



The State of the Vote

*Expectations from Georgia's
Election Administrators*

Executive Summary

Despite the Trump Administration's efforts to undermine our elections and restrictive state voting laws, conversations with election administrators across Georgia show that local officials feel prepared to administer secure elections this fall.

The Office of Senator Warnock interviewed 10 election administrators across Georgia to discuss their preparation ahead of the 2026 midterms:

- ✧ All 10 election administrators felt confident and prepared for the midterm elections. However, they identified some issues they have had to prepare for, including federal actions and poll worker harassment.
- ✧ Election administrators are concerned about USPS and mail-in voting, in part due to requirements in Georgia's SB 202. While receiving strong support from local officials, election administrators cited other challenges posed by state entities, such as the State Elections Board.
- ✧ Administrators identified needs that additional federal election administration and security funding could help meet, particularly as Georgia law restricts local election offices' ability to accept outside grants

Congress must listen to the voices of those on the ground and immediately pass legislation creating a uniform standard for voting, taking away the ability of Presidents or state legislatures to inject hurdles into the voting process. Additionally, Congress must help local jurisdiction respond to new election threats by robustly funding the Election Administration Assistance and its Election Security Grants.



Recent & Ongoing Attacks on Voting Rights

The Trump Administration has injected chaos into election administration by casting doubt on the integrity of our election systems, attempting to restrict voting by mail, threatening federal interference in the midterms, and more.¹

But despite this Administration's best efforts to undermine our elections, thus far, the President has failed. Federal judges blocked the Trump Administration's efforts to seize state voter lists² and restrict mail-in ballots.³ Even after the Supreme Court's disastrous ruling in *Louisiana v. Callais*, Georgia's congressional maps remain unchanged for the 2026 and 2028 election cycles due to vocal opposition.⁴ And shown below, even after all of these attacks, election administrators in Georgia are confident in their preparation for this midterm election cycle.

Spotlight on Georgia

The Office of Senator Warnock interviewed local election administrators from 10 Georgia counties to discuss how they are feeling ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. These include administrators from four counties with Democratic-led Board of Commissioners, four counties with Republican-led Board of Commissioners, and two counties with nonpartisan elections for county commissioners. Four of the counties are located in northeast Georgia, while northwest, southeast, and southwest Georgia are each represented by two counties.⁵

These officials are responsible for administering federal, state, and local elections in geographically and politically diverse jurisdictions across Georgia.

A. *Despite concerns, local election administrators across Georgia are prepared for the elections.*

Every election administrator interviewed said they felt prepared for the upcoming 2026 midterms. On average, election administrators rated their readiness at **8.8** out of 10.

Most counties have been especially successful in recruiting and training their poll workers. One election administrator had to put a hold on recruiting thanks to thousands of applications outpacing the number of available positions, and another recruited enough poll workers to share volunteers with neighboring counties.

“We don’t have a problem with recruiting; people remain and return year after year.”

However, harassment of election staff and poll workers remains a challenge. **6 out of 10 administrators** shared that their workers have reported threatening phone calls, bomb threats, and other forms of intimidation.

As a response, most counties have enhanced their security and de-escalation training for poll workers. Counties have also kept up close coordination with local law enforcement to keep election staff, poll workers, and voters safe. One election administrator has “made sure to go to every poll worker training class to stress that their safety and well-being is my top priority.” As another administrator stated, “Our goal is always to equip them with as much information as possible, since they’re the ones who do the work on the front lines.”

Additionally, county election offices across Georgia are developing emergency protocols in the event of a safety or security issue at a polling place, such



as inclement weather, power outages, or election disruption by private individuals. These election-specific emergency procedures include specific guidelines so administrators and their staff know how to handle sensitive materials if a major incident were to occur, and they often include close collaboration with local law enforcement and other emergency professionals.

“For us, each election is a full-on emergency management activation for everyone – our police chief, our IT manager, our facilities team, etc.”

Counties are also making plans for how to respond to potential federal interference in the midterms, whether that interference comes from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), or another federal entity. Election administrators have stressed that they “will not tolerate [their] voters being harassed” and “would not give up anything or release any documents” without first going through their entire legal command structure.

“ICE is not allowed [at a polling place] unless they have a warrant.”

For the most part, however, election administrators do not have serious concerns about the possibility of federal interference in the midterms. Officials are engaged in “cautious preparations without overt concerns.” In other words – they do not expect federal agents to appear at polling places, but they will be ready.

B. *Election administrators do expect some challenges, especially around mail-in voting. While support from local officials remains strong, state laws and entities pose challenges.*

Despite general confidence in upcoming elections, most election administrators are anticipating challenges, primarily around mail-in voting, with others sharing concerns about state leadership.

6 out of 10 administrators cited mail-in voting as a potential area of concern, with several mentioning that ballots have arrived late or gotten lost. Three noted that their county's mail is redirected out of state for processing, which increases the likelihood of mail delays.

“We always have [issues with mail], and I bet we always will.”

The problem may have gotten worse with the implementation of Georgia state law SB 202. This bill made several changes to election administration in Georgia, including when election administrators can send out absentee ballots. As a result,



voters have less time to fill out and return their ballots. One administrator said that due to SB 202, absentee ballots are “very likely to not get to folks on time.”

