Senate, and if the Biden administration enters with a united or divided government.

Already, more than one million voters have cast their ballots, via mail or early voting, and hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on advertising and other efforts on behalf of Republican Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler, and their Democratic challengers Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, respectively.

In previous newsletters we have reported on the history of runoffs in Georgia, the backgrounds of the four candidates, and the messaging they've used in TV ads. This week, we explore the four candidates' policy positions, which outside groups are spending money in Georgia and how they're spending it, and what the polling can tell us about where the two races stand.

Candidate Policies: What Kind of Senator Will They Be?

Amid the half-billion dollars of advertising flooding Georgia's airwaves, it can be easy to forget that at their core, these elections are about selecting two policymakers.

Loeffler and Perdue have largely run as checks on Democratic power. Both have made clear that the extent to which their victories will have an influence on policy in the coming years, it will be stopping Democrats from passing any significant legislation of their own.

This is the crux of the "Stop Socialism, Save America" line embraced by Republicans. Perdue and Loeffler are presenting Georgians with a slate of policies — Medicare for All, defunding the police, the Green New Deal, expanding the Supreme Court, admitting DC and Puerto Rico as states, abolishing the Electoral College, granting amnesty to undocumented immigrants — and asking voters to vote for them so they can prevent the list from becoming reality.

It is worth noting that all of those policies would require Democrats to both abolish the filibuster, which several Democratic senators, including pivotal moderate Sen. Joe Manchin, are on record opposing, and maintain total party cohesion on highly controversial bills which only have limited support within the caucus. To Republicans though, each additional Democrat on Capitol Hill is a slippery slope toward that Democratic wish list.

Continued on page 6

Control of the Senate

116th Congress

53 Republicans, 47 Democrats

117th Congress*

50 Republicans, 48 Democrats

2020 Elections

Seat Change

D +1 *

*Upcoming Races (Jan. 5)

Georgia (David Perdue)

Georgia (Kelly Loeffler)

States that Flipped

Democrat to Republican

Alabama (Doug Jones)

Republican to Democrat

Colorado (Cory Gardner)

Arizona (Martha McSally)

New Senators

Tommy Tuberville, R, Alabama

Mark Kelly, D, Arizona

John Hickenlooper, D, Colorado

Roger Marshall, R, Kansas

Ben Ray Lujan, D, New Mexico

Bill Hagerty, R, Tennessee

Cynthia Lummis, R, Wyoming

Candidates for Jan. 5 Georgia Senate Runoffs

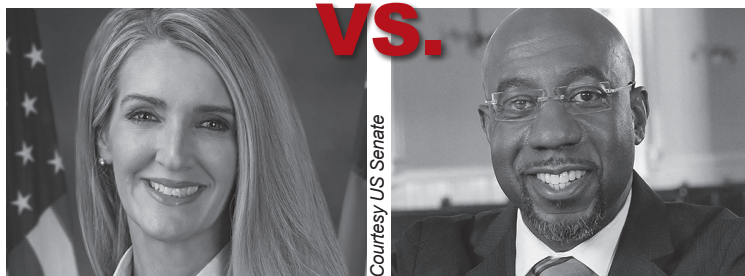


Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

David Perdue (R)

Jon Ossoff (D)



Courtesy US Senate

Courtesy Warnock for Senate

Kelly Loeffler (R)

Raphael Warnock (D)

Statewide Baseline Updates After the 2020 Election

By Bradley Wascher

With the election results now certified, it's easier to begin analyzing what happened. *Inside Elections* is excited to roll out updates to our Baseline metric, now incorporating results from 2020. Baseline captures a state or congressional district's political performance by combining all federal and state election results over the past four election cycles into a single average. It can help describe the themes that have emerged over the past few years.

One way to understand those patterns is by looking at the 2020 Baseline scores (using results from 2014–2020) in relation to those from four years ago (using results from 2010–2016).

At first glance, not much appears to have changed. Comparing 2016 Baseline scores to 2020 Baselines, states drifted toward either party by only 1.5 points on average, and 15 states saw their Baseline margins move by less than 1 point. Thus, in this regard, the political landscape which led to the election of Joe Biden in 2020 is — unsurprisingly — similar to that which led to the election of Donald Trump in 2016.

Digging deeper, though, the differences start to become more clear.

Take West Virginia as an example. According to the 2016 Baseline, a typical Democrat could have expected to earn 46.2 percent in the state, and a typical Republican could have expected to earn 50.6 percent. But in the 2020 Baseline, the average Democrat in West Virginia would receive just 38 percent against the average Republican receiving 58.8 percent. This 16.4-point swing toward the GOP was the largest change in any state's Baseline between 2016 and 2020.

If anything, West Virginia's major movement reflects the tail end of a decades-long trend. The state voted consistently blue at the presidential level into the 1990s, and continued to prefer Democrats in statewide contests for the next few cycles afterward. In more recent elections, however, West Virginia has veered sharply in favor of Republicans, remarkably jumping from R +5.8 in 2018 to R +20.8 in 2020.

This pattern is reflected across other states with changing, and hardening, partisan preferences as well. Missouri and Virginia — two states that have shed their battleground status over the past 20 years — have further solidified their Baselines since 2016, respectively moving toward Republicans by 8.3 points and Democrats by 5 points. Overall, many reliably safe states inched even deeper into their partisan camps.

