The Abrams Playbook

The Strategy and Path to Victory in 2020

September 9, 2019

Friends:

Next year, Georgia will be the premier battleground state in the country. Our 16 electoral votes are in play, and we are the only state in the country set to have two U.S. Senate races. Also up for grabs will be two hotly-contested suburban congressional seats and control of the state house. Georgia faces historic electoral opportunities, and Democrats cannot achieve success nationally without competing and winning in Georgia.

In 2018, my campaign for governor engaged, organized and inspired traditional voters and brought new voices to the table. Although I am not Georgia's governor, our unprecedented campaign received more votes than any Democratic candidate for any office in Georgia history, fueled by record-breaking support from white voters and presidential-level turnout and support from the diverse communities of color in our state. However, I am not the only candidate who can create a coalition and a strategy to win this state; and Georgia is not the only state poised to take advantage of demographic changes; but we are uniquely positioned for effectiveness. The formula to replicate and improve upon our performance is clear: (1) continued investment in infrastructure and a broader electorate than the conventional "base" approach, (2) adoption of our 2018 campaign lessons learned, (3) harnessing and meaningfully engaging continued population and electorate growth, and (4) improvement of and protecting access to the vote. Together, this approach will improve performance, build on the dramatic support of 2018 and yield electoral successes for 2020 and beyond.

When analyzing next year's political landscape and electoral opportunities, any less than full investment in Georgia would amount to strategic malpractice. Beyond our organic growth and concomitant efforts to maintain our progress, the volatile national environment, arcane Electoral College system and limited pathways to pick up U.S. Senate seats make Georgia a must-compete and must-win state. Our work reflects this deep-seated belief in our capacity to be a tipping point in the battle for 2020. We have invested in ourselves, from voter engagement and electoral integrity work to training and funding candidates to secure a role in the 2021 redistricting process. However, I take a broad view on 2020, knowing that Georgia is part of a national charge.

With Fair Fight 2020, a program already working in 20 states, we are not only sharing our efforts to fight voter suppression; we are also learning from those states that have been able to tackle variations on the challenges we have faced. I know Democrats must continue to reexamine our conventional strategies and adopt innovations in order to compete across the country to elect a Democratic president, a Democratic senate and make gains in state legislatures and down-ballot races like secretaries of state and attorneys general. Therefore, this playbook is not meant to diminish the importance or winnability of any state—instead, it is a synthesis of what we learned from other races, created to compete in the changing landscape of the Sun Belt, and uncovered in the aftermath. But, more importantly, this is a declaration of intent: Democrats, let's do better and go big. We can win Georgia, and we can win across the nation in 2020 and beyond. Now, let's get it done.

Sincerely,

Stacey Abrams

Hon. Stacey Abrams
2018 Democratic Nominee for Governor of Georgia
Founder and Chair, Fair Fight

To: Interested Parties
From: Lauren Groh-Wargo, former Campaign Manager, Abrams for Governor
Re: *The Abrams Playbook: The Strategy and Path to Victory in 2020*

It was an honor to serve as Campaign Manager for the Abrams for Governor campaign and to work with a broad coalition of talented, hardworking organizations and individuals who set out to change Georgia. On behalf of Team Abrams, I am eternally grateful for the tireless efforts of countless groups and leaders who organized early, made our success in 2018 possible, and will lead us to victory in 2020.

SUMMARY

1. **Georgia is competitive up and down the ballot.** With a diverse, growing population and rapidly changing electorate, Georgia is not a future opportunity for Democrats; it is a necessity right now.
2. **The Abrams strategy provides a blueprint for Democratic victory up and down the ballot in 2020.** By expanding the electorate and delivering a clear, values-based message to all voters, Democrats are poised to win Georgia in 2020.
3. **Large national and local investments can unleash Georgia's potential.** By investing big and investing early in registration, organizing, and turnout, Democrats can further change Georgia's electorate and maximize turnout among voters of color and Democratic-leaning white voters.
4. **Democrats must reject false choices and apply an evidenced-based approach in Georgia and beyond.** We do not lose winnable white voters because we engage communities of color. We do not lose urban votes because we campaign in rural areas.
5. **Georgia is every bit as competitive as perennial battleground states.** With one of the youngest and the most African American electorate of any competitive state, Georgia has demographic advantages that don't exist in other states.

WHAT WE KNOW

GEORGIA IS COMPETITIVE AND ITS POPULATION IS GROWING.

In Georgia in 2020, Democrats can take the presidency, both U.S. Senate seats, the 6th and 7th Congressional districts, and seize the state house majority. Stacey Abrams broke records by winning more votes than any Democratic candidate in Georgia history, including presidential Democrats, and there is still plenty of room to grow in 2020.

- As of June 2019, nearly 200,000 additional Georgians had already registered to vote since November 6, 2018, and the universe of these voters favors Democrats.
- With expected registration growth thanks to the hard work of numerous Georgia organizations as well as organic registration, we anticipate an additional 200,000 African American and 100,000 other voters of color (including at least 40,000 Latinx voters and 30,000 AAPI voters) who were not registered in 2018 to register by Fall 2020. These voters are likely to be strongly Democratic, with those who were newly registered or less likely to vote being more likely to support Democrats.
- With new registrants plus infrequent/nonvoting Democratic-leaning voters factored in, the universe of potential voters to remake the 2020 electorate is a pool of 1.7 million. In other words, Democrats have the ability to turn out 1.7 million additional voters in 2020 who were not part of the record-breaking 1.9 million vote haul for Abrams in 2018. (For context, Clinton lost the state in 2016 by 211,000 votes.)
- Abrams made huge strides with college-educated white voters in 2018, and those predominantly suburban voters continue to trend our way, as evidenced by their very low Trump approval scores. Hundreds of thousands of attainable, likely voting white voters now exist, and many more will skip the presidential contest altogether.

GEORGIA'S ELECTORATE IS CHANGING RAPIDLY.
Leading up to the 2018 campaign, the Abrams for Governor team had monitored the ongoing shift in Georgia's demographics and voter registration for several cycles. Georgia had changed dramatically over that time in the following ways: (1) the white share of the electorate had been steadily declining, (2) the African American share had been significantly growing, (3) AAPI and Latinx voters had reached measurable levels to affect voting outcomes and were continuing to grow, and (4) more voters were declining to disclose their race, growing the proportion of unknown/other voters and suggesting an even more favorable electorate.

