

ELECTION DAY | SENATE RUNOFFS

In Georgia, a sprint to the finish as Trump casts shadow

Associated Press

ATLANTA, Ga. — President-elect Joe Biden on Monday told Georgia Democrats they had the power to “chart the course” for a generation as President Donald Trump urged Republican voters to “swamp” the polls ahead of runoff elections that will determine control of the U.S. Senate.

Trump made his final-hours pitch to voters at a nighttime rally in north Georgia, where Republicans were banking on strong voter turnout Tuesday to reelect Sen. Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue and hold control of the chamber.

Biden campaigned with Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock in Atlanta, hoping he could re-create the coalition that secured him a narrow victory in the presidential race in November.

“Folks, this is it. This is it. It’s a new year, and tomorrow can be a new day for Atlanta, for Georgia and for America,” Biden said at a drive-in rally.

The president’s trip Monday comes a day after disclosure of a remarkable telephone call he made to the Georgia secretary of state over the weekend. Trump pressured Republican Brad Raffensperger to “find” enough votes to overturn Georgia’s election results ahead of Wednesday’s joint session of Congress that will certify Biden’s Electoral College victory. The call highlighted how Trump has used the Georgia campaign to make clear his continued hold on Republican politics.

Trump, at the rally in Dalton, Georgia, spent much of his address on message, making an impassioned case that Loeffler’s and Perdue’s races were among the most important Georgia voters would ever face and made the case that “the fate of our country is at stake.”

To be sure, he also spent a fair amount of time rehashing false claims that the November election was “rigged.” He fumed that Republican Gov. Brian Kemp was “incompetent” and replayed many of the same debunked claims that he raised days ago in his call with Raffensperger.

What’s at stake in Tuesday’s election

Republicans need just one victory to maintain Senate control and force Biden to contend with divided government. Democrats need a sweep for a 50-50 split, giving the tiebreaking vote to Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. That would give Democrats a Senate majority to go along with their control of the House and executive branch.

More than 3 million Georgians already have voted.



Submitted photo/Oregon Capital Insider

U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, right, is sworn in as the representative for Oregon’s 2nd Congressional District on Sunday. The oath was administered by House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy with Bentz’s wife, Lindsay Norman, holding a Bible.

Bentz

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Bentz’s accusation of voting irregularities worthy of congressional investigations is an about-face from the stance of his predecessor, Rep. Greg. Walden, R-Hood River. Walden, who represented the district covering Eastern and Central Oregon for 20 years, stepped down Saturday. Bentz was sworn in Sunday.

In a Dec. 1 radio interview with the National Journal, Walden said the election had been fair and “the die is cast” for Trump’s departure. At the time he was one of only 27 Republicans in the House and Senate who would say Biden had defeated Trump.

Biden defeated Trump by over 7 million votes, and the Electoral College confirmed his victory on Dec. 14 by a 306-232 margin.

Trump or his surrogates have filed more than 50 lawsuits, with only one procedural request winning. The other cases on his allegations and seeking to stop vote counting or certification of votes have been rejected. The U.S. Supreme Court declined without comment to consider lawsuits by Trump supporters.

The process in Congress

Trump has kept up the pressure, switching to a long-shot gamble to get Congress to reject the Electoral College votes sent by the states. The Electoral College results are sent to Congress, where they

are read aloud. Normally, Congress rapidly certifies the vote in a largely ceremonial process.

However, if a member of the House and a member of the Senate object to any slate of electors, both chambers must hold separate two-hour debates before voting whether to accept or reject the Electoral College numbers.

House members — including Democrats — have made single objections in the past, but no senator has joined the effort.

However, more than 100 of the 211 Republicans in the House have said they will oppose the vote.

“Multiple states have engaged in litigation and thousands of witnesses have submitted sworn affidavits of reported fraud in the 2020 Presidential election,” a letter signed by Bentz and other freshmen says.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., had lobbied his caucus not to join the objection. But Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., announced he would object, and an additional dozen senators, led by Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, say they will also object.

Critics of the effort

While the moves to block certification are expected to delay the result by a few hours Wednesday, the House Democratic majority of 222 members will be joined by several Republicans who oppose the effort as undemocratic.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, the Republican presidential nominee in 2012 who lost to President

Barack Obama, slammed those challenging the Electoral College votes as “dangerously threatening our democratic republic.”

“I could never have imagined seeing these things in the greatest democracy in the world,” Romney said. “Has ambition so eclipsed principle?”

Former House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., told his former colleagues in the House that challenging the Electoral College results was “striking at the foundation of the republic.”

Ryan said he could not think of “a more anti-democratic and anti-conservative act than a federal intervention to overturn the results of state-certified elections and disenfranchise millions of Americans.”

Trump tweeted that those members of Congress who were not supporting him were cowards.

“The ‘Surrender Caucus’ within the Republican Party will go down in infamy as weak and ineffective ‘guardians’ of our Nation, who were willing to accept the certification of fraudulent presidential numbers!” Trump tweeted Monday.