The most electorally consequential shifts, by contrast, have occurred in the Southwest.

2020 marked the second time since 1952 that a Republican failed to secure Arizona's electoral votes, and after the past two cycles Democrats now hold both seats in the United States Senate. Baseline tells the story:

in the post-2016 calculations, a typical Democrat in Arizona could have expected to earn 44 percent of the vote; post-2018, that number rose to 46.6 percent; and post-2020, the Democratic benchmark in Arizona now stands at 47.6 percent. Pair this with a drop in support for Republicans, and the state's overall Baseline swung toward Democrats by 5.8 points — going from R +9.4 post-2016 to R +4.9 post-2018 to R +3.5 post-2020.

The same goes for Texas, which is growing increasingly competitive. Nudged by above-average performances from candidates such as Beto O'Rourke in 2018, its statewide Baseline has moved from R +19.9 post-2016 to R +14.5 post-2018 to R +13.7 post-2020.

There's evidence from this election that this shift in Texas will continue into the future. A typical Democrat could expect to earn 41.5 percent of the vote according to the post-2020 Baseline, but Biden outperformed that benchmark by receiving 46.5 percent against Trump, thereby giving the president-elect a Vote Above Replacement (VAR) score in Texas of 5 points.

But fans of political compromise might not be pleased by those new numbers. After all, this initial analysis suggests that presidential voting trends have finally seeped down-ballot in most states. The latest Baseline and VAR scores could therefore further confirm what we've already observed for years — an enduring increase in polarization and, by extension, a discernible decrease in ticket-splitting. **IE**

Statewide Baseline Changes in Battlegrounds

State	2016	2020	Difference
Texas	R +19.9	R +13.7	D +6.2
Arizona	R +9.4	R +3.5	D +5.9
Georgia	R +12.5	R +7.9	D +4.6
Florida	R +8.9	R +5.6	D +3.3
Michigan	R +1.4	D +1.8	D +3.2
Wisconsin	R +3.3	R +0.4	D +2.9
Iowa	R +8	R +5.7	D +2.3
Minnesota	D +6.6	D +7.4	D +0.8
Ohio	R +12.3	R +11.5	D +0.8
Nevada	R +3.1	R +2.5	D +0.6
North Carolina	R +2.2	R +2.3	R +0.1
Pennsylvania	D +4	D +3.7	R +0.3

Note: margin discrepancies due to rounding

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2020 Elections and Beyond: Results vs. Reactions

What happened in the elections matters less than what the politicians think happened in the elections. It's a lesson from earlier this summer, and no more applicable than right now.

Republicans could have taken President Donald Trump's defeat, another two years in the House minority and a loss of at least one U.S. Senate seat as a repudiation of their leader and their party. But nothing could be farther from the truth.

Republicans believe they're on the ascent. To many of them Biden's victory is shrouded in widespread voting irregularities and controversy that have yet to be proven in court, and some even believe Trump is the true winner of the presidential race. The GOP is confident in their ability to maintain their Senate majority by winning the runoffs in Georgia, as they have in the past. And a double-digit seat gain in the House is the ultimate way to thumb their nose at Democrats and the media in one swoop.


The reaction has implications for Capitol Hill and the future of the GOP. After defying expectations, Republicans feel little need to be conciliatory when it comes to legislating, particularly when history shows the GOP is well positioned to win enough seats in the upcoming midterm with a Democratic president to win the House majority.

From an electoral perspective, the GOP will just move forward in the same direction as it has for the last four or so years under Trump. The biggest question is when — or if — Trump is ready to cede the mantle of leadership and if Republican voters trust someone else.

Along the same line, it's unclear when, how — or if — Republicans will move on from the 2020 election. Even though the president and his team have been unsuccessful in more than 50 court challenges (including two attempts with the U.S. Supreme Court), some Republicans are still unconvinced. Senate Republicans are starting to acknowledge Biden's victory, but that's not necessarily a reflection of the party as a whole.

Meanwhile, Democrats are balancing the satisfaction of defeating their common enemy with retrospection and infighting about how they fell short of lofty goals set by faulty polling. And even though the president is usually the leader of his party, Joe Biden will oversee a divided party without a consensus on policy, strategy, and tactics.

It will be interesting to see how the narrative of the 2020 elections changes if Democrats win both Georgia races and capture control of the Senate, since a significant part of the GOP excitement is based on the strong showing by GOP candidates in key races that were viewed as competitive before the election.

One of the biggest challenges for the country is a lack of consensus about the results. At least a third of the country might not ever believe Biden was fairly elected. A second Trump term after the states certified Joe Biden's victory and submitted more than 270 Electoral College votes for the former vice president would enrage more than half the country and undermine the entire electoral process. At a minimum, it will be a difficult legislative environment when some bipartisan consensus will be necessary to address the challenges and crisis facing the country. 