In Georgia, as in other states, race is often the strongest predictor of political leanings, which means that effective engagement of voters of color, increased turnout of white voters with Democratic leanings and high turnout rates overall could tip the scales. Between 2002, when Georgia Democrats lost the governorship, and 2018, voters of color increased their share of the electorate by more than 15%, from less than 25% to more than 40% of the overall electorate, a growth of about one%age point every year. These trends have continued to be reflected in new voter registrations since Election Day in 2018, and if these trends hold, voters of color will make up 42% of Georgia's electorate in 2020.

Georgia's Diversifying Electorate
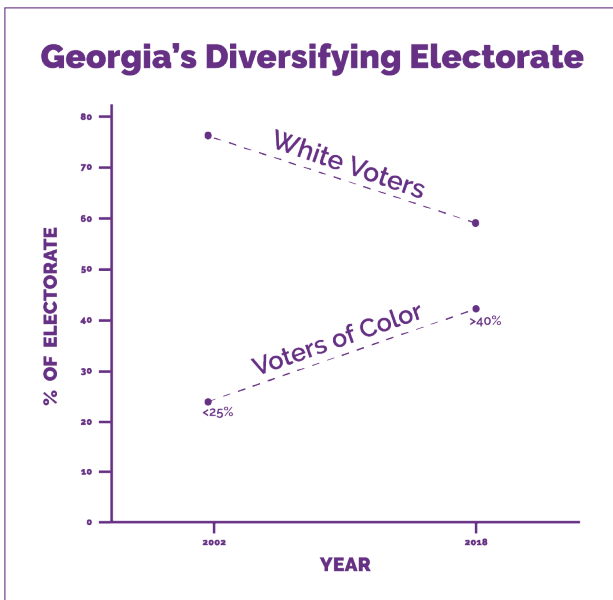
The fact that Georgia's population is changing and growing are related but distinct trends. Voters of all races who had lived in Georgia for less than 10 years voted for Stacey Abrams by a whopping 30-point margin, 65% to 35%, according to a CNN exit poll. Each person who moves to Georgia and votes is almost twice as likely to vote Democratic than Republican.

✕ 2018 MYTHS MUST BE REFUTED AND REJECTED.

This memo looks back on what we did, learned and achieved through the Abrams campaign and shares thoughts on a path to winning the state for Democrats up and down the ballot in 2020. However, let us first address some of the myths about Georgia and the 2018 Abrams campaign.

MYTH: Abrams did not campaign in rural Georgia or communicate with rural whites.
✕ **FALSE.** The campaign conducted robust outreach in both the general election and in the primary in rural areas. Of note, rural Georgia is comprised of white, Black and Latinx voters. We launched the campaign in Albany, a rural city in south Georgia, to signal a different approach and highlight that we viewed south Georgia as a critical part of the state, and then we aggressively campaigned in communities in both north and south Georgia, including smaller locales such as Waynesboro, Cordele, Dahlonega and Montezuma. The campaign invested significant resources on staff and communications in every region. Through paid communications and media and direct outreach from Abrams, we expanded the traditional reach of Democrats to include country music radio and broad digital universes and we used conventional and unconventional methods to reach rural voters and white voters of all backgrounds.

MYTH: Abrams reached the upper bounds of what is possible with African American turnout, leaving no room for additional growth.
✕ **FALSE:** We anticipate a universe of 1.7 million likely-Democratic newly registered or unlikely voting voters in 2020. The majority of these voters is African American. To suggest that our work was the extent of what can be done by 2020 or to suggest that nothing will change in Georgia's population and electorate between 2018 and 2020 is both oddly pessimistic and plain wrong.

MYTH: Abrams left suburban white women votes on the table.
✕ **FALSE:** Abrams achieved a higher share of the white vote than any Democratic candidate in Georgia in a generation; overall 25% of white voters supported Abrams, up from the low 20s for previous presidential and gubernatorial candidates; college educated white women supported Abrams over 31%, an improvement from the roughly 24% support rates at the top of the ticket in 2014. There is room to grow support further in 2020.

MYTH: Abrams is the only candidate who could achieve what she did in 2018.
✕ **FALSE:** The Abrams campaign was notably the first contemporary Georgia campaign to truly invest in communities of color at scale, along with broad and targeted communications to white voters across the state. Her playbook can be replicated, improved, expanded and advanced by any aggressive, authentic candidate and campaign. This is only the beginning of what is possible for Georgia Democrats in the modern era.
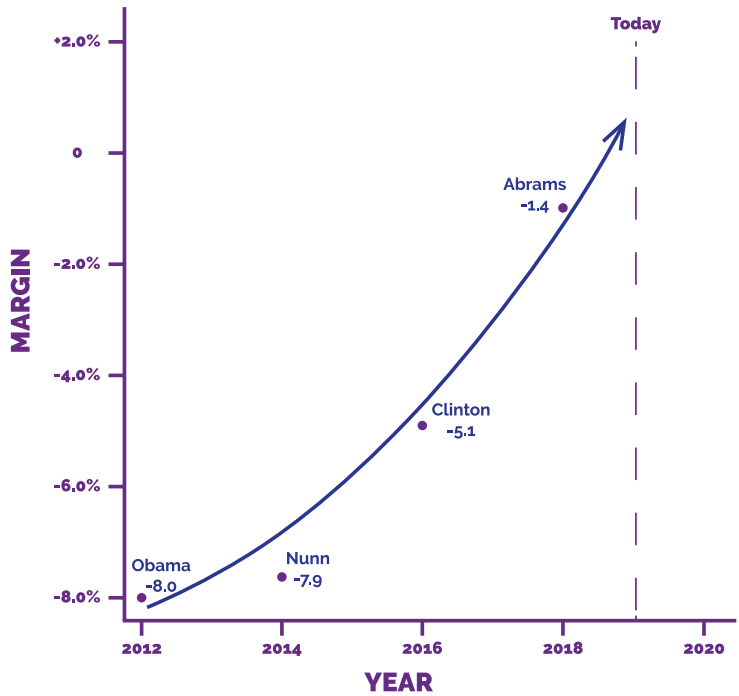
GEORGIA'S 2016 AND 2018 NUMBERS SPELL OPPORTUNITY FOR DEMOCRATS IN 2020.

