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# Newton County votes down TSPLOST

**By TOM SPIGOLON**  
tspigolon@covnews.com

COVINGTON, Ga. — More than 54% of Newton County voters voted against imposing a new 1% sales tax for transportation Tuesday, Nov. 3.

With all 22 precincts reporting and all absentee and in-person advance votes counted, the unofficial totals showed 27,905 votes against a new sales tax and 23,226 for it.

However, two state constitutional amendments and a statewide referendum won “yes” votes in Newton County and statewide.

Newton County voters were asked if they wanted to approve a 1% Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax for transportation, and a bond issue of \$18.9 million, all for transportation projects in Newton County’s unincorporated area and six cities.

The sales tax could have only been imposed for five years and produce a maximum of \$56.1 million for transportation projects in the cities and unincorporated area.

The bond issue was to be used to more quickly begin work on projects in the county and Covington as they await the collection of tax revenues, officials have said.

Transportation SPLOST for Newton County:

- Yes – 23,226 votes, or 46%
- No – 24,277 votes, or 54%

**Constitutional Amendment 1**

This proposal asked voters if they want to include in the state Constitution a requirement that the state government only use fees it collects for such purposes as cleanup of illegal tire dumps or hazardous waste



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**A voter places her ballot in a scanner to complete the process at Washington Street Community Center precinct Tuesday, Nov. 3.**

to be used for those purposes and not placed into the state budget for other uses.

However, it also allows the state to use the money in the event of an economic downturn and prohibits the General Assembly from dedicating money for a specific purpose if it exceeds 1% of total state revenues from the previous year.

It requires establishment of a special fund to include identification of its specific purpose, naming the state agency to administer the funds, providing annual reports of revenues and expenses, and ending the fee or tax within 10 years.

**Constitutional Amendment No. 1:**

- Yes – 77% (won with 81% statewide)
- No – 23%

**Constitutional Amendment 2**

This will remove sovereign immunity protections from state and local governments, and allow lawsuits against them for alleged violations of state laws and state and U.S. constitutions.

Sovereign immunity is a concept Georgia carried over from British

common law that states the government legally can do no wrong.

District 110 State Rep. Andy Welch, R-McDonough, whose district included part of Newton County, sponsored the resolution for the constitutional amendment in reaction to previous vetoes of similar legislation by two governors.

It will allow lawsuits against governments in superior courts and authorizes superior courts to order state and local officers and employees to cease violations beginning Jan. 1, 2021.

It also requires that such legal actions be against the state or local government entity and not an elected official or individual working in the government.

The amendment also prohibits any type of monetary award unless the Georgia General Assembly approves it.

The Georgia Supreme Court ruled in 2017 that sovereign immunity protected public officials from being sued.

**Statewide Referendum**

This law will apply to nonprofits like Habitat for Humanity. It will exempt from property taxes land owned by a nonprofit if the property is only used for construction or repair of single-family homes financed by the nonprofit with zero interest loans for individuals.

Final totals of absentee and in-person advance votes showed:

**Statewide Referendum A:**

- Yes – 71% (won with 73% statewide)
- No – 29%

## SHERIFF:

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unexpected deaths and those caused by violence or suicide.

Bailey-Butts is a registered nurse and businesswoman. She publicly cited her experience in the medical field as a reason for supporting her candidacy.

Davis, who also is a funeral director, served as a deputy coroner for five years before succeeding Bob Wheeler in 2008. He cited his experience in doing the work of coroner as a main reason for re-electing him.

Newton County Coroner:

- Tommy Davis (R) (i), 25,253 votes, or 47%.
- Dorothea Bailey-Butts (D), 27,995 votes, or 53%.

County Commissioner, District 1

Incumbent Republican Stan Edwards defeated Democratic challenger Catalata Hardeman for a second term in the seat representing southeastern, southern and part of southwestern Newton County on the board of commissioners.

Edwards was first elected in 2016 after serving two years on the Newton County

School Board.

District 1 County Commissioner (seven of seven precincts reporting):

- Stan Edwards (R) (i), 7,884 votes, or 71%.
- Catalata Hardeman (D), 3,190 votes, or 39%.