2020 Statewide Baselines

State	Democrat	Republican	Margin
Alabama	38.5%	61.2%	R +22.6%
Alaska	41.6%	51.5%	R +9.9%
Arizona	47.6%	51.1%	R +3.5%
Arkansas	36.5%	59.5%	R +23.0%
California	60.4%	39.2%	D +21.2%
Colorado	49.9%	45.8%	D +4.1%
Connecticut	55.2%	41.6%	D +13.6%
Delaware	57.1%	40.9%	D +16.2%
Florida	46.4%	51.9%	R +5.6%
Georgia	45.6%	53.4%	R +7.9%
Hawaii	67.9%	29.2%	D +38.8%
Idaho	35.9%	61.5%	R +25.6%
Illinois	55.3%	41.0%	D +14.3%
Indiana	40.5%	56.4%	R +15.9%
Iowa	45.7%	51.4%	R +5.7%
Kansas	39.7%	58.1%	R +18.3%
Kentucky	41.5%	57.1%	R +15.6%
Louisiana	40.4%	58.6%	R +18.1%
Maine	49.5%	45.2%	D +4.3%
Maryland	60.8%	36.7%	D +24.2%
Massachusetts	61.7%	35.1%	D +26.6%
Michigan	49.3%	47.5%	D +1.8%
Minnesota	51.1%	43.7%	D +7.4%
Mississippi	39.1%	58.7%	R +19.6%
Missouri	40.6%	56.1%	R +15.5%
Montana	42.9%	54.6%	R +11.7%
Nebraska	36.3%	60.7%	R +24.4%
New Hampshire	49.9%	47.1%	D +2.8%
New Jersey	55.7%	42.1%	D +13.6%
New Mexico	54.3%	44.1%	D +10.2%
Nevada	46.0%	48.5%	R +2.5%
New York	61.5%	35.8%	D +25.6%
North Carolina	48.3%	50.6%	R +2.3%
North Dakota	31.8%	65.0%	R +33.1%
Ohio	43.2%	54.7%	R +11.5%
Oklahoma	34.2%	62.9%	R +28.7%
Oregon	52.8%	41.2%	D +11.7%
Pennsylvania	50.5%	46.8%	D +3.7%
Rhode Island	60.5%	35.6%	D +24.9%
South Carolina	40.9%	56.9%	R +16.0%
South Dakota	33.6%	63.3%	R +29.7%
Tennessee	35.9%	61.0%	R +25.1%
Texas	41.5%	55.3%	R +13.7%
Utah	31.0%	62.3%	R +31.3%
Vermont	59.2%	35.6%	D +23.6%
Virginia	53.3%	45.2%	D +8.1%
Washington	55.8%	43.2%	D +12.7%
West Virginia	38.0%	58.8%	R +20.8%
Wisconsin	48.5%	49.0%	R +0.4%
Wyoming	26.8%	67.9%	R +41.0%

Note: margin discrepancies due to rounding

2022 Report Shorts

California Dreamin'

Senate. Soon to be vacant due to Kamala Harris's election as vice president. Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom will appoint a successor to Harris, and this seat was already scheduled for an election in 2022. Various constituencies are reportedly lobbying Newsom for their preferred candidates, in the hopes that Newsom could make history by appointing the state's first Latino senator, or elevate a Black woman to replace the departing Harris, who was just the second Black woman to serve in the Senate.

21st District (Southern Central Valley and part of Bakersfield) David Valadao, R. Elected 2020 with 50%. Valadao is back after just two years, having narrowly reclaimed his seat from Democrat TJ Cox in one of 2020's closest races. Cox, widely considered to be one of Democrats' weakest incumbents, has already signalled he intends to seek Round 3 with Valadao, telling supporters in a post-election email "I'm running again to take back my seat for Democrats and save our majority." Former state Assemblywoman Nicole Parra, a Democrat, has already announced her campaign. It's also unclear what this district (or any district) looks like in 2022 after redistricting.

25th District (Northern Los Angeles County suburbs) Mike Garcia, R. Re-elected 2020 with 50%. Former Democratic Assemblywoman Christy Smith is hoping that the third time's the charm. Smith, who lost to Garcia twice in 2020 — first in a May special election by 10 points, and again in November by just a few hundred votes — has already filed to run for the seat again in 2022, and recently tweeted a clip from the *Terminator* series in which protagonist Sarah Connor says "I'll be back."

48th District (Coastal Orange County) Michelle Steel, R. Elected 2020 with 51%. Outgoing Democratic Rep. Harley Rouda signalled that he would seek a return to this Orange County seat in 2022, after serving just one term before being ousted by Steel, one of several Republican women of color to win a seat in 2020.

Trump Affect

Alaska Senate. Lisa Murkowski, R, re-elected 2016 (44%). President Donald Trump has long had a contentious relationship with Alaska's senior senator, who broke with him on high-profile issues such as Obamacare repeal and the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court. After Murkowski said over the summer that she was struggling with whether or not to support Trump in the 2020 election, the president pledged that he would travel to Alaska to campaign against Murkowski in 2022. "Get any candidate ready, good or bad, I don't care, I'm endorsing," Trump wrote on Twitter, adding "If you have a pulse, I'm with you!" Alaska jettisoned its old system of elections in favor of a novel two-round system where all candidates appear on the same primary ballot, and the top four vote getters progress to the general election, which will be conducted using instant runoff ranked choice voting.

Georgia Governor. Brian Kemp, R, elected 2018 (50%). Kemp is planning to seek re-election in one of the nation's newest battleground states, but his ongoing feud with Trump over the results of the presidential election in Georgia could complicate things. The president has trained his fire squarely on Kemp, previously one of his strongest allies, recently tweeting that Georgians should "vote [him] out of office." While holding a rally in Georgia, Trump openly floated

2022 Senate Races

Democrats (13)

Bennet (D-Colo.)
Blumenthal (D-Conn.)
Cortez Masto (D-Nev.)
Duckworth (D-Ill.)
Harris (D-Calif.)*
Hassan (D-N.H.)
Kelly (D-Ariz.)
Leahy (D-Vt.)
Murray (D-Wash.)
Schatz (D-Hawaii)
Schumer (D-N.Y.)
Van Hollen (D-Md.)
Wyden (D-Ore.)

