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Warring Republicans try to unite against Ossoff in Georgia's Sixth



POLITICAL INSIDER

By **Greg Bluestein**, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

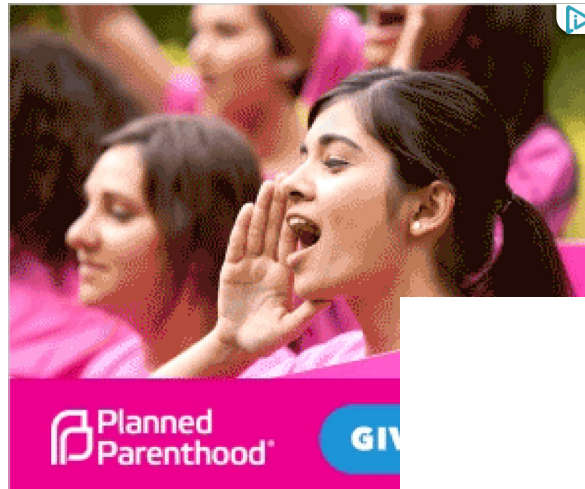
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Fractional Georgia Republicans tried to unite behind a "stop Jon Ossoff" movement ahead of Tuesday's special election to represent a suburban Atlanta district, with party leaders urging voters to stream to the polls and prevent an upset victory by the Democrat.

Republicans face a daunting enthusiasm gap in the 18-candidate race to represent the 6th District, and the leading GOP contenders have spent the final days feuding with each other. Ossoff, one of five Democrats in the race, is leading in the polls - and aiming for an outright victory in Tuesday's vote.

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At a GOP voter drive in the district's western flank of Marietta, about 30 volunteers and officials turned out to make calls and listen to several likely Republican statewide candidates.

"This is personal," said Attorney General Chris Carr, who lives in Dunwoody. "We have great candidates. But whoever you support is better than the other side. They are trying to embarrass us, but let's show them this district is Republican red."

At a GOP breakfast on the district's eastern DeKalb outskirts, state Sen. Fran Millar criticized Democrats who think it's a "done deal that this kid's going to become the Congressman."

"I'll be very blunt: These lines were not drawn to get Hank Johnson's protégé to be my representative. And you didn't hear that," said Millar. "They were not drawn for that purpose, OK? They were not drawn for that purpose."

Millar, a Dunwoody Republican, has endorsed former state Sen. Dan Moody in the race.

Ossoff, a 30-year-old ex-congressional aide, has marshaled thousands of volunteers – and droves of paid staffers – to blanket the district. His unprecedented \$8.3 million fundraising haul along with Donald Trump's struggles in the area – he won it by less than 2 points – give Democrats hope he can flip the seat.

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And he's tried to tap into the electorate's mood by vowing to "stand up to Donald Trump" while also hewing to some conservative themes, such as a pledge to cut wasteful spending.

The Republicans on the ballot are all gunning for chance to square off with Ossoff in a June 20 runoff - if they can keep his numbers under 50 percent. Meanwhile, the leading GOP contenders and their supporters are pummeling each other with attack ads.

On Saturday, Republican leaders tried to shift the criticism to Ossoff. State Rep. Sam Teasley of Marietta said Ossoff's platform is chock-full of "left wing priorities."

"The national media would love to make this a story about a turning tide," said Teasley. "But we aren't going to let that happen."

Georgia GOP chair John Padgett compared the surge of attention around Ossoff's campaign to the failed 2014 bids of "little blue-headed folks" Jason Carter and Michelle Nunn.

"What got them beat is you. You got out and outworked them," he said. "And you'll do it again."

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About the Author



**Greg Bluestein**

Greg Bluestein is a political reporter who covers the governor's office and state politics for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

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