

Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America

PROGRESSIVE VOTER GUIDE



May 2024 Primary Edition

Thank you for using our voter guide for Georgia's May 2024 elections! This guide focuses on Democratic Primaries statewide and in the Metro-Atlanta area. We recommend voting early and making a plan to vote. You can use mvp.sos.ga.gov to find your polling place, see what elections you're voting in, preview your ballot, and confirm that your voting address and information are up-to-date.

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Introduction

In 2020 and 2022, our chapter put out detailed voter guides. This year, we have focused most of our energy on electing our member Gabriel Sanchez in House District 42. Once he is elected, we will continue and expand the struggle to build working-class power through elections. In the meantime, there are also many other consequential elections taking place. Although our capacity is more limited at the moment, we have identified several races where the least harm choice for left voters is clear. Among these races are a Supreme Court race that could help protect reproductive freedom in Georgia, multiple legislative races where one candidate is much better on Palestinian issues than the other, sheriff elections key to the liberties of individuals held in jail, and several key county commission races. Recommendation in this guide is **not** an endorsement, although we have included our current endorsed candidate in the guide.

Key Voting Information

To find **all the information you need to vote** (ballot info, your voting districts, polling location, early voting locations, vote by mail applications, etc), you can go to **Georgia's My Voter Page** and login with your name, birthday, and county of residence. The link is below:

<https://mvp.sos.ga.gov/s/>

Primary Election Dates

April 29 - Early voting begins

May 21 - Election day

June 10* - Latest date for early voting for runoffs to begin

June 18** - Runoff election day

*The date listed above is the final deadline for counties to begin early voting for a runoff. Please refer to your county's election office (linked below) to get accurate information for runoff early voting.

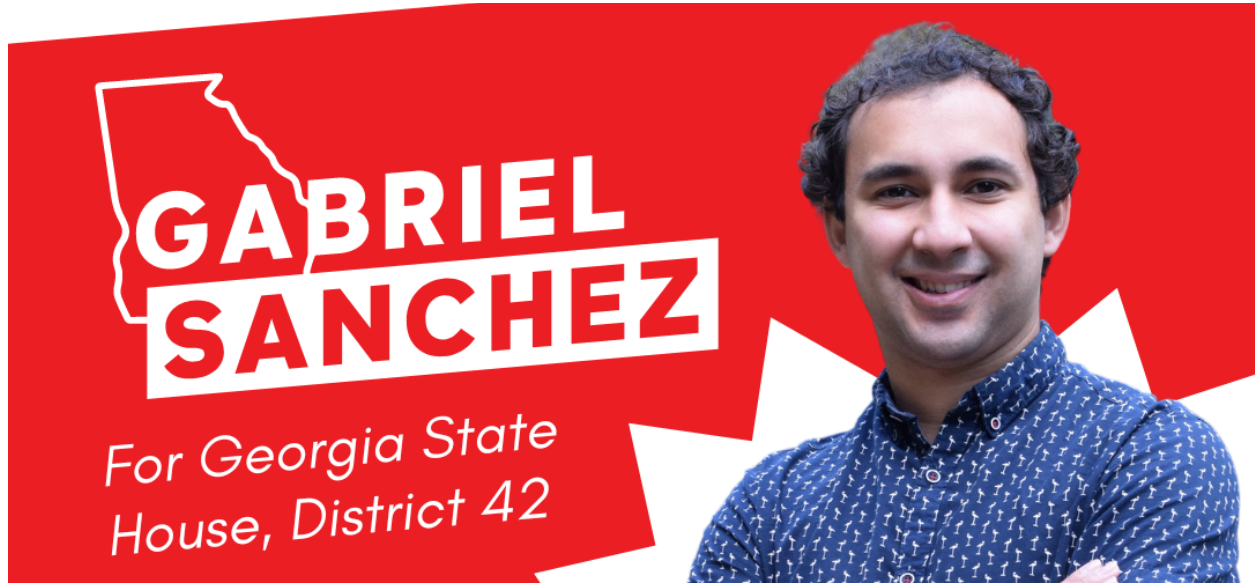
[GA County Election Office Finder](#)

**If no candidate in an election receives a majority (more than 50% of votes), then the top two candidates in the race will go to a runoff on June 18.

Endorsed Candidates

Gabriel Sanchez

House District 42 (Smyrna, Cumberland, S. Marietta)



Atlanta DSA is proud to endorse our comrade [Gabriel Sanchez for Georgia State House](#). Gabriel is an activist, organizer, and champion for the working class who's running to fight for a Georgia that works for all of us, not just the rich and powerful.