Republicans (21)

NC Open (Burr, R)
PA Open (Toomey, R)
Blunt (R-Mo.)
Boozman (R-Ark.)
Crapo (R-Idaho)
Grassley (R-Iowa)
Hoeven (R-N.D.)
Johnson (R-Wis.)
Kennedy (R-La.)
Lankford (R-Okla.)
Lee (R-Utah)
Loeffler (R-Ga.)**
Moran (R-Kan.)
Murkowski (R-Alaska)
Paul (R-Ky.)
Portman (R-Ohio)
Rubio (R-Fla.)
Scott (R-S.C.)
Shelby (R-Ala.)
Thune (R-S.D.)
Young (R-Ind.)

*Likely to be her appointed successor

**Or Raphael Warnock (D) per Jan. 5 results

a potential primary challenge to Kemp from outgoing GOP Rep. Doug Collins, who lost a race for Senate this year. On the Democratic side, 2018 gubernatorial nominee Stacey Abrams is widely expected to run again.

North Carolina Senate. Open; Richard Burr, R, not seeking re-election. In 2016, Burr said he wouldn't seek re-election in 2022, but the senior senator has been mum on his plans since. (It doesn't help that Burr is reportedly still under FBI investigation for stock trades he made at the outset of the pandemic in February.) Other North Carolina Republicans are taking him at his word and planning for an open-seat contest. GOP Rep. Mark Walker, who was redistricted out of his seat this cycle and didn't seek re-election, has already announced a run, while President Trump's daughter-in-law, North Carolina native Lara Lea Trump, is reportedly feeling out a run herself. On the Democratic side, state Sen. Erica Smith, who lost the 2020 Democratic primary to former state Sen. Cal Cunningham, is running. Trump won the state by 1.4 percent in this year's presidential race.

Ohio Governor. Mike DeWine, R, elected 2018 (50%). DeWine has drawn the frustration of President Trump on several occasions over the past year, first over the pro-active covid restrictions he placed on the state, and more recently over the first-term governor's acknowledgement that Joe Biden won this year's presidential election. In mid-November, Trump openly solicited a GOP primary challenger to DeWine; Rep. Jim Jordan, one of Trump's most fervent backers, and former Rep. Jim Renacci, who briefly ran for governor in 2018 before switching to the Senate race (which he lost) are two possibilities.

Lessons and Challenges: Assessing the Performance of Polls in the 2020 Election

By Bradley Wascher

In the six weeks since November 3rd, much has been said about the performance of election polling. Were the polls good enough, or were they catastrophically wrong? The answer of course depends on whom you ask, but one thing is clear: pollsters could have done better.

To be fair, the argument is often made that scientific surveys were never meant to measure the attitudes of the electorate with infallible accuracy and precision — most pollsters maintain that their numbers should be treated as approximations at a point in time, rather than surefire prognostications of the future.

Regardless, though, there's no denying that election polls are placed under a microscope by both the public and the media. And in 2020, the picture was muddier than we had hoped.

Now that states have certified their official results, it appears election polls at the state level will end up being off by 4 or 5 points on average. But these patterns vary from state to state.

Take, for example, Georgia, which might have been the biggest win for polling accuracy on election night. More than a dozen surveys of the presidential race were fielded in Georgia during the last two weeks of the campaign, averaging to a razor-thin lead of 1.3 points for Joe Biden in our final Snapshot estimates; according to the certified election returns, he ended up carrying the state by less than 1 percent (0.3 percent). Additionally, many surveys of the two Georgia Senate races correctly predicted that both contests would go to runoffs.

Georgia wasn't the only state where polls came close to reflecting the true results. The final few presidential surveys in Mississippi and Colorado were also within 1 point of Biden's eventual margin. Even in battlegrounds such as Minnesota and Arizona, polls respectively missed the mark by 2.2 points and 2.3 points on average, just outside the margin of error.

But a common problem plagued polls in Georgia, Minnesota, Arizona, and practically every other state: they all underestimated President Donald Trump's support.

This is precisely what happened in Pennsylvania too. An average of the state's 37 public presidential polls in the final two weeks predicted a Biden win of 50.2-46 percent over Trump. The actual result, however, was 50 percent for Biden and 48.8 percent for Trump. While the estimated margin was off by only 3 points, most of that error failed to capture support for the Republican, not the Democrat.

So it shouldn't come as a surprise that across the board, polls performed worse in states won by Trump than those won by Biden — the average absolute error is on track to be 4 points in Biden states but 6.8 points in Trump states. Alongside spoiling projections of the presidential election, these kinds of misses also sunk projections for the House and Senate: in many key congressional races, Republican candidates exceeded race raters' and pollsters' expectations.

It will take time for organizations such as the American Association for Public Opinion Research to properly analyze the numbers and diagnose why these failures occurred. Part of the hurdle, at least with early post-mortems, is that the errors are inconsistent.

For instance, in terms of support, Biden underperformed his polls in

Wisconsin by 2.9 points. And the overall margin was off by 7.6 points, the largest miss of any state with at least five public surveys fielded in the final two weeks of the campaign. But again, the same wasn't seen in Minnesota, Wisconsin's demographically similar (albeit higher-educated) neighbor to the west.

