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# Georgia Desis Ecstatic About Runoff Results and ‘They See Blue’ Activists Proud of Their Efforts

BY ANU GHOSH ([HTTPS://AMERICAKAHANI.COM/AUTHOR/ANU.GHOSH/](https://americakahani.com/author/anu-ghosh/))  
JANUARY 7, 2021

Members of the grassroots organization hand wrote over 63,000 postcards to voters in Georgia, sent out 30,000 flyers, made over 30,000 phone calls and contacted over 100,000 voters via texts to rally support for the Democratic candidates.



Democrats took control of the Senate on Jan. 6 with a pair of historic victories in Georgia’s runoff elections, solidifying Georgia’s political transformation and ensuring that the Biden-Harris team will have an easier time enacting their agenda. The victories also delivered a final snub to President Trump in his last 13 days in office.

Rev. Raphael Warnock defeated Sen. Kelly Loeffler (R), who was Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp appointee, becoming the first Black Democrat elected to the Senate from the South. And 33-year-old Jon Ossoff, head of a video production company who has never held public office, defeated incumbent Sen.

David Perdue, becoming the state's first Jewish senator and one of the youngest to be elected to the upper chamber.

The political fallout of Trump's tenure is now clear: His one term in the White House will conclude with Republicans having lost the presidency, the House and the Senate, all on his watch.



Ani Joshi, an IT professional from the Johns Creek area in Georgia, with candidate Jon Ossoff during a campaign stop.

Ani Joshi, an IT professional from the Johns Creek area in Georgia, who campaigned vigorously as part of the grassroots group – They See Blue, Georgia – is thrilled by the double victory. “We need sanity in our lives and peace for all Americans,” he told American Kahani. “We cannot afford to have leaders at the state and federal levels who live in an alternate world of conspiracies, undermining our constitutional norms, stoking division and only caring for one side of the aisle.”

Joshi canvassed his contacts and ensured they all voted in the primary as well as the runoffs. Referring to the recent mob insurgence at the Capitol building in Washington D.C. on Jan. 6 by Trump supporters, he adds, “the runoff outcome is a great dam against this outflow of rage being seen in the Capitol today.”

Speaking to the importance of the Indian American bloc in the electoral process, Joshi says, “Georgia has been purple for a few years now, and the Indian American votes are

important,” adding proudly, “although, I believe it is the large black turnout and a great ground game by Stacy Abrams and so many party workers that turned the page. Personally, I managed to convince 40 people who had not voted early to go and vote on Jan 5th.”

Sonjui Kumar, one of the co-directors of South Asians for Biden, Georgia chapter says: “For those of us on the ground here in Georgia, today has been a surreal experience. I feel like I have been holding my breath for the last 24 hours and to have the race called for Jon Ossoff in the same hour that the Trump mob stormed the U.S. Capitol crystallized how important these two races were.”

Kumar campaigned extensively for both the Biden-Harris ticket in the Nov. 3 general election and the Senate runoffs in the Peach State. Outlining what the organization did, she says, “In early November, shortly after the 2020 presidential election ended, the national leadership team of South Asians for Biden pivoted to support its Georgia chapter to support the two Senate runoff elections in our state. With the support of our well-oiled machine developed during the general election, we set up four phone banks a week, including the first ones targeted at South Asians, we mailed out 40,000 postcards to South Asians, we held relational organizing calls, and we hosted two celebrity get out the vote events.”

Kumar, a Georgia resident for the past 26 years, “23 of which were spent in Newt Gingrich's district in Cobb County” says: “To be able to watch Cobb, my old home county, turn blue and have my new home county, DeKalb, push Ossoff and Warnock over the line, has been exhilarating.” She adds: “We have been working to elect Democrats in Georgia for years and it didn't matter how great the candidates were, whether it was Michele Nunn or Jason Carter, the results were always the same. The race was always called at 7:01 p.m. for the Republicans. So, to be able to work with our growing community and bring these races home for Ossoff and Warnock has been the culmination of years of effort.”

As to the recognition and rise of a new power in politics – the Asian American voter – Kumar says, “the role of Asian Americans in general and South Asians in particular has been well documented and recognized. We voted in huge numbers in November and again in December and January, and we voted for the Democrats. We could not be happier or prouder.”

Kumar’s co-director and friend, Joy Kirpalani reached out to “American Kahani” via email. “When I first read your message early this morning for a comment on the election, I was feeling elated and ecstatic,” he write. “I woke up feeling like it was finally morning in America. We were finally done with Moscow Mitch, hopefully for good!”



Pooja Juwekar, recent graduate from Georgia Tech, who lives with her family in Alpharetta in Fulton County, volunteered for the two Democratic candidates.

An optimistic Kirpalani further wrote: “As a longtime resident of ruby red Georgia, to see a black pastor and the son of a Jewish immigrant going to the U.S. Senate to represent our state feels surreal. You can’t get away from the history or the meaning of that. These are ordinary and authentic people chosen to represent our people.”

Seeing the recent mob violence at the Capitol, Kirpalani points out on a somber note, “But now, at the end of the same day, I have to try to remember how I felt this morning because I am overwhelmed with feelings of anger, heartbreak, disgust, fear, and disappointment. However, I am determined not to let those thugs and anarchists take this moment from us. I am going to revel in the knowledge that we have two new U.S. Senators from Georgia and that is fantastic news.”

Pooja Juwekar, 22, a recent graduate from Georgia Tech, who lives with her family in Alpharetta in Fulton County, is thrilled with the victory. “The Senate win represents the importance of engaging and organizing across our community. It symbolizes a new frontier for the young generation across Georgia. In the runoff, I was empowered by my fellow Indian family friends to not just vote, but to volunteer and participate in canvassing.”

