

Warnock, Ossoff win in Georgia, handing Dems Senate control

By STEVE PEOPLES, BILL BARROW and RUSS BYNUM
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Democrats won both Georgia Senate seats — and with them, the U.S. Senate majority — as final votes were counted Wednesday, serving President Donald Trump a stunning defeat in his last days in office while dramatically improving the fate of President-elect Joe Biden’s progressive agenda.

Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, Democratic challengers who represented the diversity of their party’s evolving coalition, defeated Republicans David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler two months after Biden became the first Democratic presidential candidate to carry the state since 1992.

Warnock, who served as pastor for the same Atlanta church where civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. preached, becomes the first African American from Georgia



Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Rev. Raphael Warnock waves to supporters during a drive-in rally, Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021, in Savannah, Georgia. Warnock defeated incumbent Republican incumbent Kelly Loeffler in the runoff election Tuesday, Jan. 6.

elected to the Senate. And Ossoff becomes the state’s first Jewish senator and, at 33 years old, the Senate’s youngest member.

Their success is a symbol of a striking shift in Georgia’s politics as the swelling number of diverse, college-educated voters flex their power in the heart of the Deep South.

This week’s elections mark the formal finale to the turbulent 2020 election season. The unusually high stakes transformed

Stephen B. Morton/AP Photo

Georgia, once a solidly Republican state, into one of the nation’s premier battlegrounds for the final days of Trump’s presidency — and likely beyond.

In an emotional address early Wednesday, Warnock vowed to work for all

Georgians whether they voted for him or not, citing his personal experience with the American dream. His mother, he said, used to pick “somebody else’s cotton” as a teenager.

“The other day, because this is America, the 82-year-old hands that used to pick somebody else’s cotton picked her youngest son to be a United States senator,” he said. “Tonight, we proved with hope, hard work and the people by our side, anything is possible.”

In an interview with ABC’s “Good Morning America,” he described his win as a “reversal of the old Southern strategy that sought to divide people,” Warnock told ABC’s “Good Morning America.”

Loeffler remains a Georgia senator until the results of Tuesday’s election are finalized, returned to Washington on Wednesday morning to join a small group of senators planning to challenge Congress’ vote to certify Biden’s victory.

Georgia’s other runoff election pitted Perdue, a 71-year-old former business executive who held his Senate seat until his term expired on Sunday, against Ossoff, a former congressional aide and journalist.

“This campaign has been about health and jobs and justice for the people of this state — for all the people of this state,” Ossoff said in a speech broadcast on social media Wednesday morning. “Whether you were for me, or against me, I’ll be for you in the U.S. Senate. I will serve all the people of the state.”

Trump’s false claims of voter fraud cast a dark shadow over the runoff elections, which were held only because no candidate hit the 50% threshold in the general election. He attacked the state’s election chief on the eve of the election and raised the prospect that some votes might not be counted even as votes were being cast Tuesday afternoon.

Mardi Gras: No big crowds, but plenty of cake

By REBECCA SANTANA
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — A subdued Carnival season begins Wednesday, Jan. 6, after the coronavirus pandemic put an end to the crowd-heavy balls and street parades that draw thousands of people to the city every year.

The Mardi Gras season always starts Jan. 6 and ends on Fat Tuesday, which this year falls on Feb. 16. The season is usually marked by extravagant balls and parades where costumed riders throw trinkets to the mobs of people packed along the parade routes.

The coronavirus has put an end to those large events. But that has not stopped notoriously creative New Orleanians from coming up with socially distant ways to celebrate.

The Krewe de Jeanne d’Arc is a club that annually pays homage to the fallen French hero with a parade through the French Quarter on the official start of the Carnival season. This year,



Rusty Costanza/AP Photo, File

In this Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2020, file photo, Bourbon Street is a sea of humanity on Mardi Gras day in New Orleans. A subdued Carnival season begins Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021, after the coronavirus pandemic put an end to the balls and parades that draw thousands of people to the city every year.

gather at the facility where the street car starts its journey to see the group off, but this year people are asked to disperse along the street car route and watch from there instead.

But people can still eat cake — king cake that is. The sweet cakes, which are decorated with the official Carnival colors of purple, green and gold, are only to be eaten starting on Jan. 6.

In Mobile, Alabama, dozens of parades, balls and other events also have been canceled. The city on the Gulf of Mexico calls itself the birthplace of Mardi Gras since celebrations began there a few years earlier than in New Orleans.

Coastal Alabama typically begins its observances later in January than New Orleans, meaning the current coronavirus surge could be easing by the time events were set to start. But multiple organizations began announcing cancellations last month to protect the health of members and revelers.

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Biden to name judge Merrick Garland as attorney general

Move pushes against Republicans who spurned Garland’s nomination in 2016

By ERIC TUCKER and MICHAEL BALSAMO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Joe Biden has selected Merrick Garland, a federal appeals court judge who in 2016 was snubbed by Republicans for a seat on the Supreme Court, as his attorney general, two people familiar with the selection process said Wednesday, Jan. 6.

Biden is expected to announce Garland’s appointment on Thursday, along with other senior leaders of the department, including former homeland security adviser Lisa Monaco as deputy attorney general and former Justice Department civil rights chief Vanita Gupta as associate attorney general.

In picking Garland, Biden is turning to an experienced judge who held senior positions at the Justice Department decades ago, including as a supervisor of the prosecu-

tion of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

The pick will force Senate Republicans to contend with the nomination of someone they spurned in 2016 — refusing even to hold hearings when a Supreme Court vacancy arose — but Biden may be banking on Garland’s credentials and reputation for moderation to ensure confirmation.

Garland was selected over other finalists including Alabama Sen. Doug Jones and former Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates. The people familiar with the process spoke on condition of anonymity.

If confirmed, Garland would confront immediate challenges, including an ongoing criminal tax investigation into Biden’s son, Hunter, as well as calls from many Democrats to pursue inquiries into Trump after he leaves office. A special counsel investigation into the ori-

gins of the Russia probe also remains open, forcing a new attorney general to decide how to handle it and what to make public.

Garland would also inherit a Justice Department that has endured a tumultuous four years and would likely need to focus on not only civil rights issues and an overhaul of national policing policies after months of mass protests over the deaths of Black Americans at the hand of law enforcement.

It was unclear how Garland’s selection would be received by Black and Latino advocates who had advocated for a Black attorney general or for someone with a background in civil rights causes and criminal justice reform.

Garland would also return to a Justice Department radically different than the one he left. The Sept. 11 attacks were years away, the department’s national security division had not yet been created and a proliferation of aggressive cyber and counterintelligence threats from

foreign adversaries have made counties like China, Russia and North Korea top priorities for federal law enforcement.

But some of the issues from Garland’s first stint at the department persist. Tensions between police and minorities, an issue that flared following the 1992 beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles, remain an urgent concern particularly following a summer of racial unrest that roiled American cities after the May killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

And the FBI has confronted a surge in violent from anti-government and racially motivated extremists. That is a familiar threat to Garland, who as a senior Justice Department official in 1995 helped manage the federal government’s response to the bombing of a government building in Oklahoma City that killed 168 people. The bomber, Timothy McVeigh, who was later executed.

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