County Commissioner, District 5

Incumbent Republican Ronnie Cowan defeated Democratic challenger Dorothy Piedrahita for the seat representing northeastern and central Newton County on the board of commissioners.

Cowan was seeking a second term. He is an attorney who also has served as a police officer, human resources director and administrative services director with the city of Covington.

Piedrahita has worked in business and in several roles in government in two states, including with the city of Atlanta and the state of Alabama.

District 5 County Commissioner (11 of 11 precincts reporting):

- Ronnie Cowan (R) (i), 6,710 votes, or 60%.
- Dorothy Piedrahita (D), 4,479 votes, or



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**District 1 County Commissioner Stan Edward holds a sign near his home voting precinct at Mansfield Community House Tuesday, Nov. 3.**

40%.

Unopposed Candidates

Candidates on the Nov. 3 ballot who were unopposed included incumbent Clerk of Superior Court Linda D. Hays, who has served 37 years in the position; and County Chairman Marcello Banes and Probate Court Judge Melanie Bell, who were each elected to second terms.

Others included District 2 county school board member Eddie Johnson, who was unopposed for a fourth term; District 4 school board member Anderson Bailey, who recently was appointed to the board and was unopposed for his first full term; and Alana Sanders, who was unopposed for her first term in the county commission District 3 seat.

## MCGINLEY:

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Brian Strickland (R) (i) has 54.12% of the total vote.

Kelly Rose (D) has 45.88% of the total vote.

*92% of precincts reporting; 100% of Newton County precincts reporting.*

**State Senate, 43rd District**

Melanie Williams (R) has 27.06% of the total vote.

Tonya P. Anderson (D) (i) has 72.94% of the total vote.

*92% of precincts re-*

*porting; 100% of Newton County precincts reporting.*

**State Representative in the General Assembly, 109th District**

Dale Rutledge (R) (i) has 50.88% of the total vote.

Regina Lewis-Ward (D) has 49.12% of the total vote.

*92% of precincts reporting; 100% of Newton County precincts reporting.*

**State Representative**

**in the General Assembly, 110th District**

Clint Crowe (R) has 58.92% of the total vote.

Ebony Carter (D) has 41.08% of the total vote.

*92% of precincts reporting; 100% of Newton County precincts reporting.*

**State Representative in the General Assembly, 112th District**

Dave Belton (R) (i) is running unopposed. He has garnered 26,069 total votes from Newton and Morgan County; 92%

of precincts reporting; 100% of Newton County precincts reporting.

**State Representative in the General Assembly, 113th District**

Sharon Henderson (D) is running unopposed. She has garnered 23,643 total votes; 92% of precincts in Newton and Rockdale counties have been reported; 100% of Newton County precincts reporting.

**Public Service Commission District 1**

Jason Shaw (R) (i) has 54.51% of votes from across the state of Georgia.

Robert G. Bryant (D) has 41.89% of votes from across the state of Georgia.

Elizabeth Melton (L) has 3.60% of votes from across the state of Georgia.

*91% of total precincts reporting.*

**Public Service Commission District 4**

Lauren Bubba McDonald Jr. (R) (i) has 54.34%

of votes from across the state of Georgia.

Daniel Blackman (D) has 42.75% of votes from across the state of Georgia.

Nathan Wilson (L) has 3.09% of votes from across the state of Georgia.

*91% of total precincts reporting.*

*Results are unofficial and may not include all absentee ballots and provisional ballots.*



# Perdue holding double-digit lead over challenger Ossoff

**By DAVE WILLIAMS**  
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — U.S. Sen. David Perdue appeared on his way Tuesday night to winning a second term representing Georgia on Capitol Hill. Perdue, a Republican, was leading Democratic challenger Jon Ossoff 54% to 44% late on Election Night with 2,071 of Georgia's 2,656 precincts reporting, according to unofficial results. Libertarian Shane Hazel had received only 2% of the vote.

With few Georgia voters splitting their tickets, the Perdue-Ossoff contest was mirroring closely the presidential results in the Peach State. GOP President Donald Trump was well ahead of Democratic challenger Joe Biden in



David Perdue



Jon Ossoff

Georgia late Tuesday night, 54% to 45%.