Mail delays could also affect the arrival of completed ballots. To make sure all eligible votes are counted, several election administrators mentioned that they will send

staff members to pick up ballots from the local U.S. Postal Service (USPS) office instead of waiting for delivery. In one example from a prior election cycle, a county administrator traveled to Florida to pick up ballots that were sent out-of-state for processing.

Because of these difficulties, at least one administrator suggested that voters should “only vote by mail if [they] really have to” and encouraged voters to return their mail-in ballots “as soon as possible.” According to them, the best way to make sure your absentee ballot reaches the election office on time is to vote early, use drop boxes, or – if voters need to vote by mail – send in absentee ballots as soon as possible.

Administrators are also aware that voters may have concerns about recent changes to the Trump Administration’s policies regarding USPS and absentee ballots, as described in the section above. However, as one administrator emphasized:

“We try to assure our voters that, as of now, everything is the same. We will mail ballots as necessary, and they should feel confident when they mail them in.”

In addition, election administrators overwhelmingly cited strong support from their community and county leadership. Nearly **every election administrator** acknowledged that their county had provided meaningful assistance as they prepared for the upcoming midterms.

At the state level, however, new challenges have appeared. For instance, some shared concerns that the State Elections Board could continue to platform election deniers and skeptics. One administrator shared specific concerns on how the Board’s “investigative authority” might be used to target county election officials. Another noted that the increased presence of election skeptics “doesn’t bother me personally, but it is affecting our work.”

“If you know or if you keep up with our State Elections Board, they are often changing rules on us.”

These findings suggest that election administrators feel confident about the safety, security, and smooth operation of upcoming elections, but there is still space for additional support and clarity.

C. *Additional federal funding would enable local election administrators to meet a variety of pressing needs and fill gaps created by state restrictions on outside grants.*

As election administrators plan for possible challenges, including mail delays and state-level policy changes, another issue comes up: funding. Administrators referred to several new funding challenges, including the loss of some federal funding



programs and the passage of SB 202, which restricted the ability of counties to apply for grant funding from external organizations.

Election administrators throughout Georgia indicated that they would welcome additional federal resources and funding to support their operations. Administrators provided numerous possible uses for this funding, including hiring additional seasonal workers, upgrading equipment

and technology, and strengthening their existing partnerships with local law enforcement and emergency management personnel.

Some administrators also highlighted existing funding gaps due to policy changes at the federal and state levels. One administrator identified improvements to voting accessibility, such as “automatic door openers [and] parking lot set-up” at polling places, as a funding need; these resources had previously been covered by Help America Vote Act (HAVA) accessibility grants, “but that’s no longer available.”⁶ Multiple administrators also mentioned their inability to access outside grant funding following the enactment of SB 202. This restriction makes federal grant funding for election administration particularly beneficial in Georgia, especially if that funding is distributed directly to the counties instead of going through the State Elections Board.

Congress Must Listen

Election administrators across Georgia are doing incredible work to protect the vote this fall. However, Congress can make their work easier by passing legislation like the *John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act*, which would restore the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the *Freedom to Vote Act*, which would create national standards for early, absentee, and in-person voting; prevent partisan takeovers of local election officials; and improve election security.



Moreover, Congress must respond to the needs of election administrators and support additional federal election funding. In Fiscal Year 2026, Congress only appropriated \$45 million to states through the Election Assistance Commission’s

Election Security Grant. However, coalition of voting rights organizations has urged Congress to fund this grant at \$825 million to address needs across the country. Congress must do more to help county boards of elections modernize voting systems and infrastructure, maintain accurate voter registration databases, recruit and train poll workers, and keep our elections safe and secure.

- 1 Michael Sozan and Ben Olinsky, *The Trump Administration Is Interfering in the 2026 Midterm Elections to Entrench the Imperial Presidency* (August 12, 2026), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-trump-administration-is-interfering-in-the-2026-midterm-elections-to-entrench-the-imperial-presidency>
- 2 Luc Cohen, *Trump Loses 21 Straight Court Battles for State Voter Rolls as Midterms Near*, (August 7, 2026), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/trump-loses-21-straight-court-battles-state-voter-rolls-midterms-near-2026-08-07/>
- 3 Amy Howe, *Supreme Court Denies Trump Administration's Request to Implement Parts of Rule on Mail-In Voting* (September 14, 2026), <https://www.scotusblog.com/2026/09/supreme-court-denies-trump-administrations-request-to-implement-parts-of-usps-rule-on-mail-in-voting/>
- 4 Olivia George, *Georgia GOP Drops Redistricting Plan That Would Hurt Black Representation* (June 17, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2026/06/17/georgia-republicans-say-no-redistricting-now/>
- 5 The Office of Senator Warnock interviewed election administrators from 4 Democratic-led and 4 Republican-led counties, and 2 counties with nonpartisan elections for county commissioners. 4 of the counties are located in northeast Georgia, while northwest, southeast, and southwest Georgia are each represented by 2 counties.
- 6 Grace Klinefelter, *Evaluating Federal Grant Programs to Improve Voting Accessibility* (August 27, 2027), <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/evaluating-federal-grant-programs-to-improve-voting-accessibility>

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