Trump’s phone call

The heat of the argument intensified Sunday when a recording of an hourlong telephone call by Trump in the White House to Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, a Republican, was made public.

In the call, the president told Raffensperger, the state elections

official who had already certified the results, to go back into the votes again to overturn Biden’s 11,779-vote win.

“So look. All I want to do is this. I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have,” Trump said. “Because we won the state.”

Raffensperger said repeated recounts had not changed the outcome and that he would not change the result.

“Well, Mr. President, the challenge that you have is, the data you have is wrong,” Raffensperger said.

Oregon’s sole Republican

Bentz is the only Republican among Oregon’s five House members and two senators. One of his colleagues, Rep. Earl Blumenauer, said Trump’s call to the Georgia officials should be prosecuted.

“In 17 days, Trump has NO claim to immunity and should be investigated,” “If a crime was committed, he should be arrested and prosecuted.”

Walden, the outgoing representative of Oregon’s 2nd Congressional District, could not be reached to comment on Bentz’s position or whether if Walden was still in Congress he would support the results over objections of Republican activists.

Soon after the election Republican political leaders were refusing to buck Trump’s claims of having the election stolen from him. McConnell declined to support Trump’s conspiracy theories on voting but publicly refused to call Biden “president-elect.”

On Dec. 1, The Washington Post asked all 249 Republicans in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House “Who won the election?”

Walden was among the 70% of those polled who did not respond directly to the newspaper’s query. But the Post reviewed recent public statements and put Walden on the list of 27 accepting Biden as the next president based on a Dec. 1 interview for a National Journal podcast.

“I think in the end we’ll have a transition here, and you’ll have a new president come January 20,” Walden said. “I don’t see the math where this gets overturned and so far I’ve not seen the evidence of the amount of fraud it would take, or mistakes — and those occur in every election — to overturn the results in any state.”

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Clarno

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Entering her 80s, she had had four children, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren — and she intended her memoir, “From Pigs to Politics,” to tell her story and to inspire them.

But for most of the past two years, which ended Monday, Clarno was busy adding chapters to her public life as Oregon secretary of state.

She was appointed by Democratic Gov. Kate Brown a month after Republican Dennis Richardson, who was elected in 2016, died of cancer in February 2019. State law required Brown to appoint a Republican successor — and Brown had led Democrats while Clarno led Republicans when the Oregon Senate was tied 15-15 in 2003.

“I may have to add another chapter or two,” Clarno said with a laugh during an interview. “But I doubt I will publish another book.”

As was the case in 2015, when Secretary of State Brown became governor upon the resignation under pressure of John Kitzhaber, Brown sought an appointee who would not seek a full term in the next statewide election.

“But she never even asked me that. At my age, she must have assumed I would not run,” Clarno said. “I had a lot of people ask me if I would. But campaigning is not a job description I want to do at this point in my life.”

Now 84, Clarno took office a year before the coronavirus pandemic, which did have the effect of allowing her to run her office from her home in Central Oregon.

“Who would think that at age 83, you would have to learn how to do Zoom meetings?” Clarno said.

The secretary of state is the chief elections officer — although elections are conducted by Oregon’s 36 counties — and oversees audits. As an appointee, however, Clarno was not next in line for succession as



“I still believe we should be careful in how we spend hardworking Oregonians’ tax money. A lot of agencies do not understand that the people paying their salaries are people who sometimes need help.”

— Bev Clarno, outgoing Oregon secretary of state

governor.

“I am glad I had the opportunity, and I am glad to see how a state agency functions from the inside,” Clarno said. “I am proud of all the people who work there and do a good job.”

Shemia Fagan of Portland, a Democratic state senator, succeeds Clarno.

A passion for audits

From her early days in the Oregon House, where she criticized spending she considered wasteful — particularly in the former Adult and Family Services Division — Clarno took on the role of public watchdog. At the start of her two-year stint as Oregon House speaker in 1995, Clarno was not shy about criticizing spending by the Oregon Economic Development Department during the Oregon Ducks’ appearance in the Rose Bowl.

“I still believe we should be careful in how we spend hardworking Oregonians’ tax money,” she said. “A lot of agencies do not understand that the people paying their salaries are people who sometimes need help.”

But Clarno also praised the work by the Audits Division, which is part of her office. Under the Oregon Constitution, the secretary of state oversees financial audits to ensure that money is spent properly, and under a 1987 law, is empowered to conduct performance audits of agencies.

Clarno said that if she had her way, legislators beyond those who sit on the joint audits committee need to pay attention. For example, she said, several state audits had detailed problems with the Employment Department’s computer modernization project before they surfaced last spring during the crush of unemployment

ment claims.

“In fairness to legislators, there is not always time to read through an audit. But it should be done,” she said. “In those (party caucus) meetings, they would get an education about what the audits found out in their audits.”

‘Try it, you might like it’

Clarno drew critics when she did not forcefully rebut accusations by President Donald Trump and others, mostly Republicans, about the use of mail-in ballots.