Georgia is unmistakably moving in the direction of Democrats. The Republicans' margin of victory in Georgia dropped significantly from 2012 to 2016 and drastically from 2016 to 2018.
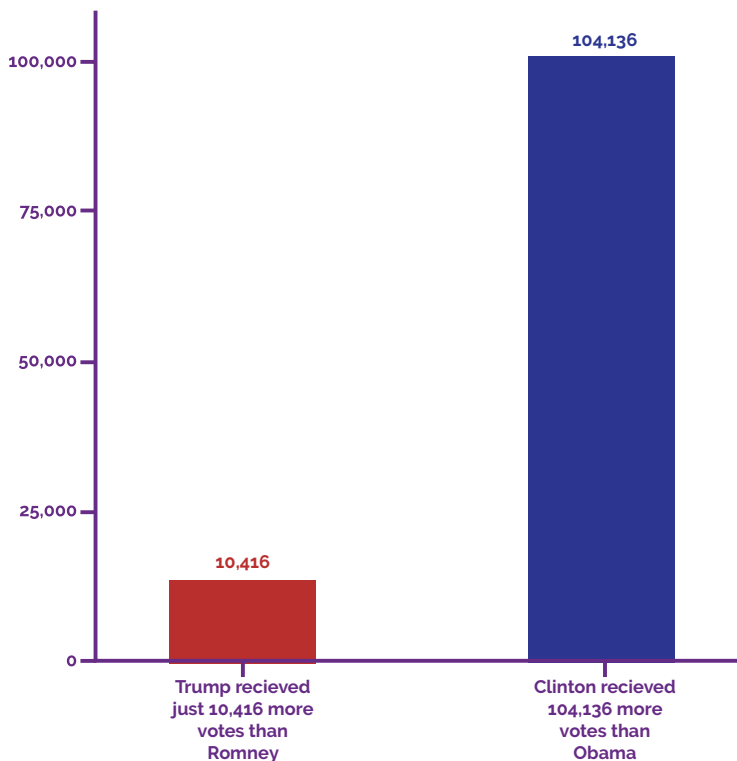
The 2016 Georgia presidential results showed significant improvement in the Democrats' direction despite a difficult national environment and little national investment in the state.

The 104,000 vote improvement between the Obama and Clinton raw vote totals stands in contrast to states like heavily contested North Carolina (where Clinton won just 11,000 votes more than Obama), Pennsylvania (where Clinton won 64,000 fewer votes than Obama), Iowa (163,000 fewer Clinton votes) and Ohio (330,000 fewer Clinton votes), along with Wisconsin (239,000 fewer Clinton votes) and Michigan (295,000 fewer Clinton votes).[1]

Georgia's Rapid Democratic Swing

The 2018 results show even more reason for optimism for next year's elections in Georgia. Building a strong multi-racial, multi-ethnic coalition with historic turnout levels, while making meaningful, marginal improvements on white voters' support levels put the Abrams for Governor campaign on the doorstep of statewide victory – and puts Democrats in a strong position to break down that door in 2020. A strategy that deliberately envisions what the total possible Georgia electorate could look like, instead of being structured through the typical "likely voter" lens, creates for 2020 Democratic efforts a similar and even better opportunity than the 2018 effort that put Stacey Abrams on the cusp of taking the governor's mansion.

Georgia Raw Vote Increases by Party (2012-2016)

[1]In Florida, Clinton won more than 250,000 additional votes than Obama; however, Trump won more than 450,000 more votes than Romney in Florida. (In Georgia, Trump won only 10,416 more votes than Romney).

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Moreover, while the Abrams campaign and the coordinated campaign with the state party made an historic $42 million investment in the 2018 cycle, that amount did not reach the 2016 presidential investments in similarly sized states. Further, the $42 million investment happened in a midterm election; it did not coexist with the natural forces that compel more people to vote in presidential years. Simply put, the full potential to expand Georgia's electorate has not yet been realized. With full investment, 2020 Democratic efforts will expand Georgia's electorate to numbers that ensure victory.

The table below shows the blue-sky potential for Democrats to expand the electorate by turning out more African American voters in major counties. The numbers of registered voters indicated are as of right now – and will only increase by Election Day 2020.

County	Race	Nunn Est.	Abrams Est.	Registered
Fulton	African American	115,054	170,167	336,929
Gwinnett	African American	56,492	93,105	165,110
DeKalb	African American	111,352	160,244	290,137
Cobb	African American	50,177	80,618	142,301
Chatham	African American	26,088	38,273	75,915
Clayton	African American	49,809	71,768	142,502
Henry	African American	28,546	45,050	75,041
Richmond	African American	26,823	39,779	74,820
Muscogee	African American	19,421	29,681	59,796
Bibb	African American	20,176	29,527	56,072
Clarke	African American	6,314	10,155	21,244
Dougherty	African American	14,709	19,943	42,141
Glynn	African American	3,049	5,317	13,439
Whitfield	African American	555	929	2,036

Opportunities to expand the electorate in Georgia go beyond African American voters. While Abrams was able to triple Latinx and AAPI turnout from 2014, large numbers of both groups remain to be mobilized for 2020. In fact, statewide there are 128,765 registered Latinx voters and 90,965 registered AAPI voters who did not vote in 2018. These are voters who, through strong national investment, can be mobilized in 2020.

GEORGIA ALREADY PERFORMS LIKE A BATTLEGROUND STATE, BUT WITH UNIQUE ADVANTAGES.

Black voters, the most reliably Democratic voting bloc, comprise a significantly higher proportion of Georgia's eligible electorate than that of any other competitive state. Georgia has, by far, the largest base of voters a 2020 campaign can turn out; more importantly, ample room exists for growth to identify and engage additional voters to build upon the organic 2016 gains and the cultivated 2018 gains that the Abrams campaign put in motion.

While Georgia Democrats hold a massive demographic advantage in African American voters, the state also has a younger electorate than other competitive states. Voters over age 65, the most reliably *Republican* voting bloc, comprise a lower proportion of Georgia's eligible electorate than that of any other competitive state.

A likely reaction to this information is to decry the ability to leverage this structural difference into a competitive advantage; however, the 2018 results show that targeted investment does yield measurable

State	Af-Am Registered Voter Share[2]
GA	32.9%
NC	22.7%
VA	19.3%
FL	14.2%
MI	14.1%
TX	13.6%
OH	12.6%
PA	11.1%
NV	10.5%
AZ	5.8%
WI	5.6%
MN	5.3%
IA	3.3%
NH	1.5%
ME	1.0%

increases in participation. In fact, the Abrams campaign tripled AAPI turnout, tripled Latinx turnout, increased African American turnout by 40%, and increased turnout among young voters by 139%. The evidence is clear: investments in organizing in Georgia pay off. Georgia Democrats have never benefited from modern presidential-level investment to expand the electorate and making such an investment provides a path to victory.

