



## **Republicans bring out the big guns in Georgia runoff election, but Trump's refusal to concede sparks concern**

*Marquise Francis*

*CANTON, Ga. — In the high stakes runoff election for two U.S. Senate seats that will decide which party controls the chamber under President-elect Joe Biden, incumbent Republican Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler are looking to bring in big GOP names to stump alongside them, while Democrats are choosing to keep things local.*

*On Friday, Loeffler and Perdue were joined by Vice President Mike Pence in Canton, Ga. to a raucous outdoor crowd of more than 1,000 supporters. While Pence stopped short of conceding the general election, which has been called by [Associated Press](#) and other media outlets for Biden, Pence made a tacit acknowledgement that if Democrats Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff were victorious, the resulting 50-seat tie would be broken by Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.*

*“We need the great state of Georgia to defend the majority,” Pence said. “And the road to the Senate Republican majority goes straight through the state of Georgia.”*

*On Thursday, Loeffler and Perdue held a joint indoor rally in front of a smaller crowd of about 150 at the Georgia National Fairgrounds in Perry, Ga. alongside Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, who made a similar admission.*

*“Sometimes the Lord works in mysterious ways,” Cotton said. “He’s giving the people of Georgia the chance not just to vote for your senators ... he’s giving you the opportunity and the honor to hold the line and make sure Republicans remain in charge in the U.S. Senate.”*



*Provided by Yahoo! News Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) speaks to the crowd during a "Defend the Majority" rally for Sens. Kelly Loeffler (R-GA) and David Perdue (R-GA) on November 19, 2020 in Perry, Georgia. (Photo by Jessica McGowan/Getty Images)*

*Cotton, a rising star in the Republican party who many people think will run for [president in 2024](#), has a penchant for stoking strong culture wars as evidenced most recently after his published [New York Times op-ed article](#) that led to the resignation of the paper's editorial-page editor.*

*Last week, Loeffler and Perdue were joined by both GOP Florida senators in Marco Rubio and Rick Scott.*

*Weighing heavily on the race is President Trump's refusal to concede defeat to President-elect Biden, as well as his insistence that his loss in Georgia could only be explained by voter fraud.*

*"Republicans have the advantage in a vacuum — the problem is this run-off is taking place in the eye of a political hurricane of the president's own making," Republican strategist Liam Donovan told Yahoo News.*

*"The longer this quixotic bid to overturn the results and deny the reality of a Biden victory, the harder it is to argue you need a GOP majority as a check."*

*Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who called himself a "Republican through and through" in an [interview with Yahoo News](#) earlier this week, blamed Trump for Biden's win in the state.*

*"Twenty-four thousand people did not vote in the fall; either they did not vote absentee because they were told by the president 'don't vote absentee, it's not secure,' " Raffensperger said in an [interview with WSB-TV](#), an Atlanta-area ABC affiliate.*

*"But then they did not come out and vote in person. He would have won by 10,000 votes. He actually depressed, suppressed his own voting base."*

*On both Thursday and Friday, Loeffler and Perdue both reiterated that Georgians would be responsible for what happens not only for the next 4 years, but for generations.*



*Provided by Yahoo! News Vice President Mike Pence waves to supporters at a Defend the Majority Rally in Canton Georgia along with Sen. David Perdue (R-GA) and Sen. Kelly Loeffler (R-GA) on Friday, Nov. 20, 2020 in Canton, GA. (Jason Armond / Los Angeles Times via Getty Images)*

*"Georgia is on everyone's mind," Loeffler said at Thursday's rally.*

*"We are the firewall. It's not just control of the U.S. Senate. It's the future of our country. We are going to hold the line against socialism right here in Georgia."*

*"Today we're the last line of defense against this country making a change to the left that we won't get to undo for maybe two, three, four, five generations," Perdue said Friday.*

*The Republican senators spent little time attacking their Democratic opponents. Instead, Perdue and Loeffler took jabs at Democratic Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, calling them "radical" leaders of the Democratic party who want to push the country towards socialism.*

*In an about face, they also pushed absentee and early voting, which starts on Dec 14 for the runoff election.*

*Donovan believes both Georgia senators have learned from Trump's mistakes.*

*"It's a significant issue Republicans are seeking to address by telling their people to vote however they can, including absentee," Donovan said.*

