

Georgia Democrat Stacey Abrams Won't Run for Senate in 2020

Decision dims party's hopes of a majority in the Senate

By Bill Barrow
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Georgia Democrat Stacey Abrams says she will not run for a U.S. Senate seat in 2020, dimming her party's hopes of a Senate majority and renewing speculation about her political future after last year's unsuccessful run for governor catapulted her to national acclaim.

Abrams, 45, came within 60,000 votes of being the first Black woman elected governor in U.S. history. She told The Associated Press she hasn't ruled out a presidential bid, though she's in no rush to join a Democratic field that already includes 20 candidates.

"I'm going to continue to watch how the national conversation around the presidency unfolds," Abrams said in an interview after she told Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, her chief Senate advocate, of her plans. "I'm not taking myself out of that conversation, but I'm not ready to make a determination, and I don't think one is necessary at this moment."

Abrams said she was "deeply gratified" to Schumer for recruiting her to run for the Senate and giving her ample time to make a decision. A Senate seat, she said, is "an extraordinarily persuasive idea" and a "critical



In this Nov. 6, 2018 file photo, former Georgia Democratic gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams speaks to supporters in Atlanta. Abrams tells The Associated Press she will not run for a U.S. Senate seat in 2020 despite being heavily recruited by national party leaders. Abrams left open the possibility of running for president, though she says she's in no hurry to make that call as she continues her advocacy on voting rights and educating citizens ahead of the 2020 census.

cal role" but "not the role that I want to play."

For now, Abrams said her emphasis remains on two advocacy groups — one focused on voting rights, the other on educating residents ahead of the 2020 census — that she helped launch after her November loss to Republican Brian Kemp.

She also will consider a rematch against Kemp in 2022, and some of her confidants say that office still rests at the center of her near-term ambitions. Separately, Abrams has been floated as a potential vice-presidential pick for an eventual Democratic nominee,

particularly if former Vice President Joe Biden, a 76-year-old white man, claims the nomination. The two met recently in Washington, but Abrams later downplayed the idea of teaming up, at least for now. "You don't run for second place," she said on ABC's "The View."

Abrams met Schumer on Monday in Washington, ending months of eager courting by the hard-charging New Yorker and leaving him to plot another uphill path to reversing Republicans' 53-47 Senate advantage.

"He was extraordinarily gracious," Abrams said.

Georgia is among a handful of states with Senate races where Democrats need an upset to have hopes of a new majority. Schumer has been open in his belief that Abrams would have the best shot to defeat Republican Sen. David Perdue, who in his first term has

become one of President Donald Trump's most loyal Capitol Hill allies.

Schumer also is looking to Montana and Texas for unlikely but possible victories. But as in Georgia, he has not yet landed headliner candidates. Democrats in Washington want Montana Gov. Steve Bullock to take on Republican Sen. Steve Daines, but Bullock, twice elected governor in a state Trump won, is eyeing a presidential run instead.

In Texas, former Rep. Beto O'Rourke is running for president instead of reprising his 2018 Senate bid that fell short against Republican Sen. Ted Cruz. Texas Democrats could turn to Rep. Joaquin Castro as their best shot to unseat Sen. John Cornyn. Castro's brother, Julian, is running for president.

Beyond Senate implications, national Democrats had hoped an Abrams candidacy would fuel turnout among young and non-white voters to help the party's presidential

nominee in an emerging battleground state. Trump won Georgia by 5 percentage points in 2016 but fell short of a majority.

Schumer began his Georgia recruiting effort by inviting Abrams to deliver Democrats' response to Trump's State of the Union address in February, making her the first black woman to give an opposition response and further elevating her status in the party despite her loss.

"I began with skepticism," Abrams said of her deliberations, influenced in part by the years she spent leading the Democratic minority in Georgia's General Assembly.

Abrams said she could envision "the best day and the worst day" in a chamber known for its slow pace and increasingly bitter partisanship.

"But for me it was what do I do every day, and is this the role I want to play for six years? Is this the role I want to play for 12 years or 18 years?" she said. "Because this is a

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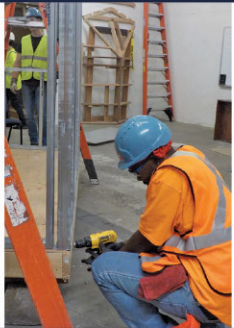


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