Oregon has conducted all statewide elections by mail for 20 years, and for local elections years beforehand going back to 1981. Clarno was House speaker — and Republicans had majorities in both chambers — when the Legislature passed a statewide vote-by-mail bill in 1995. (But then-Gov. Kitzhaber vetoed it, citing a lack of public process. Voters passed it by a ballot initiative in 1998.)

Four other states had followed Oregon’s lead before the 2020 election.

But the critics were silenced when, on an appearance June 28 on “60 Minutes,” the long-running CBS News program, Clarno said her response to vote-by-mail critics was: “Try it, you might like it.”

She said that of Oregon’s 2 million ballots cast for president in 2016, only about 20 cases were detected of people trying to cast ballots in two states.

Clarno said it took Oregon years to perfect the system.

“I think the problem nationally was that too many states tried to become a vote-by-mail state overnight,” she said. “If you do not have signature verification, I do not know how you would know for sure if your ballots were used properly or misused. We’ve had 20

years of taking all the necessary precautions we need to do to have a good system.”

Clarno was drawn into another controversy right after the Nov. 3 election, when she fired Steve Trout, who had planned to leave as Elections Division director by Dec. 15. Trout was originally hired in 2009 by Brown, who fired him in 2013, but returned when Richardson hired him in 2017.

Trout had sent a letter to the candidates seeking to succeed Clarno. He warned of deficiencies, including a need to replace the 14-year-old ORESTAR system that tracks campaign contributions and expenditures.

“I did not see it until after he sent it to the candidates, which was totally inappropriate,” Clarno said.

She said he covered many of the same points during a March 6 appearance at the House Rules Committee, which has authority over election laws.

“He testified that the current system was safe and satisfactory, but it was old and we needed to replace it,” she said. “I was troubled by his change of attitude.”

‘You just do it’

As she leaves public office, Clarno said she is troubled by a couple of things.

Although political tensions have long split the Portland metro area and the populous Willamette Valley from the rest of the state, Clarno believes they have worsened, particularly on environmental issues.

“I do not believe the environmental movement today is servicing anybody except the legal community,” Clarno, who was born on the south coast and has lived mostly in Central Oregon, said. “There is not much credibility with an agenda that seems to go in a direction Portland is taking us in and assumes that we all have to go along happily. Rural Oregon is not going to heal until we have a better understanding of what they are doing to the rest of Oregon.”

When Brown announced her appointment as secretary of state, Clarno said she was

congratulated by senior legislators from both parties. One of them was Peter Courtney, a Democrat from Salem who was thrust into the Senate presidency in 2003 as part of a power-sharing agreement. He got the job when some of Clarno’s Republican colleagues said they did not want it to go to Kate Brown, the Democratic leader.

For Clarno, it was a favor returned. After she as House speaker faced down a revolt in her own Republican ranks in the 1995 session, it was Courtney who offered her support from the 26 House Democrats.

So Clarno said she was dismayed to hear the public criticisms by some Democrats

of Courtney, now the longest-serving legislator and Senate president.

“I do not approve of people who have treated him that way after he has given so much of his life to public service,” she said. “Being in leadership is not easy. There’s always somebody trying to bite you on the back side.”

Still, she said, public service has been worth it for her — even if she took time away from seeing her grandchildren, including a grandson who is 13.

“Maybe he understands that if Grandma wants to do something that is the right thing to do for public service, you just do it,” she said.

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DEATH NOTICES

John E. Masterson of Bend, OR
July 25, 1933 - December 24, 2020
Arrangements: Niswonger-Reynolds Funeral Home is honored to serve the family. 541-382-2471 Please visit the online registry for the family at www.niswonger-reynolds.com
Services: No service currently planned
Contributions may be made to: Union of Concerned Scientists www.uscusa.org or the Sunriver Music Festival www.sunrivermusic.org

Bill E. Snider of Bend, OR
July 19, 1932 - December 19, 2020
Arrangements: Niswonger-Reynolds Funeral Home is honored to serve the family. 541-382-2471 Please visit the online registry for the family at www.niswonger-reynolds.com
Services: Private family gather to be held this summer
Contributions may be made to: Humane Society of Bend or The Shepard’s House

Trevor Lynd “Trapper” Mitchell of Bend, OR
July 30, 1971 - Dec. 27, 2020
Arrangements: Baird Memorial Chapel of La Pine is honored to serve the Mitchell family. Please visit our website, www.bairdfh.com, to share condolences and sign the online guestbook.
Services: Private services will be held.
Contributions may be made to: Humane Society of Central Oregon
61170 SE 27th Street
Bend, OR 97702
541-382-3537
www.hsco.org

David Howard Curyea of Crescent, OR
May 23, 1976 - Dec. 15, 2020
Arrangements: Baird Memorial Chapel of La Pine is honored to serve the Curyea family. Please visit our website, www.bairdfh.com, to share condolences and sign the online guestbook.

OBITUARY DEADLINE
Call to ask about our deadlines
541-385-5809
Monday-Friday 10am-3pm
Email: obits@bendbulletin.com