*"If they don't address this inequity, you could very well see another election night lead for Republicans eroded as the mail votes roll in."*

*Still, Republicans in the state are fearful that their party isn't doing enough to turn out voters for the runoff.*

*"We have to do a better job getting out the vote," Denise Dehnel, a 64-year-old Republican Perry, Ga. resident, told Yahoo News.*

*"The Democrats are good at that. They have a great ground game. We have to decide how important this is to us. If we lose the Senate, I'm worried about what this country will look like."*

*A Republican from Wrightsville, Ga., Glynn Martin, 66, told Yahoo News that he worries that Stacey Abrams was responsible for generating "fake votes" for Democrats, and could do so again. "If a Democrat gets in, we are in trouble," Martin said.*



*Provided by Yahoo! News A Republican supporter wearing a Stop the Steal hat attends the Defend the Majority Rally in support of Sen. David Perdue (R-GA) and Sen. Kelly Loeffler (R-GA). (Jason Armond / Los Angeles Times via Getty Images)*

*There is no evidence that Abrams or anyone within the Democratic Party engaged in fraud. On the contrary, Abrams, who narrowly lost to Republican Gov. Brian Kemp in a controversial race in 2018, has dedicated her efforts to mobilizing Georgia voters through her [Fair Fight](#) national voting rights organization, which has been widely credited as a huge force behind Biden's victory.*

*Republicans in the state worry that Democrats now have an advantage in terms of organizational structure and that many reliable GOP voters will let cynicism over allegations of election fraud keep them from the polls. [Georgia Republican Assembly](#) president Alexander Johnson worries a misinformed public will affect voter turnout in the runoff election.*

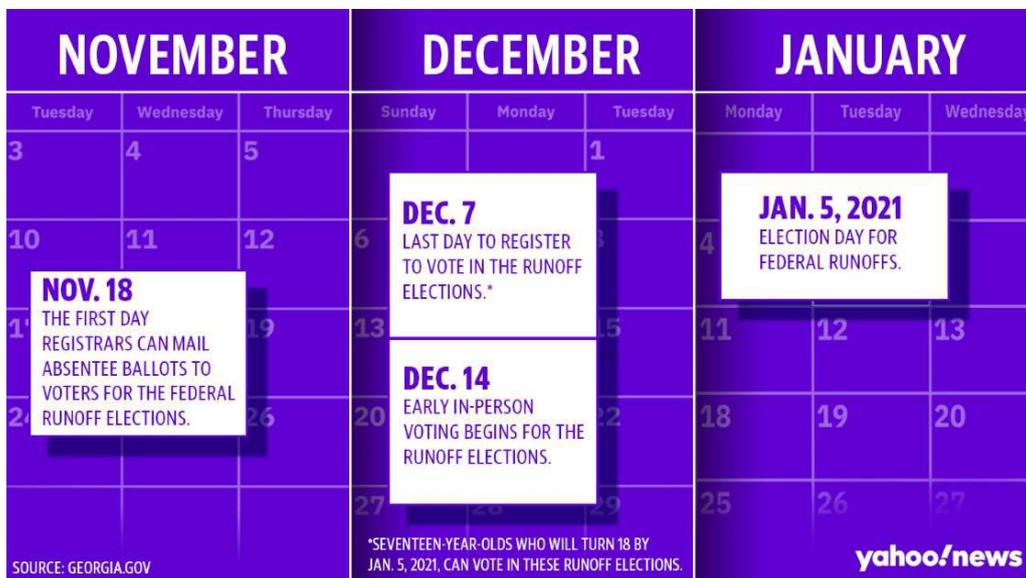
*“The idea of whether or not the election is secure or not will definitely have an effect into January,” Johnson told Yahoo News.*

*“I think that it's very important that for people to trust the system, they need to understand the system and know that legal votes will be counted.”*

*“I think that one of the major problems right now is there's so much talk about what people think regarding the election, instead of the facts of the way voting works, what happens to your ballot, how signatures are verified and just how the process works,” he added.*

*“I think that uncertainty could definitely hurt the turnout throughout the election.”*

***Below are key dates for Georgians to remember ahead of the state’s Senate runoff elections on Jan. 5, 2021:***



*Provided by Yahoo! News*