

Michelle Nunn's midterm result shows that Georgia's demographics may be shifting to favor the Democrats.

In Georgia's Senate race Republican David Purdue defeated Democrat Michelle Nunn by nearly eight points, despite polling that had shown a much closer contest. [Jamie L. Carson](#), [Joel Sievert](#), and [Ryan D. Williamson](#) reflect on Georgia's midterm election results, writing that in gaining more than 40 percent of the vote, Nunn outperformed many previous Democratic candidates in the state. They argue that if the Democratic Party continues to field good candidates in Georgia, shifting demographics may mean that they will be able to take statewide races within a few election cycles.



The 2014 midterm elections reflect a clear victory for the Republicans and a repudiation of the Democrats and President Obama. Currently, the Republicans have picked up at least 7 seats in the U.S. Senate (and possibly two more following the final election certification in Alaska and next month's runoff in Louisiana) and look to control at least 31 governorships when the final electoral dust settles. The Republicans are also poised to control more seats in the U.S. House than at any time since the Truman administration, with the current number of gains holding at 12. This number may increase by as many as 5 or 6 in the coming days when the remaining close races are eventually settled.



The electoral results in Georgia are similar to many of the trends observed at the national level. Both incumbent GOP Governor Nathan Deal and Senate candidate David Perdue managed to win more than 50 percent of the statewide vote and avoid an eventual runoff between the top two finishers. Deal finished with 52.8 percent of the vote compared with Democrat Jason Carter's 44.8 percent, whereas Perdue did slightly better with 52.9 percent of the vote compared to the 45.2 percent of the vote won by Democratic challenger Michelle Nunn. These figures for the winning Republican candidates are somewhat higher than many of the pre-election polls suggested, but can most likely be explained by the increased turnout in the state. According to statewide data, turnout reflected 49.9 percent of registered voters in Georgia, which is quite high for a midterm and most likely a function of both the gubernatorial and Senate race appearing on the statewide ballot.



This number is particularly impressive given the national turnout rate was considerably below 40 percent, as is typical in midterm elections. However, the higher turnout rate in Georgia did not help Michelle Nunn's chances in the end. Though she received over 90 percent of votes from African-Americans, less than 30 percent of African-Americans ultimately participated in this election. Even more problematic for the Democratic candidate was the fact that only about one quarter of white voters cast their ballot in her favor. Therefore, it is not surprising that David Perdue managed to win in such a convincing fashion despite the pre-election polls that suggested a very close race.



Michelle Nunn Credit: [Janelle Bouie](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-NC-2.0](#))

Early in the evening, it looked like Deal and Perdue were going to run away with the election. Nevertheless, neither race was called until much later in the evening. After all the ballots were tallied statewide, Perdue ended up carrying 126 of the 159 counties in Georgia, whereas Nunn managed to carry 32 of the counties (with one county—Baker—ending in a tie between the two Senate candidates). Despite this disparity, Nunn still managed to win over 45 percent of the vote since she did quite well in urban areas especially around Atlanta. Although the electoral outcome will most likely be disappointing for the Carter and Nunn campaigns, they can both take solace in the fact that both exceeded the 40 percent threshold of many previous Democratic statewide candidates.

This result appears to confirm the conventional view that demographics in Georgia are changing, which could open the door to the possibility of Democratic statewide victories in the foreseeable future. In 2008, Jim Martin, the Democratic candidate for the Senate, rode the Democratic wave to nearly 47 percent of the vote forcing a runoff against incumbent Saxby Chambliss where he would eventually lose. However, Nunn managed to garner a similar level of support during a Republican wave, which could easily be seen as the silver lining to a dark election night for Democrats across the nation. If they continue to field viable candidates in future statewide races, it may only take a few more election cycles before Republicans lose their hold on those seats in Georgia.

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About the authors

Jamie L. Carson – *University of Georgia*

Jamie Carson is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at The University of Georgia. His primary research interests are in American politics and political institutions, with an emphasis on representation and strategic political behavior. Most of his current research focuses on congressional politics and elections, American political development, and separation of powers.



Joel Sievert– *University of Georgia*

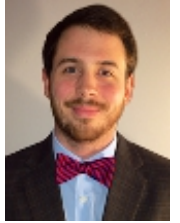
Joel Sievert is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Georgia. His research interests are in American political institutions and American Political Development. His current research focuses on congressional politics and elections, separation of powers, and institutional development.



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Ryan D. Williamson – *University of Georgia*

Ryan Williamson is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Georgia. His research interests center on American politics and electoral behavior. His more specific interests include congressional elections, separation of powers, and political methodology.



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