Working families are struggling to make ends meet, while the rich keep getting richer. The GOP is pushing a racist, extremist agenda, and the corporate Democratic establishment enables them every step of the way. That's why Gabriel is running: to challenge the status quo and bring the working class into the halls of power.

Gabriel has shown up time and time again to fight for working people. As a long-time member of our chapter, he's walked the picket line with striking workers, campaigned for abortion rights, and advocated for a free Palestine. Last summer, Gabriel was a field captain for the Stop Cop City referendum campaign, where he organized volunteer canvassers to collect thousands of petition signatures. As a State Representative for District 42, he'll be a radical voice for change and a true champion for Democratic Socialism.

As a Democratic Socialist candidate, Gabriel is refusing money from corporations or their PACs. We're running a grassroots campaign of, by, and for working people – and we need your help to win this election. Sign up today to contribute or volunteer with our campaign at [SanchezForGeorgia.com!](#)

Statewide Offices

Supreme Court

John Barrow, Andrew Pinson

You'll have to look past the primary portion of the ballot to the "nonpartisan" section for a very important race. Former U.S. Representative John Barrow is running against Kemp appointee Andrew Pinson in the only Supreme Court race of the year. We disagree with Barrow, who was one of the most conservative Democrats in Congress, on a wide variety of issues. However, he has made clear that his campaign this year is focused on restoring the promise of *Roe* and ending partisan gerrymandering, and is going to court to defend his right to say so. Pinson, on the other hand, was recently Georgia's Solicitor General, meaning it was his job to defend awful Republican laws in court. **John Barrow** is the clear choice for anyone left of, well, John Barrow. Unfortunately, he'll be just one of nine Justices on our state Supreme Court, but he'll sure be better than Pinson.

Court of Appeals

Jeff Davis, **Tabitha Ponder**

Davis has served as Real Estate Counsel for Caribou Coffee, and he directed the Judicial Qualifications Commission from 2010-2014, during some of its most productive years. He lists his priorities as "upholding the rule of law", "fairness under the law," and, oddly, "appellate law experience." He resides in Madison. Ponder is a part-time magistrate in Cobb who previously served as a public defender in South Georgia. She names Yvette Miller, the current holder of the seat, as a mentor and role model. From a left perspective, although Davis's work holding judges accountable is commendable, we give **Tabitha Ponder** the edge because of her work as a public defender.

U.S. House of Representatives

GA-06 (S. Cobb, S. Fulton, E. Douglas, N. Fayette)

Lucy McBath, Jerica Richardson, **Mandisha Thomas**

Rep. Lucy McBath, a mainstream centrist Democrat who was one of the few House Democrats who initially declined to sign onto the pro-labor PRO ACT, is seeking her fourth term in Congress. Although she has never represented any part of this district, McBath is quite well-known and will be hard to beat. Her opponents are Cobb County Commissioner Jerica Richardson and State Rep. Mandisha Thomas. Although none of the candidates are leftists, either of McBath's opponents would be more progressive than her. We recommend a vote for **Mandisha Thomas**, who has the most left-leaning platform.

GA-13 (S. Gwinnett, Rockdale, Clayton, Covington, Stockbridge)

Mark Baker, Marcus Flowers, Brian Johnson, Uloma Ekpete Kama, Rashid Malik, Karen Rene, David Scott

Several candidates are challenging David Scott, who is one of the more conservative Democrats in Congress. The most prominent is, unfortunately, Marcus Flowers, who raised large sums of money in his doomed challenge to Marjorie Taylor Greene in 2022. Flowers, a former military/defense contractor, has unremarkable stances on the issues, and a questionable background.

Of the available candidates, the most promising is Mark Baker. Like most of the candidates, he has little connection to the district, as a former city council member in South Fulton. He lost a very close State House race last year, and he is campaigning on the progressive record of South Fulton's city council, like decriminalizing marijuana and banning no-knock warrants. He does not spare Democrats any criticism, saying, "We've had decades to implement enhanced voting rights, civil justice reform, and modernize environmental and economic policies, yet incumbents sat by and watched as our protections were chipped away, piece by piece." The Associated Press quoted Baker specifically directing similar criticism at Scott. We recommend a vote for **Mark Baker**.

Georgia Legislature

Senate District 40 (N. DeKalb, Peachtree Corners)

Sally Harrell, David Lubin

Sally Harrell, a mainstream Democrat who holds what was once a swing seat, faces David Lubin, parent of an Israeli soldier, who is running because Harrell declined to support HB 30, an atrocious bill conflating antisemitism with anti-Zionism. Lubin's election would be a complete disaster, making this an easy choice. We recommend **Sally Harrell**. Sally Harrell was also an early signatory of the Reproductive Freedom Act and United Campus Workers' bill to legalize public sector bargaining rights.

