

Trump rebuffed in Georgia Republican primary elections

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Republican and Democratic primaries and runoffs in five states Tuesday resulted in several significant defeats for former President Donald Trump, although the candidates who overcame his opposition are themselves diehard reactionaries committed to anti-working class policies.

Four of the five states—Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas and Texas—are in the Deep South and are dominated by the Republican Party, which controls all branches of the state government—executive, legislative and judicial. The Republicans also control six of the eight seats in the US Senate from those states and 41 out of 61 seats in the US House of Representatives.

The fifth state, Minnesota, held a primary election in only a single congressional district, to choose nominees to fill the vacancy created by the death of Republican Rep. Jim Hagedorn.

The results of the primaries demonstrated the further shift to the right in both big business parties, confirming again that the working class can find no genuine expression of its social and political interests within the corporate-controlled two-party system, and that it must build an alternative.

The Republican Party is being transformed into a fascistic organization, whether or not Trump controls it. The ex-president has been seeking to purge any Republican who opposes his “stop the steal” campaign, an effort to make the supposedly “rigged” character of the 2020 election the main issue in the November midterm elections.

The most publicized rebuff to this effort came in Georgia, where Republican Governor Brian Kemp and Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger turned back challengers endorsed by Trump. Kemp defeated former US Sen. David Perdue in a landslide, winning 74 percent of the Republican primary vote compared to 22 percent for Perdue. Raffensperger defeated US Rep. Jody Hice by a narrower margin, 52 percent to 33 percent, but won a majority of the votes cast and thereby avoided a runoff.

Perdue waged a vitriolic campaign against Kemp, claiming that the incumbent was responsible for the existence of the Biden administration because he failed to overturn the 2020 vote in which Georgia’s 16 electoral votes went to the Democrat by a narrow margin, 11,779 votes. Despite Trump’s repeated claims of fraud, without any evidence, Biden’s margin survived multiple recounts, including a statewide hand recount of every ballot.

The contest became a proxy fight between the Republican Party establishment and Trump. The Republican Governors Association pumped \$5 million into the Kemp campaign, while Trump directed

\$2.64 million from his own political action committee (PAC) to Perdue, his sole substantial donation to any Republican primary candidate. Former Vice President Mike Pence, former President George W. Bush and many other Republican leaders backed Kemp.

In conventional bourgeois political terms, Kemp had an even more right-wing record than Perdue, a former CEO who was considered a Chamber of Commerce Republican in the Senate, rather than an advocate of more provocative and anti-democratic policies on abortion, school prayer, immigration and other issues stoked by Trump and his Christian fundamentalist and fascist supporters.

Kemp was actually Trump’s choice in a contested Republican primary in 2018, when he was secretary of state, the chief election official in the state, and challenged the establishment favorite, Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle, who was expected to succeed the term-limited Republican Governor Nathan Deal. Kemp had trailed in the polls until Trump intervened, boosting him as the more aggressive right-wing candidate.

Candidate Kemp became nationally known for his provocative right-wing commercials. In one ad, he said, “I got a big truck, just in case I need to round up criminal illegals and take ’em home myself.” In another, he announced that there were only two requirements for dating his teenaged daughter, while pointing a shotgun at a teenaged boy. The young man responded: “Respect, and a healthy appreciation for the Second Amendment.”

In the general election in 2018, Kemp refused to recuse himself from exercising his powers as secretary of state to administer the election in which he headed the Republican ticket. He won narrowly over Democrat Stacey Abrams, defeating her by less than 55,000 votes out of nearly 4 million cast.

Trump evidently expected friendly treatment in 2020 from Raffensperger, Kemp’s successor as secretary of state. Notoriously, he pressured Raffensperger during an hour-long phone call to “find” the 11,780 votes required to overcome Biden’s lead in Georgia and award Trump the state’s electoral votes.

As governor, Kemp has a record of unrelieved reaction. He was among the earliest governors to reopen schools and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. He pushed through the largest ever cut in the state’s income tax and a bill allowing residents to carry a concealed firearm without a license. He also funneled new money to the police and imposed restrictions on classroom

discussions of the history of racism in America, as well as sexual orientation and gender issues.