This is not to say that national 2020 efforts should not also invest in perennial battlegrounds; rather, it is a demonstration of the strategic imperative to include Georgia in the mix.

State	65+ Registered Voter Share[3]
GA	18.33%
TX	19.80%
VA	20.88%
NC	22.13%
OH	22.44%
NV	22.84%
MI	22.87%
MN	22.91%
IA	23.41%
PA	23.75%
AZ	24.59%
WI	24.89%
NH	25.70%
FL	26.91%
ME	27.21%

Comparing Georgia's 2018 results to the results in other states provides the clearest rationale for why Democrats should go big in Georgia without abandoning prior efforts. The 2018 Democratic gubernatorial campaigns in perennial battleground states of Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin saw a significant dropoff in votes from the 2016 presidential cycle, even in the states where the elections yielded Democratic victories. This was to be expected; it is a near impossibility for midterm campaigns to create the same voter awareness and voter motivation to achieve presidential-level turnout. Typically, the best that even well-run and well-funded midterm campaigns can do is get as close as possible to turning out the number of voters who participated in the presidential election two years prior.

In Georgia, the unthinkable happened: more Democratic voters turned out in a midterm gubernatorial election than did in the presidential election preceding it. More Georgians voted for Stacey Abrams than for Hillary Clinton, making Georgia *one of the few states[4] in the country in which the Democratic gubernatorial candidate received more votes than the 2016 Democratic presidential nominee.* Three factors contributed to this
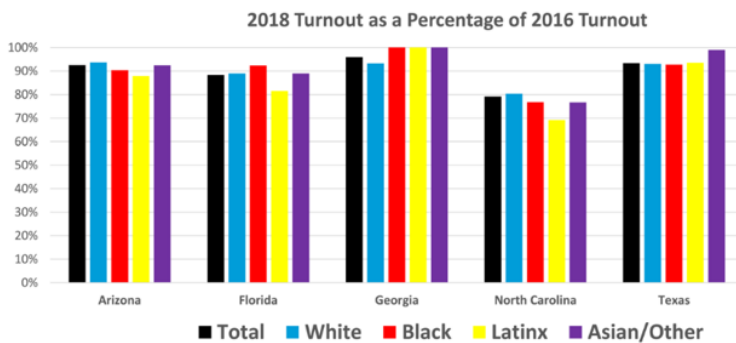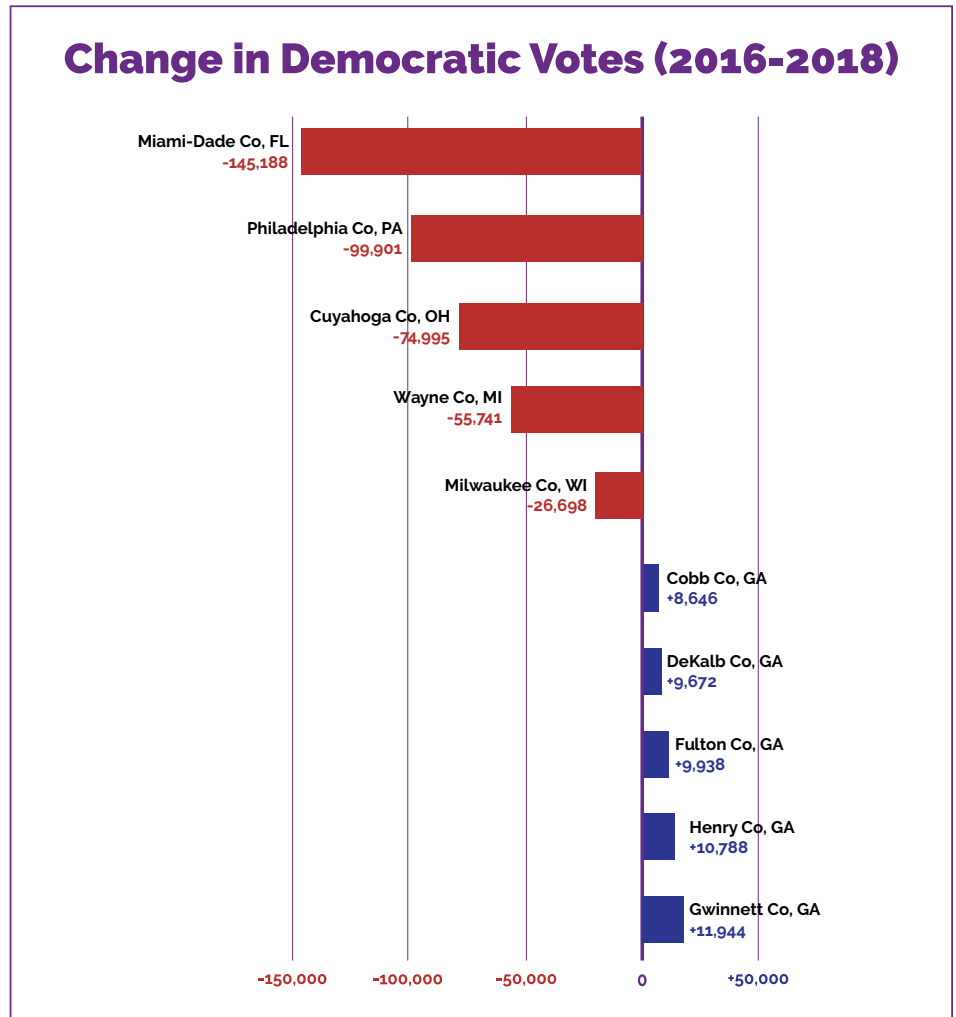
[2]Catalist model of likely African American voters.
[3]TargetSmart voter registration counts as of August 2019. Age based on registration or modeled likely age. Wisconsin and New Hampshire stopped providing age in the last few years on the voter file, so these estimates may slightly overstate older voters.

anomaly: (1) The Abrams campaign made a deliberate early, ongoing effort and a massive investment to expanding the electorate; (2) The Abrams operation also competed statewide, in every county, community, radio and TV market, and was aggressive about pursuing white Georgians of all political leanings (without that effort overly dominating spending or strategy), leading Stacey Abrams to win the largest share of white voters in a generation; and (3) Georgia's population, particularly in heavily populated metro areas, resulted in a larger pool of Democratic voters for the campaign to turn out, along with a large pool of Democratic voters who turned out on their own. All these factors can be replicated by 2020 Democratic candidates to an even larger scale.