Perdue, 70, was elected to the Senate in 2014 after a 40-year career in business that included serving as CEO of Reebok and Dollar General.

He spent his first term in the Senate as one of President Donald Trump's closest allies, supporting the president's tax cut legislation in 2017, Trump's get-tough trade policy with China, and, more recently, the president's much-criticized handling of the coronavirus outbreak.

Ossoff, 33, an investigative journalist who runs a documentary production firm, entered elective politics three years ago, losing a special election for a congressional seat in Atlanta's northern suburbs. This year marked his first run at statewide office.

In what turned into a brutal campaign during the final weeks, Perdue portrayed Ossoff as backing the national Democrats' "radical socialist" agenda including a government takeover of health care, defunding the police and abolishing ICE (U.S. Immigration and



From left, Glenn "Ozzie" Ozburn of Oxford, U.S. Sen. David Perdue and Trent Ozburn of Mansfield pose together in front of Perdue's campaign bus on the Covington Square on Saturday, Oct. 31.

Customs Enforcement).

The senator also accused Ossoff of harboring ties to a Chinese company, charges an Ossoff campaign spokesman later said pertained to a Hong Kong media company that bought one of Ossoff's films.

For his part, Ossoff has slammed Perdue for following Trump's lead in downplaying the threat posed by coronavirus during the pandemic's early days.

The challenger even called Perdue a "crook" during a televised debate last month, referring to purchases of stock in a company that produces PPE (personal protective equipment) after some senators received a private briefing in January about the looming threat of COVID-19.

Perdue noted he was cleared of any wrongdoing by the bipartisan Senate Ethics Committee.

# Loeffler, Warnock head to runoff in U.S. Senate race

**By BEAU EVANS**  
Capitol Beat News Service

U.S. Sen. Kelly Loeffler and challenger Rev. Raphael Warnock appear headed for a runoff in one of two hotly contested Senate seats in Georgia.

U.S. Rep. Doug Collins, the firebrand Republican challenging Loeffler for her seat in a free-for-all election, called Loeffler to concede and support her campaign around 10:30 p.m. on Election Day after results indicated she will advance to the runoff. His campaign confirmed the call.

Warnock, who has mustered a staunch coalition of Democratic support in Georgia and nationwide, was likewise well on his way to gathering enough votes to face Loeffler in what will be a closely watched runoff race in January.

"We're going to be successful, but we've got a long road ahead," Loeffler said late Tuesday night. "So we've got to come together."

Rallying with supporters Tuesday hours before results arrived, Warnock cast the special election for Loeffler's seat and others Democrats are trying to claim as something of a spiritual as well as political quest.

"I know it's been a long, dark night," Warnock said. "But joy comes in the morning. And we are on the verge of morning in Georgia and in the United States of Ameri-

ca."

In a Twitter post just after 10:30 p.m., Collins said he will back Loeffler in her runoff campaign against Warnock.

"She has my support and endorsement," Collins said. "I look forward to all Republicans coming together."

The race for one of Georgia's two Senate seats has been dominated for almost a year by the fierce intra-party battle between Loeffler and Collins, who repeatedly scorched each other in television attack ads and social-media posts.

All the while, Warnock has sought to take advantage of the Republican spat that has largely shielded him from direct campaign attacks and allowed him to broadcast consistent messaging on health care, voting rights, criminal justice and workers' rights issues.

Speaking Tuesday, Warnock said he plans to stick with that campaign strategy while incorporating more ways to "draw a contrast between my record" and his runoff opponent.



Kelly Loeffler



Raphael Warnock

Loeffler was appointed in January by Gov. Brian Kemp to hold the seat vacated by retired Sen. Johnny Isakson, who stepped down due to health concerns with three years remaining in his term.

Whoever wins the runoff in January and claims Isakson's old seat will need to run again in 2022 for a full six-year Senate term.

The special election held Tuesday involved around 20 candidates including Loeffler all on the same ballot, marking a free-for-all ballot format that prompted the intense campaigning between Loeffler and Collins.