House District 56 (Atlanta: Georgia Tech, AUC, Mozley Park, Beecher Hills)

Bryce Berry, Adalina Morello, Corwin Monson, William Watkins

Rep. Mesha Mainor switched parties last year after several disagreements with leading Democrats on issues such as charter schools, and she has no chance at being reelected as a Republican in this deep blue district. This is functionally an open seat. We recommend **Bryce Berry**, a progressive who has the backing of organized labor.

House District 90 (SW DeKalb, inc. part of E. Atlanta)

Saira Draper, **Becky Evans**

First-term Rep. Saira Draper and third-term Rep. Becky Evans were drawn into the same district last year by Republicans. They're both left-of-center within the party, but Evans was one of only five state representatives to vote against final passage of HB 30. She was also the lead sponsor of a resolution mourning the loss of Refaat Alareer, a Palestinian poet killed by the IDF. Politicians willing to lead on this issue don't come along often. We recommend re-electing Rep. **Becky Evans**. According to Evans, Draiper's campaign is also guilty of accepting fossil fuel money.

County Elections

Fulton County District Attorney

Christian Wise Smith, Fani Willis

You may have heard of Fani Willis for her role overseeing the Georgia prosecution of Donald Trump. We fully support accountability for Trump's attempt to steal the election. However, he is but one man, and district attorneys oversee many prosecutions. Willis has received criticism for her choice of special prosecutor for the case. In addition, her office contributes to the overcrowding at Fulton's jail by failing to move cases forward, with some people egregiously having been held for years without a trial. She has also attempted to introduce rap lyrics as evidence in criminal trials, a practice which is widely condemned.

Christian Wise Smith ran as a "progressive prosecutor" in 2020, and while the logic behind that is flawed, his election has the potential to reduce the harm the state does to a great many people. He also criticized Willis at the time for her prosecution of teachers in the Atlanta test cheating scandal. His platform has actually improved somewhat from 2020, when he came in third and forced a runoff. Willis has probably scared off the Republicans whose support she courted in 2020, but she is still the same person she campaigned as. We recommend voting for **Christian Wise Smith**.

Gwinnett County District Attorney

Andrea Alabi, Patsy Austin-Gatson, **Daryl Manns**

First-term DA Patsy Austin-Gatson faces two challengers in this six-figure race. Daryl Manns is the more progressive candidate, pledging to "always recommend sentencing alternatives for non-violent criminals." Andrea Alabi says she will focus on "violent crime and repeat offenders" while recommending alternatives for *low-level*, non-violent offenders. Austin-Gatson herself has a mixed record at best on reform, and has faced criticism from within the party over how she runs the office. Sens. Gloria Butler and Sheikh Rahman have endorsed Austin-Gatson, while several Republican mayors, a handful of Democrats, and the AFL-CIO have endorsed Alabi. Unfortunately, these endorsements and fundraising reflect that Alabi is likely more viable than Manns. We still recommend a vote for **Daryl Manns**, as if no candidate gets a majority there will be a runoff.

Clayton County Sheriff

Levon Allen Jr., Clarence Cox, Jeffrey Turner, Charlene Watson-Fraser

The shadow of longtime-sheriff Victor Hill, who is now in federal prison for torturing people at his jail, looms over this race. His handpicked successor, Levon Allen Jr., won a close runoff against Clarence Cox in 2023. Allen has presided over several deaths at the county jail, and the county medical examiner recently sued to force his office to provide the relevant medical records. The rematch has been shaken up by the candidacy of Jeffrey Turner, who currently chairs the county commission. Allen appears to be delinquent on his campaign finance reports, but in 2023, he received tens of thousands from bail bondsmen and companies providing private services to jails. Cox and Turner would both be clear improvements. Cox told the *News-Daily* that, if elected, he would audit the office's funds and contracts, and he identified the top issue as ensuring the safety of people at the jail. Turner described the top issue as "poor leadership and management", which is a bit of an understatement, while the other candidate, Charlene Watson-Fraser, said the top issue was staffing.

Cox has generally seemed the most serious about reform. However, in a late development, he announced the endorsement of former Sheriff Hill. While Cox says this does not affect his commitment to "restorative justice" and that Hill will not be consulted about operations, this nevertheless gives us significant pause. We thus recommend voting for either Clarence Cox or Jeffrey Turner, so that Allen is not reelected, but we are unable to recommend one over the other.