Therefore, until more pollsters can make their raw data available, we won't know the benefit gained from certain methodological decisions, such as weighting by respondents' education. Likewise, future analysis will also confirm the extent to which sampling designs have failed to reach those in Latino communities, as well as whether non-response from Trump supporters became widespread enough to significantly affect surveys' topline results. There's a lot left to unpack.

In spite of this worrying uncertainty, though, some silver linings do remain for the polling industry.

The final pre-election surveys correctly "called" the winner in 48 of 50 states, only missing Florida and North Carolina. On top of this, online polls — which are usually cheaper and simpler to conduct than their live telephone counterparts — have continued to catch up in terms of track record and ubiquity. In fact, there were more public polls conducted in the two weeks preceding this November's contest than in the same span for any election prior.

Optimistic true believers like to think of each election cycle as a learning opportunity for polls to improve the next time. And by that metric, 2020 should carry indispensable lessons.



Polls Underestimated Trump in Battlegrounds

Across key states, President Donald Trump's support was meaningfully lower in final polling averages than the actual electoral results

State	Poll Average	Final Result	Poll Error
Iowa	48.0%	53.1%	-5.1 points
Wisconsin	44.1%	48.8%	-4.8 points
Ohio	48.8%	53.3%	-4.5 points
Florida	47.0%	51.2%	-4.2 points
Michigan	43.8%	47.8%	-4.0 points
Texas	49.1%	52.1%	-3.0 points
Arizona	46.2%	49.1%	-2.9 points
Pennsylvania	46.0%	48.8%	-2.8 points
Minnesota	42.6%	45.3%	-2.7 points
North Carolina	47.4%	49.9%	-2.6 points
Nevada	45.7%	47.7%	-2.0 points
Georgia	47.6%	49.3%	-1.6 points
Average			-3.3 points

Note: findings also consistent using two-party shares
Sources: state election offices; Snapshot polling averages

Continued from page 1

Both incumbents have highlighted their roles in passing the CARES Act in late March, touting the money their state has received from that federal package and tying it in with their identities as seasoned job creators. But as *Roll Call* noted in early December, Loeffler and Perdue initially supported a much smaller stimulus package, and were opposed to the increase in unemployment assistance included in the CARES Act. Perdue also expressed disapproval with the \$1,200 direct stimulus checks disbursed by the government, which have become a sticking point issue in the latest round of negotiations as well.

Perdue and Loeffler both adhere to Republican orthodoxy on most issues. They are pro-life, pro-Second Amendment, and fierce in their support of Trump.

And though neither candidate has emphasized policy in their campaign, Perdue has engaged more in policy questions than has Loeffler.

The issue page of Perdue's website cites several specific pieces of legislation the senator supports, including a health care bill (the PROTECT Act, which would repeal Obamacare but still require insurers to cover those with pre-existing conditions) and the JUSTICE Act (South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott's policing bill), as well as his support for the Savannah Harbor expansion project and his advocacy for HBCUs, which his campaign has cited as a bipartisan credential.

Loeffler's issue page, however, is consistently vague, eschewing specific policy for broad statements and repeated support for Trump. It also does not appear to have been updated since at least the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. There is no mention of the coronavirus on the page, which still states that the unemployment rate nationally and in Georgia is at a historic low. The page also touts Loeffler's relationship with Gov. Brian Kemp, who has fallen out of favor with Trump and Georgia Republicans following the president's loss.

In contrast, the Democratic candidates, particularly Ossoff, have placed greater emphasis on their policy agendas, and working with, rather than forming a bulwark against, the incoming administration. At the core of Ossoff and Warnock's call for a "New Georgia" are two policies: the New Civil Rights Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.

The New Civil Rights Act is a proposed bill that would eliminate sentencing disparities, ban private prisons, legalize cannabis, end cash bail, abolish the death penalty, and strengthen existing civil rights laws.

The John Lewis Voting Rights Act, which passed the U.S. House following the death of its namesake, civil rights icon and Ossoff mentor Georgia Rep. John Lewis, would reinstate the preclearance provisions of the original 1965 Voting Rights Act that the Supreme Court struck down in 2013.

As the runoffs have progressed, the two Democrats have begun arguing for greater economic stimulus in response to the pandemic, in particular direct payments to the American people. Both Ossoff and Warnock support another round of \$1,200 payments.

Both candidates also support the Equality Act, which would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. That bill currently has the support of 48 senators, meaning that unlike the Green New Deal, defunding the police, or other similar proposals, an Ossoff/Warnock victory would give it majority support, with Vice President Kamala Harris potentially needed to break a 50-50 tie.