For months, the two Republicans opened fire on their personal and political records, each seeking to portray the other as the less conservative candidate while trumpeting loud support for President Donald Trump.

Loeffler, a wealthy Atlanta businesswoman, has touted legislation she filed on protecting local police budgets, prohibiting COVID-19 aid for abortion providers and barring transgender girls from playing in public-school girls' or women's sports.

She faced controversy in April amid allegations she made stock trades to isolate her and her husband's assets from damage from the COVID-19 pandemic, shortly after she and other senators received a private briefing on the virus.

Though a federal investigation found no evidence of wrongdoing, Collins and Democratic leaders frequently used the incident to bludgeon Loeffler as an out-of-touch elitist concerned more about her own financial interests than public service.

Loeffler, who has pumped \$23 million of her own money into her campaign, embraced her wealth by portraying herself as a self-made political outsider in the mold of Trump who would not be shackled to any campaign donors.

Collins, a four-term congressman and U.S. Air Force Reserve chaplain, pushed to chisel his image as the more grassroots conservative candidate compared to Loeffler, who he accused of being too cozy with the oft-vilified Planned Parenthood and Georgia Democratic star Stacey Abrams in her role as co-owner of the Atlanta Dream women's professional basketball team.

But aside from sniping at each other's personal backgrounds, Collins and Loeffler largely shared similar conservative views on key issues like abortion, gun rights and economic security from China.

By contrast, Warnock used his platform to condemn his Republican opponents for opposing the Affordable Care Act and supporting Trump's latest U.S. Supreme Court justice pick following

the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg in September.

Warnock, who is the senior pastor at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, has pressed for boosting health-care access through Medicaid expansion and by shoring up the Affordable Care Act with a public option. He has also called for national rules on certain police activities including a ban on chokeholds and third-party probes of officer-involved killings.

Though the clear Democratic frontrunner in the race, Warnock was not immune to challenges from within his own party. In particular, he faced competition from educator and health-care consultant Matt Lieberman, the son of former U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut.

Lieberman, who drew a scant share of the vote Tuesday, refused to exit the race after many prominent Democratic leaders urged him to clear the way for Warnock in a bid to help the frontrunner gain enough votes — more than 50% of the total — to avoid a January runoff.

Former U.S. Attorney and state Sen. Ed Tarver also competed in the race as a Democrat. Former Lithonia Mayor Deborah Jackson also pulled a fair number of votes as a Democratic candidate.

## BIDEN:

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Newton County voted in favor of Jon Ossoff (D) by a tally of 29,187 (54.33%), while David A. Perdue (R) (i) received 23,389 (43.54%) votes and Shane Hazel (L) received 1,146 (2.13%).

Perdue was leading the poll at the state level through reporting from 154 coun-

ties/precincts. He sat at 2,238,680 votes (52.70%) while Ossoff had received 1,910,988 (44.98%) and Hazel 98,653 (2.32%).

The special election for U.S. Senator saw three candidates sitting atop the leader boards at both the county and state levels: Doug Collins (R), Kelly Loeffler

(R) (i), and Raphael Warnock (D). Newton County cast 20,430 votes (38.18%) for Warnock, 13,438 votes (25.11%) for Loeffler and 8,215 votes (15.35%) for Collins.

In Georgia, Warnock had received 1,280,624 votes (30.37%), followed by Loeffler at 1,150,184 (27.22%)

and Collins at 905,793 (21.25%).

The District 4 of U.S. House of Representatives race also went in favor of the Democratic party for Newton County voters. Henry C. "Hank" Johnson Jr. pulled in 26,646 votes (65.49%) from the county, edging out Johsie Cruz Ezam-

mudeen's (R) total of 14,040 (34.51%).

However, in election for the District 10 of the U.S. House of Representatives, Newton County cast 9,127 votes (74.85%) for incumbent Jody Hice (R) to giving him a landslide victory over Tabitha Johnson-Green (D), who received 3,067

votes (25.15%).

Both Johnson (75.95%) and Hice (62.92%) were leading by wide margins as votes were nearing the end of tabulation early Wednesday morning.