The starkest contrast between Abrams' performance relative to other 2018 gubernatorial candidates can be seen in the results from the states' largest counties – Democratic bastions where statewide victories require running up the score. While large blue counties in other states experienced large, albeit expected midterm drop-off, Abrams increased the number of votes in Georgia's largest counties (top right).

Change in Democratic Votes (2016-2018)

County	Change
Miami-Dade Co, FL	-145,188
Philadelphia Co, PA	-99,901
Cuyahoga Co, OH	-74,995
Wayne Co, MI	-55,741
Milwaukee Co, WI	-26,698
Cobb Co, GA	+8,646
DeKalb Co, GA	+9,672
Fulton Co, GA	+9,938
Henry Co, GA	+10,788
Gwinnett Co, GA	+11,944

2018 Turnout as a Percentage of 2016 Turnout

Total / White / Black / Latinx / Asian/Other

Arizona, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas

Powered by Catalist Data

Georgia's 2018 performance also stood alone at a statewide level across racial lines, with 2018 Black, Latinx and AAPI plus other voters turning out at 100% of 2016 presidential levels – something that happened in no other state – and something remarkable for voters of color, who typically drop off at higher rates in midterms relative to their white counterparts. As Catalist documented after the election, only one voters of color group in one other state – AAPI and other voters in Texas – achieved what Stacey Abrams did among all voters of color groups in Georgia.

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[4]Others were Colorado, Kansas, and Minnesota.

WHAT DEMOCRATS MUST DO IN 2020

THE ABRAMS STRATEGY PROVIDES A BLUEPRINT FOR 2020.

Democrats in Georgia had been losing general elections by roughly 200,000 votes the past several cycles, or eight points in a midterm year and five points in a presidential year. The Abrams campaign sought to end this 200,000-vote curse. Abrams for Governor launched in May 2017, approaching the campaign like a start-up company, one looking for new customers and with an eye on scale and reach. The path to victory centered on 1.7 million registered Georgia voters in 2017 who were Democratic leaning but who were unlikely to vote, the majority of whom were people of color. Because of new registrations, the 1.7 million figure increased to 1.9 million by the general election.

> *Our core strategic imperative was to expand the electorate through deliberate, unprecedented investment."*

Rather than allowing the traditional metrics of likely voters and likely voter polls to chart the course of our campaign, our core strategic imperative was to expand the electorate through deliberate, unprecedented investment.

This decision was driven as much by necessity as ingenuity: winning without changing the electorate would have required capturing 30% of white voters, a near-impossibility in a state that saw presidential nominees from John Kerry in 2004 to Hillary Clinton in 2016 in the low twenties. Georgia has a notoriously "inelastic" white electorate[5] in a region where non-college whites had left the Democratic Party decades ago, long preceding the dramatic changes that swept across contested states in 2016.

Traditionally, Democratic committees, consultants and the media do not factor unlikely voters into their polling, strategy and prognostications, effectively making their analyses by relitigating the prior election as if nothing had changed in the electorate since. Instead of a strategy that casts a broad net for potential new voters, campaigns historically focus on the narrower and increasingly ineffective category of targeting so-called "swing voters."

In Georgia the universe of "swing voters" or "persuadable voters" – voters who regularly vote but oscillate between parties or are of unknown partisanship – is relatively small. Even voters who consider themselves to be independents routinely vote for one specific party's candidates and are not truly persuadable. The Abrams campaign calculated this category to amount to roughly 150,000 voters out of the nearly 4 million who would eventually vote. (The campaign communicated to a much broader universe than just 150,000.) Contrastingly, the number of unlikely Democratic-leaning voters was 1.9 million. While the unlikely voters were predominantly voters of color –and 69% African American-- the "swing voters" were predominantly white. 150,000 voters equated to approximately 6% of regular midterm voters. This paled in comparison to a potential group of 1.9 million voters, the equivalent of 76% of total regular midterm voters. We refused to limit our scope of opportunity to the narrow slice of possibly persuadable, likely voters, and instead resolved to invest in all potential votes.

The common refrain from previous Georgia Democratic campaigns, local Democratic leaders and national operatives held that "lots of Black people already vote" and thus the ceiling for Black participation had already been reached. Despite steady increases in Black population, previous Georgia Democratic campaigns allowed themselves to believe that there was no way to meaningfully improve upon those numbers. We did not subscribe to such a belief. We also rejected a zero-sum approach to campaigning and targeting—that a campaign had to choose between talking to white voters OR talking to voters of color. We resolved we do both,

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[5]https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/can-stacey-abrams-really-turn-georgia-blue/

with our candidate and her time in all regions of the state, and with our communication and field dollars by investing in every tactical instrument available to the campaign in order to reach the broadest swatch of potential voters for Abrams—Black, brown, white; young, old; native-born and naturalized.

DEMOCRATS CAN AND MUST CONTINUE TO MAKE MARGINAL GAINS AMONG WHITE VOTERS.

Much of the discussion on Abrams' 2018 effort focused on her success in expanding the electorate by gaining support and high turnout from Georgia's diverse voters of color. Indeed, we accomplished this goal, and the focus on numbers of voters of color was understandable considering that registering and turning out these voters was a focus of Abrams' years-long work.

However, the media attention on voters of color led to a myth that Abrams could not make improvements among white voters and did not seek to do so. It also led to an assumed narrative that Abrams did poorly among white voters. That assumption is false. Expanding Georgia's electorate among voters of color was not a zero-sum game in which engagement of marginalized communities was inherently synonymous with losing white support.