In addition to opposing both the Green New Deal and defunding the police, both Ossoff and Warnock also oppose Medicare for All, though both are in favor of adding a public option to Obamacare, which

Control of the House

116th Congress

233 Democrats, 201 Republicans,
1 Libertarian

117th Congress

TBD

2020 Elections

Seat Change
R +10

Projected Range
R +10-12

Republicans need a net gain of 17 seats for a majority

Districts that Flipped Party Hands

Democrat to Republican	Republican to Democrat	Libertarian to Republican
California's 21st	Minnesota's 7th	Georgia's 7th
California's 39th	New Mexico's 2nd	North Carolina's 2nd
California's 48th	New York's 11th	North Carolina's 6th
Florida's 26th	Oklahoma's 5th	
Florida's 27th	South Carolina's 1st	
Iowa's 1st	Utah's 4th	

Uncalled Races Categorized by Leading Party

Republican Holds	Flips from Democrat to Republican	Democratic Holds
	Iowa's 2nd	
	New York's 22nd	

New House Members

Jerry Carl, R, Alabama's 1st	Michelle Fischbach, R, Minnesota's 7th
Barry Moore, R, Alabama's 2nd	Cori Bush, D, Missouri's 1st
Jay Obernolte, R, California's 8th	Matt Rosendale, R, Montana At-Large
David Valadao, R, California's 21st	Yvette Herrell, R, New Mexico's 2nd
Young Kim, R, California's 39th	Teresa Leger Fernandez, D, New Mexico's 3rd
Michelle Steel, R, California's 48th	Andrew Garbarino, R, New York's 2nd
Darrell Issa, R, California's 50th	Nicole Malliotakis, R, New York's 11th
Sara Jacobs, D, California's 53rd	Ritchie Torres, D, New York's 15th
Lauren Boebert, R, Colorado's 3rd	Jamaal Bowman, D, New York's 16th
Kat Cammack, R, Florida's 3rd	Mondaire Jones, D, New York's 17th
Scott Franklin, R, Florida's 15th	Deborah Ross, D, North Carolina's 2nd
Byron Donalds, R, Florida's 19th	Kathy Manning, D, North Carolina's 11th
Carlos Giménez, R, Florida's 26th	Madison Cawthorn, R, North Carolina's 11th
Maria Elvira Salazar, R, Florida's 27th	Stephanie Bice, R, Oklahoma's 5th
Nikema Williams, D, Georgia's 5th	Cliff Bentz, R, Oregon's 2nd
Carolyn Bourdeaux, D, Georgia's 7th	Nancy Mace, R, South Carolina's 1st
Andrew Clyde, R, Georgia's 9th	Diana Harshbarger, R, Tennessee's 1st
Marjorie Taylor Greene, Georgia's 14th	Pat Fallon, R, Texas' 4th
Kai Kahele, D, Hawaii's 2nd	August Pfluger, R, Texas' 11th
Marie Newman, D, Illinois' 3rd	Ronny Jackson, R, Texas' 13th
Mary Miller, R, Illinois' 15th	Pete Sessions, R, Texas' 17th
Frank Mrvan, D, Indiana's 1st	Troy Nehls, R, Texas' 22nd
Victoria Spartz, R, Indiana's 5th	Tony Gonzales, R, Texas' 23rd
Ashley Hinson, R, Iowa's 1st	Beth Van Duyne, R, Texas' 24th
Randy Feenstra, R, Iowa's 4th	Blake Moore, R, Utah's 1st
Tracey Mann, R, Kansas' 1st	Burgess Owens, R, Utah's 4th
Jake LaTurner, R, Kansas' 2nd	Bob Good, R, Virginia's 5th
Jake Auchincloss, D, Massachusetts' 4th	Marilyn Strickland, Washington's 10th
Peter Meijer, R, Michigan's 3rd	Scott Fitzgerald, Wisconsin's 5th
Lisa McClain, R, Michigan's 10th	

Republicans view as a backdoor maneuver in favor of government-controlled healthcare.

Warnock and Ossoff also adhere to their party's mainstream on a whole host of issues: raising the federal minimum wage to \$15, overturning *Citizens United*, expanding Medicaid, universal background checks on gun sales, protecting DACA recipients and creating a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

In some policy areas, Ossoff has staked out comparatively more explicit positions than Warnock. He explicitly supports debt-free public college and free vocational training, while Warnock is more vague on those issues. Ossoff has also endorsed a ban on semiautomatic weapons

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while Warnock has not, though Warnock has spoken favorably about gun control in the past.

Ossoff has also been more willing to promote his policy stances in his advertising, making civil rights, voting rights, campaign finance reform, and coronavirus stimulus key components of his pitch to voters. He also keeps a drawing promoting the Voting Rights Act in the background of all of his TV appearances.

Warnock has focused more on his personal story. His positive ads (which, as he faces an onslaught of GOP attacks painting him as a radical communist, seek to portray him in as unthreatening a light as possible) focus far more on his upbringing in the Georgia projects and his relatability to the average voter than they do the policies he supports.

Who's Getting Involved?

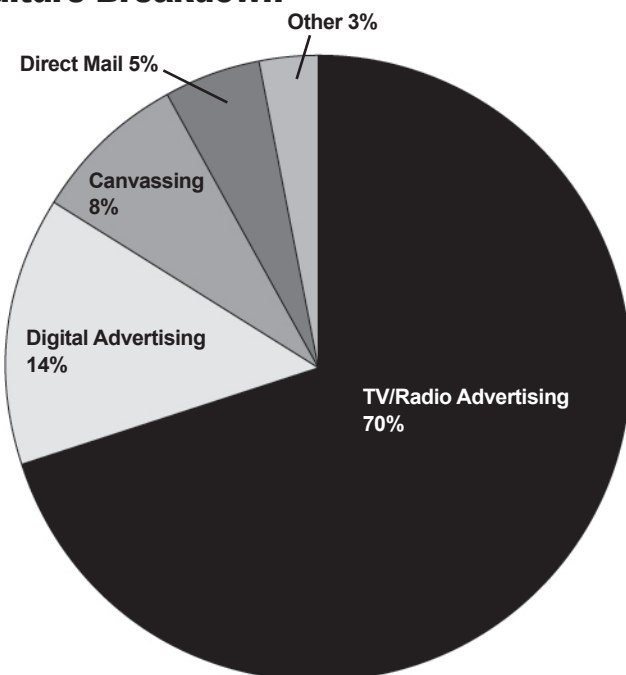
In addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars being spent by the campaigns themselves, Georgia has seen an influx of outside money on both sides of the aisle, in the form of independent expenditures.

