

# Black Candidates Win Primaries for Governor in 3 States

By Errin Haines Whack  
and Geoff Mulvihill  
Associated Press

**W**ith Andrew Gillum's upset victory in Florida, Black candidates have won the Democratic nomination for governor in three states this year in a historic turn largely attributed to voter backlash against President Donald Trump.

Gillum, Stacey Abrams in Georgia and Ben Jealous in Maryland were all aided in recent months by strong turnout, especially among black voters.

"This moment is defined by the politics of Trump and the Republican Party, which are grounded in bigotry, fear and racism," said Adrienne Shropshire, executive director of Black PAC. "I think voters are responding to that by showing up to the polls as a protest to the politics that we're seeing right now."

Voters have elected just two Black governors in U.S. history — in 2006 in Massachusetts and 1989



Andrew Gillum with his wife, R. Jai Gillum at his side addresses his supporters after winning the Democrat primary for governor on Tuesday, Aug. 28, 2018, in Tallahassee, Fla.

in Virginia.

Abrams and Jealous face uphill battles in November, while Gillum's contest is expected to be close. They will have to figure out how to translate the enthusiasm among primary voters to the general election, and will have to win over moderate Democrats, independents and probably some Republicans.

The GOP candidates in Georgia and Florida are big supporters of

Trump, setting up stark contrasts in both contests.

"It's going to be very interesting in Georgia and Florida with the personalities of the Republican nominees and the tactics they've already taken and verbiage they've used," said Kimberly Peeler-Allen, co-founder of Higher Heights for America PAC, a group that focuses on Black female candidates and voters. "It's going to be real-

ly ugly before it's over."

In fact, race became an issue in the Florida contest on Wednesday, the morning after the primary, when Gillum said voters aren't looking for a misogynist, racist or bigot, and the Republican nominee, Rep. Ron DeSantis, said Floridians shouldn't "monkey this up" by choosing his African-American opponent.

The Florida Democratic Party decried DeSantis' comment as racist,

an allegation his camp called absurd.

The nomination of three Black major-party candidates for governor ties the mark set in 2006, when there were two black GOP nominees and Democrat Deval Patrick, who went on to win election in Massachusetts.

**“It’s going to be really ugly before it’s over”**

Abrams, Gillum and Jealous represent the more liberal wing of the Democratic Party, with backing from Sen. Bernie Sanders, and Republicans are already casting them as too liberal for their states. Florida and Georgia voted for Trump in 2016, while Maryland went for Hillary Clinton.

Just hours after Gillum won his primary, Trump went on Twitter to call him "a failed Socialist Mayor" and point out the crime rate in the city Gillum leads, Tallahassee.

Abrams, a former minority leader in the

George House, faces Brian Kemp, Georgia's secretary of state. Maryland is more friendly territory for Democrats, but Jealous is challenging a popular incumbent, Republican Larry Hogan.

The Republican Governors Association plans to target all three Democrats for supporting expensive social welfare programs, spokesman Jon Thompson said.

"This has nothing to do with color, gender or any other identifying characteristic," he said. "This has to do with far-left policies that would wreck state budgets and hurt job growth."

History also provides a reality check: Other black candidates for governor with much higher profiles have failed — most notably former Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley and former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, who didn't even survive his party primary.

The hope for all three of this year's candidates lies in a surge of turnout from Black and liber-

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