MEMO

TO: Steve Phillips and Susan Sandler
FROM: Julie Martinez Ortega, JD PhD
DATE: June 27, 2020
RE: Georgia Poll Findings: Can Reverend Warnock Win?

BACKGROUND

The Sandler Phillips Center is interested in the potential to pick up a Senate seat in the 2020 Georgia special election, and in early June we asked MRG Research to conduct polling on our behalf that could inform this question. Accordingly, MRG Research fielded a survey on June 18-23, 2020 using Text-To-Web and IVR methods to contact respondents. The sample universe for the survey was a random sample of registered voters in Georgia. Given the outsized role that African Americans will play in any Georgia election outcome, we oversampled African Americans. The survey has an N=1,259. The Margin of Error is 2.8 overall (3.2 including design effect).

The Georgia special election candidates are a diverse group, and the race will take place as the Georgia electorate is in flux, making it difficult to predict the November outcomes with great certainty. However, the combination of demographic changes, recent voter registration activity, and electoral evidence from the 2018 Georgia gubernatorial strongly suggest that there is a clear path to victory for Warnock in light of the poll findings.

FINDINGS

Current Horse Race

Congressman Collins currently leads among the top contenders in the GA Senate special election with 27% of the respondents indicating they'd vote for him. He is closely followed by Warnock and Loeffler who are statistically tied for second place with 23% and 21%, respectively. Lieberman trails with only 13%.

Current Standing - "Jungle Primary"

- Warnock
- Lieberman
- Loeffler
- Collins
- Other
- Not voting
- Will not vote
- Undecided
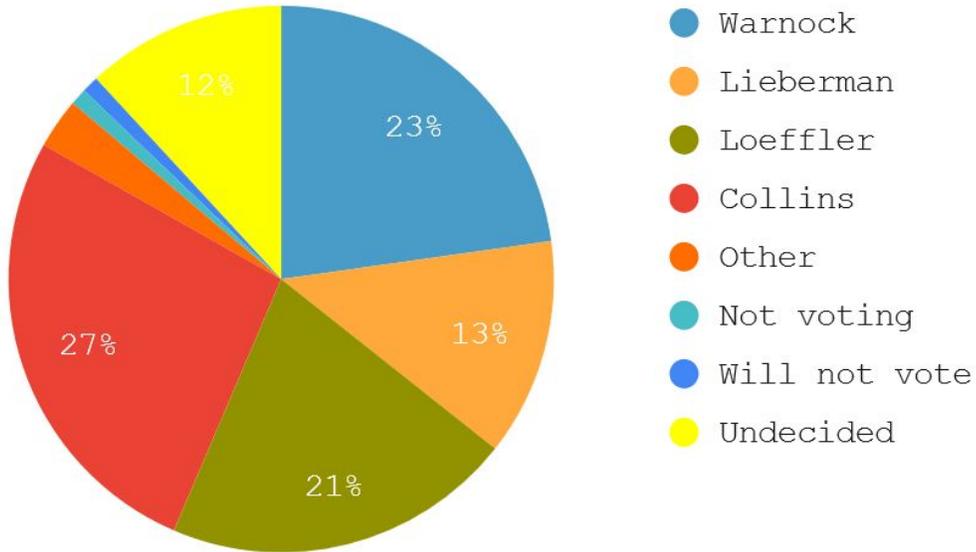
Among African American voters, Warnock outperforms Lieberman almost three-fold.

Current Standing - African Americans Only

- Warnock
- Lieberman
- Loeffler
- Collins
- Other
- Not voting
- Undecided
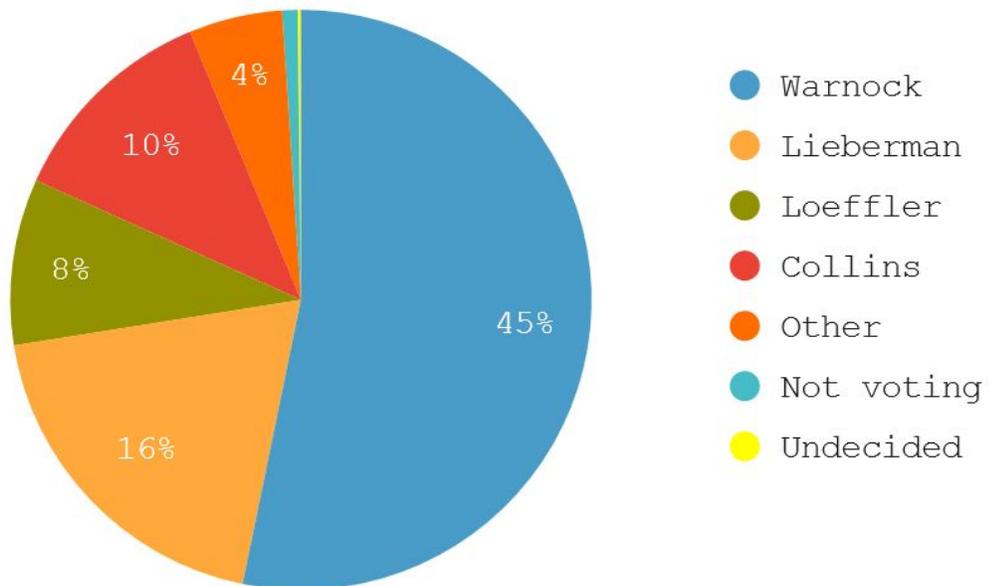
Familiarity and Favorability