According to Federal Election Commission data accessed on Dec. 16, more than 100 outside groups have reported independent expenditures totaling more than \$174 million across both runoffs since Nov. 4, the day after the general election. Each race has attracted equivalent sums of money, with outside groups spending about \$87 million on each so far, per an accounting of FEC filings.

Over half of that amount, about \$101 million, comes from the two parties' main Super PACs — Senate Majority PAC on the left and Senate Leadership Fund on the right — and their various affiliated groups.

Combined, Republican outside groups are outspending Democratic outside groups by a factor of greater than two to one, with GOP allies reporting \$121 million in independent expenditures and Democratic groups reporting \$50 million. Groups often report spending in estimates, so these are all approximate figures, and more spending is reported every day.

Republican Independent Expenditure Breakdown



Source: Federal Election Commission, accessed 12/16/20

Eleven outside Republican groups have reported more than \$1 million dollars spent so far. In addition to SLF and its affiliated organizations, the Koch brothers outlet Americans for Prosperity Action, the National Republican Senatorial Committee, billionaire Ken Griffin's National Victory Action Fund, Loeffler-aligned Georgia United Victory, the Club for Growth, the Republican National Committee, the pro-life group Women Speak Out (an affiliate of Susan B. Anthony List), the NRA, the Rand Paul-affiliated Protect Freedom PAC, and the Tea Party group Freedomworks have all invested seven figures in Georgia.

On the Democratic side, six groups have so far reported spending more than \$1 million. In addition to SMP and its affiliates, seven-figure spenders include the textiles and hospitality labor union UNITE HERE (via Take Back 2020 PAC), Black PAC (funded largely by former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg and other Democratic super PACs), American Bridge PAC, the union-funded Working People Rising PAC, and the newly-created New South Super PAC.

Although Democrats are being vastly outspent overall, an analysis reveals that Democratic outside groups are actually outspending GOP groups on canvassing, \$13.7 million to \$9.7 million. Several Democratic strategists pointed to the party's ground game as a point of strength in the state.

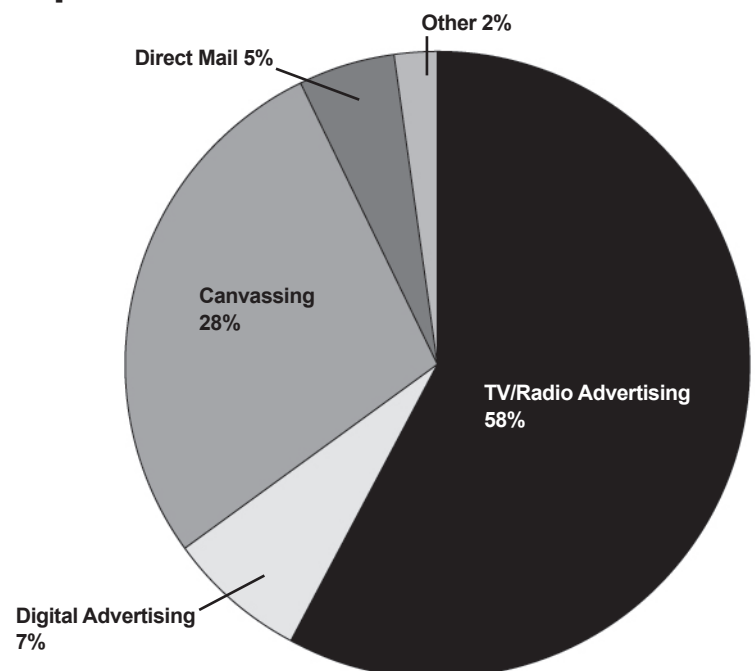
While Republican groups have put roughly 8 percent of their total spending toward canvassing, Democrats have dedicated nearly 30 percent. Democratic groups have directed less of their spending toward digital advertising and direct mail than have Republicans.

Issue groups from across the nation have also directed their efforts toward Georgia, a recognition of how pivotal the state's two Senate seats are to the direction of legislation over the next two years.

On the Democratic side, a dozen labor-affiliated groups have spent a combined \$10.4 million to boost the candidacies of Ossoff and Warnock. The Sierra Club, Human Rights Campaign, and Planned Parenthood

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Democratic Independent Expenditure Breakdown



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have each made six-figure investments in the race so far.

Republicans have seen massive support from anti-tax groups; spending by the Club for Growth and Americans for Prosperity alone account for about half of the \$9.7 million Republican canvassing dollars. Gun rights groups (\$3.9 million) and pro-life groups (\$4.6 million) are also pumping money into the state.