The state also adopted a law banning abortion after a woman is six weeks pregnant, effectively banning the medical procedure entirely. This law will take effect once the US Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*.

Kemp and Raffensperger backed the so-called Election Integrity Act, which restricts absentee voting and the use of dropboxes to collect absentee votes, makes it a criminal offense to supply food or water to voters waiting in line at the polls, and bars acceptance of grants from foundations for election expenses (a nod to the fascist hysteria over a grant from Facebook billionaire Mark Zuckerberg to help with state election expenses during the COVID-19 pandemic).

Raffensperger's victory was an equally clear-cut rebuff to the "stolen election" campaign, since the Georgia official was best known for rejecting Trump's demands to change the result of the presidential election. Trump backed Jody Hice, a sitting congressman from northeast Georgia who gave up his safe seat in the House of Representatives to run for what had previously been considered a less prestigious position as the state's chief election administrator.

Hice was also heavily defeated, winning only 34 percent of the vote and carrying only his own congressional district. Raffensperger won not only the Atlanta area and its suburbs, but largely rural central and south Georgia, where Trump's support was considered the strongest.

Other Republican primaries in Alabama and Arkansas showed mixed results for Trump's efforts to dictate the outcome. In Alabama, Trump had withdrawn his support from Rep. Mo Brooks, one of the leading supporters of the "stop the steal" campaign, after Brooks suggested that the Republican Party move on from the issue of the 2020 campaign. (Brooks also appeared to be trailing badly in a three-way race).

But after Trump's declaration, Brooks actually gained support among Republican primary voters and he finished second in Tuesday's primary, winning a place in a runoff election against Katie Britt, former chief of staff to the retiring Sen. Richard Shelby, a former Democrat turned Republican.

In Arkansas, Trump's former press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders won the Republican primary for governor easily. Sanders is the daughter of former Governor Mike Huckabee and is now expected to succeed Governor Asa Hutchinson, who is term-limited.

There were two contests of note for the Democrats. In the 28th Congressional District of Texas, the lone Democratic congressional opponent of *Roe v. Wade*, Rep. Henry Cuellar, held a narrow 175-vote lead over challenger Jessica Cisneros, a liberal lawyer who opposed Cuellar on both abortion and immigration.

The impoverished district, predominately Hispanic, stretches from the Rio Grande border with Mexico to the suburbs of San Antonio.

Cisneros had the support of Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. But even after the leak of a draft Supreme Court opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the Democratic congressional leadership supported Cuellar. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

endorsed him, while Majority Whip James Clyburn, the third-ranking House Democrat, actually campaigned with Cuellar in his district.

In the primary contest in Minnesota's First Congressional District, which covers the southernmost part of the state, along the Iowa border, Jeff Ettinger won the Democratic nomination and will face Republican Brad Finstad in a special election in August to fill the vacancy left by the death of incumbent Jim Hagedorn, a Republican. The two will also be on the ballot in November.

The nomination of Ettinger is a particularly noxious example of the Democratic Party's shift to the right and its embrace of and by corporate America. The candidate is the retired CEO of Hormel Corp., based in Austin, Minnesota, a huge food processing company. Hormel became notorious in 1985 for breaking a strike by meatpacking workers by using scabs, protected by National Guard troops sent in by Democratic Governor Rudy Perpich.

Ettinger was not on the Hormel payroll at that time. He joined the company out of law school in 1989, rising first to general counsel, then becoming CEO in 2005. He retired from that position in 2016 but still serves as president of the Hormel Foundation, established by the Hormel family, which still dominates the Fortune 500 company behind the scenes.

The Hormel strike was one of the most explosive conflicts of the 1980s. It highlighted the role of the AFL-CIO unions and their transformation into arms of management. The UFCW international intervened in the strike to suspend Local P-9, which was waging a militant struggle against the company. All the strikers were fired and replaced by scabs, and the UFCW ultimately chartered a new local comprised of those strikebreakers.

According to local press accounts, Rena Wong, organizing director for UFCW Local 663, the union now recognized at the plant, called Ettinger a "decent guy" who was responsive to workers and the union.



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