Among those running in the Senate special election, Warnock has the best favorable to unfavorable ratio among the top contenders. And while he has never run for or held public office in Georgia, much less run statewide, many more respondents are familiar enough with him to form an opinion than is the case for the other Democrat in the race, Lieberman. That said, over half the respondents didn't know enough about Warnock to form an opinion about him. Consequently, for both Warnock and Lieberman, there is tremendous room for growing the share of supporters among these respondents. Among the two Republicans, Congressman Collins outperforms Senator Loeffler on favorability. And the incumbent, Sen. Loeffler, has the highest unfavorable score of any of the top contenders, by far.

Favorability
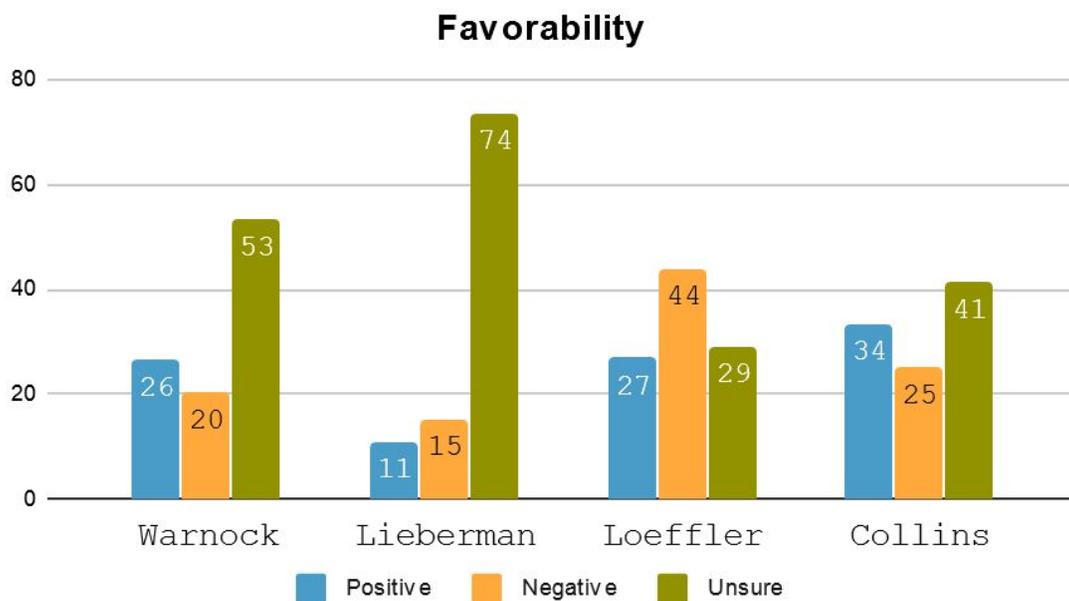
DISCUSSION: PATH TO VICTORY IN GA

The special election will take place in a unique context. This is the first general election since 2018, when Democratic nominee for GA Governor, Stacey Abrams, won more votes than any Democrat had ever won in the state, and came within an eyelash of winning outright. That election also included significant voter suppression tactics by Abrams' opponent who, as Secretary of State, oversaw the election in which he was running,, which cast significant doubt on those results.

The cornerstone of the Abrams campaign was an inspired and mobilized Black vote. Along with strong turnout among Progressive Whites, Latinos, APIs, and other Abrams supporters,

this delivered the most successful performance of any African American candidate in the state's history.

In order to determine whether Warnock is positioned to approximate Abrams' 2018 performance, we examined Abrams' public polling numbers at key intervals of the 2018 campaign and compared them to Warnock's current standing.