County	Race	Nunn Est. %	Abrams Est. %
Fulton	White	36.69%	54.84%
Gwinnett	White	16.65%	33.24%
DeKalb	White	54.27%	68.83%
Cobb	White	22.75%	35.98%
Chatham	White	26.81%	34.58%
Clayton	White	15.07%	45.59%
Richmond	White	16.77%	24.18%
Muscogee	White	20.72%	24.41%
Bibb	White	20.52%	23.99%
Clarke	White	53.80%	62.65%

In fact, in counties with large and diverse populations, where our efforts to transform the electorate were the most robust, Abrams made concurrent improvements among white voters (above right).
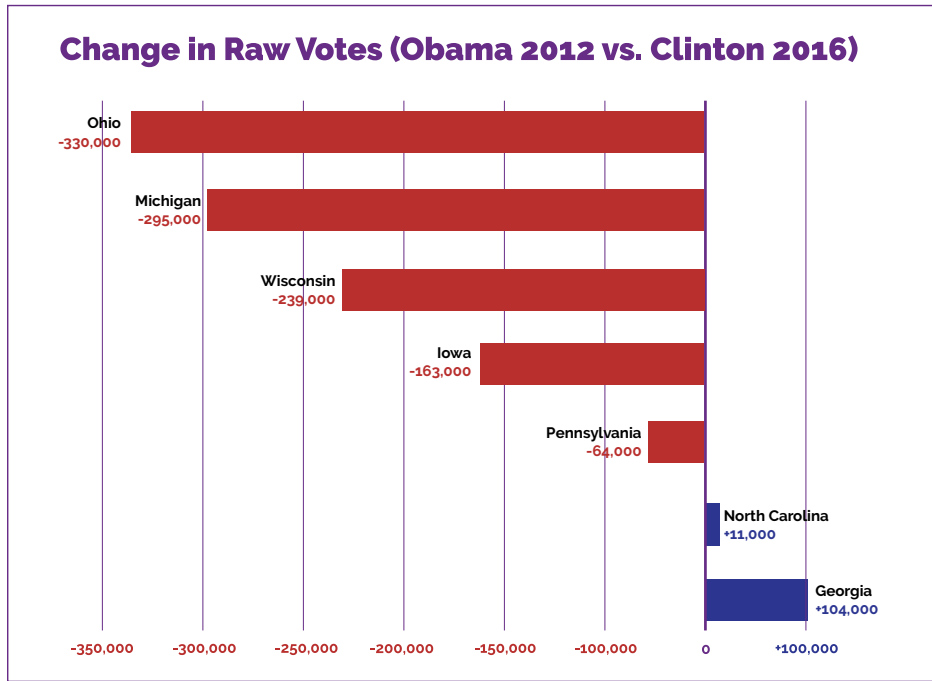
The Abrams campaign engaged white voters and achieved success in doing so, winning the highest%age of white voters in a generation, even when third-party 2016 support is accounted. Among both male and female white voters, college and non-college, Abrams won a higher share of support.

Race[6]	Gender	College Ed	Nunn Est.	Nunn Est. %	Clinton Est.	Clinton Est. %	Abrams Est .	Abrams Est. %
White	F	College	106,351	27.51%	176,034	29.36%	174,201	31.42%
White	F	Non-College	77,989	18.25%	156,467	21.75%	152,863	23.47%
White	M	College	83,879	23.00%	129,763	24.35%	134,738	26.51%
White	M	Non-College	56,246	14.78%	105,102	17.20%	111,101	19.24%

Abrams achieved these improvements in white support primarily by communicating an authentic message that was delivered in every part of the state, being clear and untimid about her values, campaigning in all areas of the state, and targeting white voters through such mediums as mail, digital, TV and rural radio. An additional reason why Abrams improved among white voters, and why 2020 Democrats can further improve these numbers, is because white voters who are moving to Georgia are much more Democratic than white voters who already live in the state. Higher support among in-migrating whites is one reason why voters of all races who have lived in Georgia less than 10 years voted for Abrams by a 65-35% margin, and why new white

[6]Estimates based on modeled support and Georgia SOS turnout data.

voters in Georgia who register in 2019 and 2020 will be more likely to support Democrats than white voters as a whole, thus offering 2020 Democrats the opportunity to make additional marginal yet significant gains.

Change in Raw Votes (Obama 2012 vs. Clinton 2016)

Ohio -330,000
Michigan -295,000
Wisconsin -239,000
Iowa -163,000
Pennsylvania -64,000
North Carolina +11,000
Georgia +104,000

-350,000   -300,000   -250,000   -200,000   -150,000   -100,000   0   +100,000

DEMOCRATS CANNOT REPEAT THE MISTAKE OF NOT INVESTING IN GEORGIA.
Despite large resources and long list of states receiving those resources, national Democrats made a strategic decision to not invest in Georgia in 2016. Having made only a nominal investment relative to other competitive states, the Clinton campaign came much closer in Georgia (a 5-point loss) than it did in Ohio (an 8-point loss) and Iowa (a 9-point loss), where national Democrats invested $70 million and $32 million, respectively.

In 2016, national operatives were challenged repeatedly about why North Carolina, but not Georgia, was being targeted as a battleground state, (1) despite polling that showed Clinton to be competitive in both states and (2) with Georgia having a much larger pool of infrequent voters of color. In the end, Governor Cooper eked out a win, but Clinton lost North Carolina and Georgia by 3.7 and 5.1 points respectively despite $91.8 million being spent on the hard side in North Carolina compared to around $8.8M in Georgia – a difference of $83M.

The table below shows that Georgia is a good financial investment as compared to other states by outlining Georgia's performance improvements relative to the investment Democrats have made in Georgia, in the region and in traditional battleground states.

State[7]	2016 % Margin	2016 Vote Margin	2018 % Margin	2018 Vote Margin	2016 Total	2018 Total
GA	-5.13%	-211,141	-1.39%	-54,723	$8,832,192.70	$54,071,790.66
NC	-3.66%	-173,315	--	--	$91,866,792.66	$21,318,451.38
IA	-9.41%	-147,314	-2.73%	36,289	$31,518,668.95	$40,822,335.83
OH	-8.13%	-446,840	-3.71%	-164,070	$70,385,551.60	$60,565,829.31
FL	-1.20%	-112,911	-0.13%	-10,033	$133,532,796.23	$128,481,156.00
TX	-8.99%	-807,179	-2.56%	-214,921	$3,609,856.19	$95,120,107.01

THE ABRAMS CAMPAIGN INVESTED BIG AND INVESTED EARLY. YOU SHOULD, TOO.
To scale up and communicate with 1.9 million unlikely voters plus the smaller pool of swing voters, the Abrams campaign launched an extensive voter contact effort through a volunteer field program starting in the primary. In addition, we ran the primary Early Vote and GOTV operation like a general election operation and tested voter protection machinery. Our victory on Primary Night was staggering: we won 76% of the vote and 153 of

[7]Sources: State SOS offices, FEC, and state ethics boards. State spending per cycle was determined by the sum of 1. Presidential TV ad spend by state for Hillary Clinton, 2. FEC reports of US Senate candidates and Federal coordinated expenditures, and 3. State reports of state coordinated expenditures and gubernatorial candidates.

159 counties, with the highest non-presidential primary turnout in Georgia history.