Fulton County Sheriff

Kirt Beasley, James Brown, Joyce Farmer, Patrick Labat

The top two issues in this race are the Fulton County Jail and the Fulton County Jail. First-term Sheriff Pat Labat faces intense scrutiny for his handling of the current jail, and his proposed solution is to build a new one. In his 2020 campaign, he argued only he had the experience and will to clean up a jail plagued by deaths and overcrowding, including a man eaten alive by bed bugs at the jail in 2023. Voters gave him a chance, and he has failed to deliver. The county commission will have a say as well, but it is preferable to have someone in this office who opposes building a new and bigger jail, is willing to work with the DA and solicitor to prioritize releasing people who are a low-risk to reoffend or flee before trial, and will do all they can to prevent further deaths of incarcerated individuals.. Bail bond companies have their man in office, and he's Pat Labat.

Labat has blamed commissioners and the jail itself for his office's problems, but he bears much responsibility. The other candidates are on the record against the \$2 billion new jail proposal, although Brown has affirmed his support for Cop City's construction. Beasley and Farmer are the most promising alternatives. Beasley promises to examine medical vendor protocols and "implement strategies aimed at reducing jail population overcrowding". Although these are modest commitments, if she implements them, they would be a very large improvement. We recommend a vote for **Kirt Beasley**.

Fulton County Commission District 4

Natalie Hall, **Mo Ivory**, Sonya Ofchus

In early 2024, a federal judge held Fulton County liable for Commissioner Natalie Hall's sexual harassment of one of her employees, ordering the county to pay nearly \$1 million. On top of that, Hall supports building a new jail and leasing the Atlanta City Detention Center. She cannot be reelected. Of her two opponents, Mo Ivory is clearly viable, boasting endorsements from top Democrats. Her policy commitments are a bit vague, but so are the third candidate's, and jail opponents have expressed some optimism. Ofchus notably ran a fairly conservative campaign for Atlanta City Council in 2021. We recommend a vote for **Mo Ivory**.

Fulton County Superior Court

Rachel Krause, **Brandi Reeves**

Rachel Krause, a judge originally appointed by Republican Governor Nathan Deal, was reelected in 2020 unopposed. She now faces a challenge from former public defender Brandi Reeves. Krause, who also presides over an "accountability court", is far from Fulton's worst judge, but Reeves would be better. We recommend **Brandi Reeves**.

Fulton County Superior Court

Scott McAfee, Robert Patillo II

Last year, Brian Kemp appointed Scott McAfee to Superior Court for Fulton County. McAfee, a former state Inspector General and prosecutor, was soon thrust into the spotlight when the Trump prosecution was assigned to him. His challenger, Robert Patillo II, is a civil rights attorney and self-described "conservative Democrat". Patillo, who also hosts a talk show, has appeared on a wide range of programs to promote his candidacy, from Tucker Carlson to Rashad Richey, and he has posted criticisms of Trump that some argue would disqualify him from presiding.

It is hard to separate this race from the Trump trial, and most observers have praised McAfee's handling of the trial. If Patillo is elected, the trial might be reassigned to a more partisan Republican, like Chuck Eaton. However, this race has consequences for everyone prosecuted in Fulton County, not just Donald Trump, and Patillo does proclaim a commitment to restorative justice. We have **no recommendation** in this race, but we have included the above information so members can make an informed decision.

DeKalb County CEO

Steve Bradshaw, **Lorraine Cochran-Johnson**, Larry Johnson

Three current DeKalb County Commissioners are seeking to become the county's next CEO, a somewhat unique position in Georgia, and hundreds of thousands of dollars have already been spent here. Longtime politician Mike Thurmond is retiring due to the two-term limit. Lorraine Cochran-Johnson has represented half the county since 2018, while Steve Bradshaw and Larry Johnson both represent 20% of the county and have been in office longer. The candidates have similar platforms, but organizers in the Stop Cop City movement have reported that Cochran-Johnson has been by far the most responsive to their efforts to reopen Intrenchment Creek Park (near the Cop City site) and rein in the power of the county CEO, while Larry Johnson has been least responsive. Bradshaw is somewhere in the middle.

Johnson also makes virtually no policy commitments, and Bradshaw's are limited, while Cochran-Johnson makes several, including increasing the housing supply. Although she has some concerning rhetoric around crime and policing, we are not convinced the other candidates would be better. We recommend voting for **Lorraine Cochran-Johnson**.