In April 2018, Abrams was in the midst of a hotly contested primary battle against Stacey Evans. Public polling revealed that Abrams had support from only 38% of the Democratic electorate, and 50% of them -- including 50% of African Americans -- did not have enough information about the candidates to decide who they would likely support. After a comprehensive and consistent voter education effort over the next month, Abrams was able to solidify support among African Americans, and she won the 2018 primary with 76% of the voters' support.

Pre-Primary Black Vote (52% Undecided)
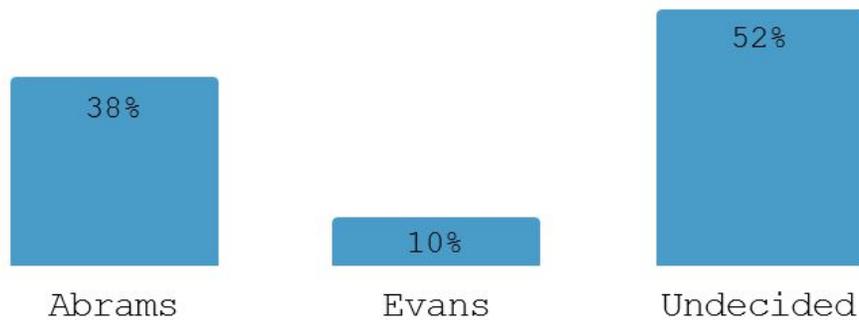
## Before & After Black Voters Learned About Abrams

■ April 2018 Poll   ■ May 2018 Results
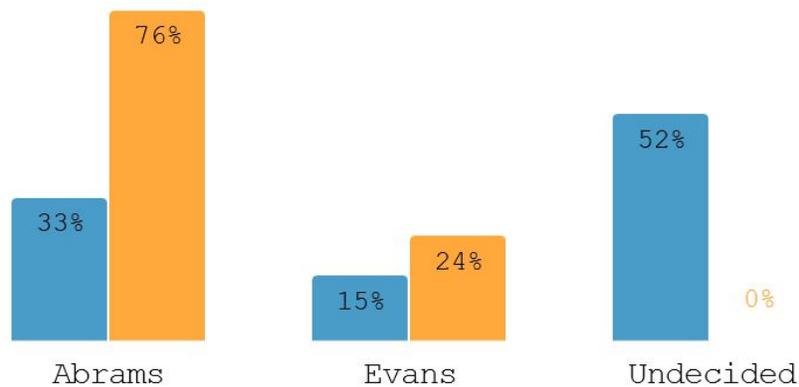
The conditions for Warnock in 2020 are even more favorable than they were for Abrams in 2018. Heavy investments into voter registration, especially among Voters of Color, has added over 600,000 new voters into the pool of voters over the past two years. Recent census numbers indicate that over a third of the Georgia electorate are African Americans, and that share of the population continues to steadily grow. Furthermore, unlike 2018, 2020 is a presidential election. And this one is extraordinarily focused on race and racism, which most analysts anticipate will drive turnout among voters of color. Current polling, including the poll we just commissioned, indicate that the presumptive Democratic Party nominee, Joe Biden, is in a statistical dead heat with Trump in Georgia.

Among African Americans, our polling indicates that Warnock begins this race with a commanding 3:1 advantage over his fellow Democrat, Matt Lieberman. This means he is well situated to follow the trajectory of Abrams in 2018 by solidifying support among African Americans at 90% or higher over the next few months of campaigning. Indeed, Biden is already polling at 92% among African Americans in Georgia, which is on par with the 2018 Abrams vote share.