A politically active Juwekar did a lot of phone and text banking, both relational canvassing (friends) as well as “blind.” Most importantly, she knocked on doors, almost 250 homes in Forsyth and Fulton County – the areas of Cumming, Alpharetta and Johns Creek.

Vyanti Joseph, director of AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) Warnock campaign, with her candidate.

Her mother Ujjwala, who also is very politically engaged, interjects. “I myself wrote 150 letters, did quite a bit of relational canvassing, some blind phone banking, early vote process monitoring in Cobb County and was a poll watcher yesterday (Jan. 5) in Gwinnett county (the largest county in Georgia).”

California-based Rajiv Bhateja, one of the original founders of the grassroots organization, They See Blue, says, “Historically, the trend has been that if the candidates are separated by, say 1 percent, in a general election, and there’s a runoff, a Republican typically wins the runoff by at least 3 percent, due to low Democratic turnout for runoffs. So history was definitely not on our side. Now, add to that the fact that Jon Ossoff ran behind David Perdue in the general election. And that total votes for Democratic candidates in the “Jungle Primary” race for other Senate seat (which had around eight candidates including Warnock, Kelly Loeffler and others) were less than those for Republican candidates. We knew we had an enormous uphill challenge.”

A relieved but pragmatic Bhateja however does point out that, “Trump will be removed from office on Jan. 20, but we would be naive to believe that Trumpism is dead, especially after the jaw-dropping events in the Capitol today (Jan. 6). The country is deeply divided due to the falsehoods espoused by Donald Trump and his mouthpieces in the conservative media. They See Blue will remain ever-watchful and alert to avoid a repeat of such a “near-miss” coup-type event in the future. Thankfully, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris along with Democratic majorities in the House and the Senate will soon bring this nightmare to an end and provide much-needed sanity, relief and a steady hand for our country, the planet and the world.”

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They See Blue members hand wrote over 63,000 postcards to voters in Georgia. “We sent out 30,000 flyers, made over 30,000 phone calls and contacted over 100,000 voters via texts,” says Bhateja, adding, “our amazing team of volunteers produced dozens of ads and interviews on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TV and radio in five languages. We broadcasted interviews with people from diverse backgrounds — business, engineering, medicine and science — to showcase a variety of perspectives. We were relentless in contacting people to remind them to vote — and to thank them for voting. The credit for this incredible effort goes mainly to the Georgia chapter of They See Blue. They did the hard work on the ground, vigorously supported by our various remote chapters via an ‘air’ campaign. Since both candidates won by less than 1 percent, we feel confident that — along with many others — our work made a difference.”

This elation was felt across a cross-section. A jubilant Vyanti Joseph, director of AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) Warnock campaign, who has tirelessly and diligently campaigned for Rev. Warnock and Jon Ossoff, posted a congratulatory message to the two newly minted senators on social media. “It’s been a journey my friend. Congratulations Sen. Elect Jon Ossoff. So happy for you!”

Georgians also took to social media to offer their congratulations to both senator-elects. First time voters Parsh and Reshmi of Johns Creek, Georgia, narrowly missed the Nov. 3 general election and posted on the They See Blue Georgia Twitter page, “We’d never forgive ourselves if Biden lost GA by 2 votes!” said Reshmi. They registered to vote soon after becoming naturalized citizens to cast their votes for #Warnock & #Ossoff!

Many of the congratulations were also lobbed at grassroots organizations that worked hard to get the vote out.

Anjali Enjeti, a volunteer for They See Blue, Georgia, tweeted, “And we are so fortunate to have an incredible national organization that relieved us of so much of the work that could be remotely. Thank you to all @TheySeeBlue chapters across the US who hit the ground running for Georgia and never let up.”

Enjeti also gave a special shout-out to the members of They See Blue, Georgia. “We lit-dropped, sign waved, knocked thousands of doors, made thousands of calls and sent thousands of postcards to South Asian voters in Georgia. Love these beautiful hard-working dedicated souls so much.”

With over 150,000 eligible South Asian American voters in Georgia, South Asian American voters were the shift and played a key role in this election. According to Kirpalani, “the South Asian Americans and the larger AAPI population has been steadily on the rise in Metro Atlanta. These

communities will be the margin of victory going forward in all Georgia elections. From South Cobb to Gwinnett, Henry and DeKalb counties, in Sandy Springs, Buford Highway and Riverdale, and all parts of the state, even red counties like Forsyth, South Asians were engaged, involved and showed we care. This election has changed the perspective of the South Asian community...we can't just put our heads down and work hard to improve the lives of our own families, we must also look around and recognize what is happening around us and how it is affecting us individually and collectively. I believe this was a big wake up call for our community and we will see much more engagement and enthusiasm from them in future elections."

And as Kirpalani sums up this new enthusiasm with, "2021 is truly going to be a New Year with new beginnings...the Phoenix is rising from the ashes," we look to building back better!

Anu Ghosh immigrated to the U.S. from India in 1999. Back in India she was a journalist for the Times of India in Pune for 8 years and a graduate from the Symbiosis Institute of Journalism and Communication. In the U.S., she obtained her Masters and PhD. in Communications from The Ohio State University. Go Buckeyes! She has been involved in education for the last 15 years, as a professor at Oglethorpe University and then Georgia State University. She currently teaches Special Education at Oak Grove Elementary. She is also a mom to two precocious girls ages 11 and 6.

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