In the general election, we dove deep on research into every segment of the electorate: from multiple focus groups of African American unlikely voters across the state, to online qualitative testing, to traditional polling, to polling of infrequent Democratic and Republican voters. At the same time, we scaled up the volunteer program and launched a living wage paid canvass in July 2018 covering all major cities as well as the rural micropolitan hubs that dot the Southern Georgia Black Belt. The campaign scaled up our already large and diverse in-house filmmaking and digital team. We leveraged the gubernatorial campaign to invest in downballot races, including constitutional offices and state legislative races. Our massive, unprecedented Coordinated Campaign at the Democratic Party of Georgia established a dozen fully staffed campaign offices across the state.

While we focused on the technical realities of the campaign, we did not lose sight of the "start-up" mentality that had led us to our early investments during the primary. Throughout the process, we were intellectually curious and open to new opportunities, we played across the state (e.g., scaled up from the rural towns to the big cities), we took risks and we were aggressive. We also regularly rejected conventional wisdom, such as repeated suggestions that we trim our African American universes of low turnout scorers to be "more efficient."

> **"We also regularly rejected conventional wisdom, such as repeated suggestions that we trim our African American universes of low turnout scorers to be "more efficient.""**

Instead, our universes included all registered African American, Latinx and AAPI voters, only removing strong-GOP scoring Latinx and AAPI voters and exceptionally high turnout-scoring voters.

In order to reach such a large universe of voters, we also examined previously untapped or under-utilized channels of communication. Where campaigns have often been under-resourced or strategically reliant on television, our approach allowed for nimbleness and broad reach. For example, we ran an unprecedented, large-scale vote by mail program that resulted in a 50,000-vote lead in mail ballots, running up the score going into the three-week early voting period. We went big and early on digital investments to target all segments of our 1.9 million pool with diverse and compelling content and we layered on digital radio, conventional radio, multiple flights of mail, door knocks and texts. From the small rural markets to massive efforts in Atlanta and to Florida and Tennessee spill markets, we leveraged every available method of communication.

Every single region of the state was reached through mail, digital, field and media. We widened our white voter universe broadly in paid communications of a whole variety of stripes—from country music radio to broad digital universes—to both win votes and communicate contrast messages on our opponent. All of this was in addition to a robust broadcast and cable advertising campaign that responded to attacks, launching contrast messaging while always having a positive track running about Stacey Abrams.

One key observation of our campaign was that we did not have to neglect white voters to substantially target and engage voters of color. Instead, we invested a commensurate amount for the potential yield of the tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of moderate or unknown partisan white voter universe, and accordingly spent the lion's share of our resources on both broad and targeted communications as well as a large scale both volunteer and paid field effort that knocked on over 1.5 million doors of the racially and ethnically diverse 1.9 million targeted voters across the state.

Our unique approach caused a raft of skepticism and consternation, such as unexpected visits from Washington, D.C. operatives to question our unorthodox approach in the primary and general elections; "friendly fire" from local Democrats on the evening news during the primary election; and grousing from

consultants who had previously advised Georgia Democrats but were not involved in our efforts. Other pushback included anxious advice when we rejected targeting recommendations from experts to trim low-turnout scoring Democrats from our universes; repeated befuddled questioning about why we weren't saving every dime for TV advertising; general strategy questions from opinion leaders in Atlanta and Washington, D.C. asking "how do you know talking to voters will work?"; and the list goes on. In the end, Abrams for Governor and the Coordinated Campaign spent a combined $42 million, outraising our opponents in both the primary and the general elections. We spent about $14 million in the general election on TV (Atlanta's media market is one of the top ten most expensive in the USA), and we also spent millions on digital, millions on mail to Democrats for vote-by-mail, early voting and Election Day, and over $7 million on organizing.

The results were historic—the governor's race was too close to call on Election Night, we broke the 200,000 margin curse, and we won substantial victories down ballot[8] with 16 new members elected to the state legislature and Lucy McBath elected a new member of Congress by a few thousand votes. Indeed, 2018 was a high turnout year across the country, but in Georgia, we exceeded our regional peers in turnout and support levels by African Americans, Latinx and APPI voters and moved the needle from the low twenties in support levels by whites for Democrats to 25% overall, with white college women supporting Abrams at more than 31%, the highest levels in two decades.

Race[9]	2014 Share	2014 Voters	2016 Share	2016 Voter	2018 Share	2018 Voter
AAPI	0.89%	22,343	1.72%	70,268	1.77%	68,895
African-American	30.47%	766,054	29.58%	1,207,834	30.82%	1,202,541
Native American	0.05%	1,316	0.09%	3,782	0.10%	3,709
Latinx	1.14%	28,559	2.33%	95,042	2.32%	90,654
Other	0.82%	20,618	1.13%	46,300	1.18%	45,964
White	66.63%	1,675,111	65.14%	2,659,502	63.11%	2,462,435

ADDITIONAL FACTORS

DEMOCRATS' OPPORTUNITY IN GEORGIA GOES BEYOND STACEY ABRAMS.

One of the perpetual questions of the Abrams campaign's efforts is this: were our achievements solely the effect of one, historic candidate or is our work replicable? Not only is our 2018 work replicable; victory is even more achievable in 2020. The biggest difference between 2016 and 2018 in Georgia was not the candidates themselves, but strategy, investment, and an authentic communication of values that was strong, clear, and untimid.

As we traveled the state, we learned that Stacey Abrams' story and identity alone were insufficient to woo voters, including Black women. Voters of all ages and all races wanted to know what she would DO. Stacey had numerous detailed plans to improve life for Georgians and to strengthen the state. She adapted her storytelling to reach specific audiences and acknowledge the specific barriers to achieving opportunity, but she talked about the same issues in small towns as she did in the Atlanta Metro, not changing her approach based on where she was and to whom she was speaking. It worked. We had huge growth in turnout from all Democratic-leaning voters and the strongest support from whites in a generation. Even in a high turnout and watershed Democratic year, Georgia stood out.

While Stacey Abrams is certainly a singular candidate who waged an historic campaign, the fundamentals of winning elections in Georgia are universal: consistent, thoughtful messaging; statewide engagement; understandable, effective plans grounded in the specific experiences of the voter; strategic methodology for

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[8]https://twitter.com/gwlauren/status/1063902250861506561
[9]Georgia SOS/DNC Votebuilder Georgia

voter targeting, persuasion and turnout; and authentic leadership. Moreover, favorable factors in Georgia's growth, changing demographics and potential for massive investment make 2020 an opportunity to expand and improve upon the efforts and outcome of 2018.