June 2020 — Black Vote
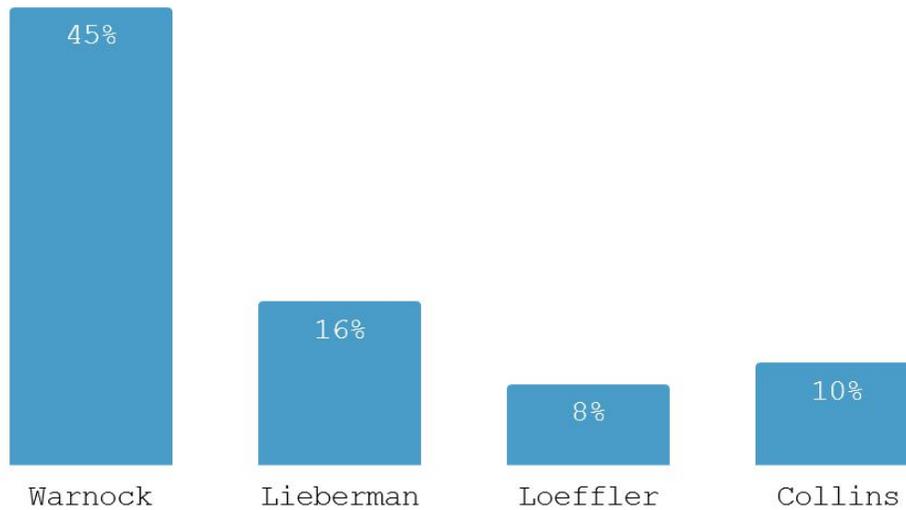
When we model what share of the November "jungle primary" vote Warnock could realistically expect to garner based on the above data, we find that Warnock could win as much as 34% of the votes, placing him among the top two vote getters in the race, and ensuring a line on the runoff ballot in January, 2021. Republican Congressman Collins is his strongest opponent, with a projected 28% share of the November votes.

Modeling of the January, 2021 runoff election between Warnock and Collins indicates that the race would be a toss up.

Horse Race & Abrams Model Extrapolated
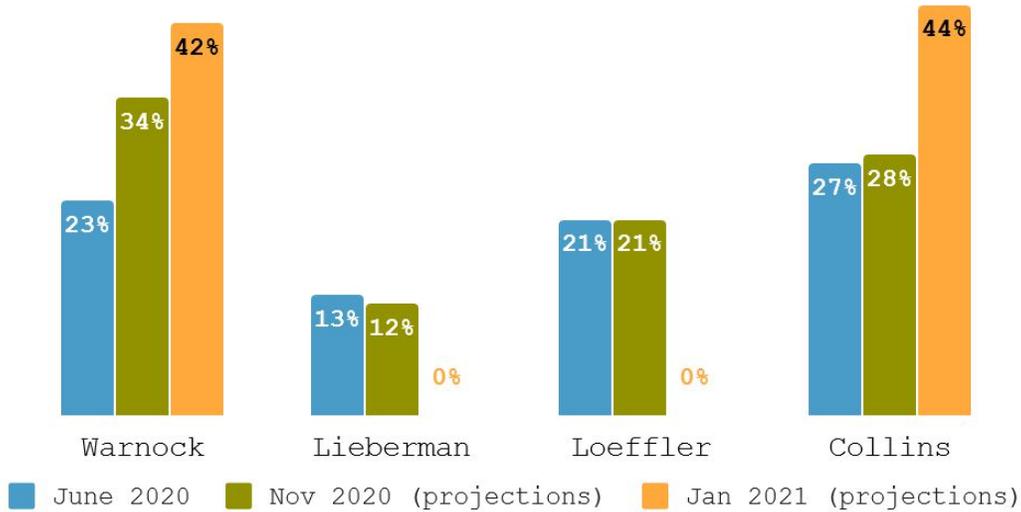
METHODOLOGY

Sandler Phillips Center surveyed a random sample of 1,259 registered voters statewide. The survey was fielded from June 18 – 23, 2020, using a combination of interactive voice response technology (touch-tone polling) and a survey administered online. Both the touch-tone and online version of the poll were conducted using a combined random, probability-based sample of registered voters in Georgia. The touch-tone version was conducted by contacting landline telephones. The online version was conducted by texting cell phones and linking poll participants to an online survey optimized for smartphones. Questions in the telephone and online versions of the survey were nearly identical, other than differences necessitated by the different platforms. Approximately half of the total sample completed the poll via landline and the other half completed it via text-to-online.

Results were balanced for gender, age, race/ethnicity, and education (college degree attainment) to match the demographic parameters of registered voters statewide. The sample included a 40% oversample of African American registered voters to enhance the reliability of crosstab estimates for that group. For toplines, the percentage of African American respondents was re-balanced to match their propensity in the voter file. Self-reported party identification was used to validate the accuracy of the demographic weights.

The overall margin of error is +/- 2.8 percentage points. Other sources of error, such as imperfect response rates and design effect (the effect of weighting results based on demographics) are also common in public opinion research and may affect the results. The adjusted margin of error, accounting for the design effect, is +/- 3.2 percentage points. The margin of error for any cross tabulated result is larger than the margin of error of the corresponding topline result.

Some results may sum to totals slightly higher or lower than 100% due to rounding.

The poll was conducted by Sandler Phillips Center working with MRG Research, a public opinion research organization specializing in issues and candidate polling, message testing, and persuasive communications. Twitter: @MRG_Research