One note about outside spending: although Democrats are being vastly outspent on TV advertising bought by outside groups, and have far fewer future reservations planned over the next month, the two Democratic candidates are actually set to outspend their two GOP counterparts on the airwaves, \$158 million to \$94 million, according to data from Kantar/CMAG.

That is important because candidates have access to significantly lower advertising rates (specifically what is called the Lowest Unit Rate) than outside groups. For instance, in the week of Dec. 14-20, the Ossoff campaign paid Atlanta NBC affiliate WXIA \$60,000 to run ten 30-second ads during the 7:30-8pm showing of *Jeopardy*. In that same week, Democratic Super PAC Georgia Way paid \$100,000 for just four *Jeopardy* spots, more than four times the candidate rate. And on Sunday, Dec. 20, when the Giants take on the Browns on *Sunday Night Football*, Ossoff will pay \$30,000 for 30 seconds while Georgia Way is scheduled to pay \$45,000.

What Do the Polls Say?

Public polling of the Georgia runoff has been scarce. Just 10 surveys have been released publicly, six of which are from partisan or ideological pollsters: Remington Research, VCreek/AMG, InsiderAdvantage, and Trafalgar Group on the right, and Data for Progress on the left.

Of three other surveys, by RMG Research, SurveyUSA, and the bipartisan team of Fabrizio Lee and Hart Research, only the Fabrizio/Hart poll, which was conducted for the AARP, was a live-caller, large sample survey. It found Ossoff ahead by 2 points, 48-46 percent, and Warnock ahead by 1 point, 47-46 percent.

Taken together, the 10 surveys confirm what we already knew about these two races: they are close. The FiveThirtyEight polling average gives Warnock a 1 point advantage and Ossoff a 0.4 point lead. Given the inherent uncertainty in polling, these differences are negligible.

Strategists from both parties expect both races to stay deadlocked through Election Day. The state's partisan divide is even, as evidenced by the razor thin margin of Biden's victory and the nearly identical results in the first round of both Senate races. And the number of undecided or persuadable voters is small. With all the attention and resources pouring into the state, operatives from both sides of the aisle acknowledge that most voters have made up their minds.

In November, Trump outperformed his polls nationally and in key swing states. And in Montana, South Carolina, Kansas, Maine, and elsewhere, GOP candidates handily won Senate races that were expected to be photo finishes, leaving many feeling skeptical about the accuracy of polls.

But for a few reasons, polling will continue to play a large role in the campaigns themselves even if media organizations that typically run polls take a step back, as it appears they have.

First, Georgia was a rare bright spot for polls this cycle. Public and private data consistently showed a close race at the presidential level, usually with Biden in the lead, and also suggested both Loeffler and Warnock, and Ossoff and Perdue, were destined for runoff races.

Second, the singular focus on the two races — they are the only

game in the country, let alone in town — presents the opportunity to do more in-depth polling and research, replete with oversamples, varying turnout models, and other more labor- and resource-intensive exercises. By sparing no expense to study the electorate, and armed with Georgia's relatively information-rich voter file (already updated from the November races), pollsters hope to avoid the pitfalls that befell them elsewhere last month.

Finally, the timing is complicated. There are only two (pandemic-addled, holiday-ridden) months between the November election and the runoff and political operatives of all stripes are wary of shifting course with such high stakes. To the extent that there is a reckoning or deeper reflection on the state of polling, it will have to wait until after these elections conclude.

The Bottom Line

America has never seen an election like this one. At stake is likely the legislative agenda of the incoming administration, as well as the newly-elected president's ability to fill judicial vacancies and avoid a string of committee investigations similar to the House probes that dogged President Barack Obama in the final six years of his tenure.

The levels of spending are similarly unprecedented. Spending on TV and radio advertising alone is likely to cross \$500 million, making these the most expensive Senate races in history, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

And the runoffs are taking place at a particularly precarious moment in our history, as the coronavirus pandemic rages on, the economy struggles to regain its footing, and the outgoing president spends his last days in office trying to overturn the certified results of the election he lost.

Taking into account all the money being spent, attention being paid, polling being conducted, and questions to be answered about turnout on both sides of the aisle, it is clear that these races are true jump balls. Both the regular and the special election runoffs are pure Toss-ups. **IE**

Top Georgia Runoff Spenders

Groups that have reported spending more than \$1 million on the two runoff elections

Organization	Affiliation	Reported Spending
Senate Leadership Fund (Incl. Peachtree PAC)	Republican	\$77,482,038
Senate Majority PAC (Incl. Georgia Honor, Georgia Way)	Democratic	\$23,923,550
National Republican Senatorial Committee	Republican	\$7,331,027
Americans For Prosperity	Republican	\$6,586,392
National Victory Action Fund	Republican	\$5,010,450
American Bridge PAC	Democratic	\$4,815,646
Georgia United Victory	Republican	\$4,476,992
Take Back 2020 (UNITE HERE Union)	Democratic	\$3,942,325
Black PAC	Democratic	\$3,590,040
Club for Growth Action	Republican	\$3,356,578
Republican National Committee	Republican	\$3,148,987
Women Speak Out PAC (Susan B. Anthony List)	Republican	\$2,633,041
National Rifle Association PAC	Republican	\$1,913,655
Protect Freedom PAC	Republican	\$1,851,109
Working People Rising	Democratic	\$1,316,885
Freedomworks	Republican	\$1,188,728
New South Super PAC	Democratic	\$1,145,920

Source: Federal Election Commission, accessed 12/16/20