MAJOR EFFORTS ARE UNDERWAY TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO DEMOCRACY IN 2020.
While the Abrams campaign transformed the electorate and achieved historic turnout, Georgia was also a voter suppression nightmare. All our planning and preparation could not overcome the incompetence and malfeasance of the architect of voter suppression, our opponent Brian Kemp, who played the role of referee, scorekeeper and participant. A panoply of suppression tactics targeted voter registration, voting access and ballot counting. Voters faced challenges getting on the rolls and staying registered. Thousands failed to receive absentee ballots, faced polling location closures and ran into a gauntlet of challenges when casting a ballot. Those who did manage to vote faced error-riddled machines, unlawful rejection of absentee ballots, illegal denial of translators in the voting booth, exceptionally high rates of provisional ballots and an erratic system of state-led, county-implemented voting procedures.

For example, there were about 80,000 voters in 2018 who we know supported Abrams but did not cast a ballot. Their ballots were rejected, they left long lines, or they simply decided not to vote. Reducing obstacles to voting will increase vote yields for Democrats.

Voter suppression of 2018 has been a call to action in Georgia. Activists are attending state election board meetings and asking tough questions. County board members are working with Fair Fight Action to improve voting access in their communities. Two landmark cases pending in federal court could fundamentally change how Georgia conducts elections. An election reform bill opposed by Democrats because it does not include hand-marked paper ballots does make marginal improvements in voting access and replaces the two-decades-old machines that led to four- or five-hour lines on Election Day. Work is being done now to make sure that the failure of democracy in 2018 does not happen in 2020.

CONCLUSION

THE GROUNDWORK HAS BEEN LAID FOR 2020 VICTORY.
Georgia must be a Tier 1 Battleground in the presidential election and U.S. Senate races next year. To win Georgia – and any state with a diverse, growing electorate – campaigns must do the following:

1. **Contemporary research and analysis:** Rigorously research and analyze "low propensity" voters of color and include them in campaign plans just as campaigns do soft or unknown partisan white voters. Build a diverse team and invest in the tools, research and know-how to fully count these voters into your plans as whole participants and top targets from the beginning.
2. **Start early and sustain infrastructure:** Use the primary to build for the general in as many 2020 competitive states as possible: Start engaging 2020 unlikely voters as soon as possible so that Democrats build the collective infrastructure necessary to reach the scale needed to persuade and mobilize that large universe of "unlikely" Democratic voters in the general election. Test and build the strength of your campaign's security and technology protocols. Invest in a voter protection operation, such as running a small-scale provisional ballot chase after primary night to test operations. Train staff and volunteers by running GOTV in the primary election with the same structure and velocity as you will need to for the general election.
3. **Communicate values rather than pandering to stereotypes:** Respect voters and their desires to have candidates who are running for something, not just against Donald Trump and the Republicans. Our research showed across demographics that voters are not satisfied solely with candidate biography or anger against the status quo; they want to know what candidates will do. The combination of a strong candidate with a strong organization and financial resources, working in all the diverse communities of

the state, brought turnout and support levels by all segments of the electorate, to unprecedented heights compared to previous Georgia elections and to our peers across the region. It is both entirely possible and necessary for this to be expanded and improved upon in 2020.

4. **Invest aggressively:** In Georgia, Democrats can take the presidency, U.S. Senate races, the 6th and 7th Congressional districts and the state house majority. The Georgia U.S. Senate seats are necessary to win the majority, and the state House is key to ensuring fair Congressional and state legislative maps for the next decade in a state where people of color will become the majority of the population around 2026. There is room to grow the Democratic electorate further and investment happening early in mitigating the Trump side of the ledger:

    a. As of June 2019, nearly 200,000 additional Georgians had already registered to vote since November 6, 2018, and the universe of these voters favors Democrats.

    b. With registration growth, we expect at least 200,000 African American and 100,000 other voters of color (including at least 40,000 Latinx voters and 30,000 AAPI voters) who were not registered in 2018 to register by Fall 2020. On average these voters are likely to be strongly Democratic – in 2018, 95% of African-American voters, 58% of Latinx voters, and 57% of AAPI voters backed Abrams, with those that were newly registered or less likely to vote being more likely to support Democrats.

    c. With new registrants plus infrequent/nonvoting Democratic-leaning voters factored in, the universe of potential voters to remake the 2020 electorate is a pool of 1.7 million. In other words, Democrats have the ability to turn out 1.7 million additional voters in 2020 who were not part of the record-breaking 1.9 million vote haul for Abrams in 2018. (For context, Clinton lost the state in 2016 by 211k votes.)

    d. Priorities USA has named Georgia as a top targeted state[10] in the same tier as North Carolina and Arizona, and their digital effort engaging Democratic and GOP-leaning white voters will prepare the ground for the 2020 general election. NDRC also has Georgia as a top targeted state[11] for its importance in redistricting.

5. **Seize the momentum:** The political and financial rationale for playing in Georgia is an immediate opportunity, not a future one. The past cycle's investment and margins show the state as a top tier battleground now. The infrastructure laid by the Abrams campaign is a foundation to 2020 campaigns to scale in order to seize this moment. The playbook has been drafted for victory next year. Now it is up to the 2020 candidates, committees and all interested and invested parties to expand on these efforts and what we've learned to win next year.

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[10]https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2019/02/liberal-super-pac-priorities-usa-announces-plan-for-2020/
[11]https://democraticredistricting.com/ndrc-2019-2020-electoral-targets/

Nowhere is Georgia's population growth and demographic shift more visible than in three Atlanta Metro counties: Cobb, Gwinnett, and Henry. In a matter of just a few years, these counties have shifted from solidly Republican to solidly Democratic, and with continued population growth and investment to expand the electorate, the margins in these counties will soar in 2020, anchoring a statewide victory along with longtime Democratic bastions like Fulton, DeKalb, and Clayton.

Georgia is Changing Fast

Today

DEM WIN

GOP WIN

Year labels	

Data points:
- Obama −2,925
- Obama −27,684
- Obama −38,938
- Nunn +407
- Nunn −21,153
- Nunn −27,674
- Clinton +19,164
- Clinton +7,209
- Clinton +4,333
- Abrams +45,099
- Abrams +29,915
- Abrams +15,121

Y-axis: +60,000, +50,000, +40,000, +30,000, +20,000, +10,000, 0, −10,000, −20,000, −30,000, −40,000

X-axis (YEAR): 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020

Legend: —— Cobb County   —— Gwinnett County   —— Henry County