

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Bobby Jenkins
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DATE: 12/31/20
RE: How is it that SW Georgia counties are leading voter turnout in Senate runoffs?

The Little Engine That Could

When the two Georgia Senate runoffs, that will determine the control of the Senate, began Bobby Jenkins was the chair of the Randolph County Democratic Party Committee, the only such committee of the three counties that are the focus of this local turnout effort. Only a few weeks later, Jenkins is leading a team that has built voter turnout that is already 73.6% of the November general election turnout. Randolph County is leading (ranging from first place to twelfth depending on the hour) all the other 158 Georgia Counties' turnout, whose average is currently 63.9% of the November turnout. (NB These numbers change hourly.)

Jenkins is a retired public school superintendent and church deacon who has become the engineer on The Little Engine That Could. The success began with Jenkins' contact with Maude Bruce, the chair of the NAACP in Ellenville, NY. She sent Thomas Brown to Randolph County. Brown, a retired school teacher, who had volunteered in Philadelphia for the Democrats' get-out-the-vote campaign. As a volunteer, Brown had learned the sophisticated use of data management and COVID-safe door-to-door canvassing protocols in Philadelphia. Energized by the success in Philadelphia and understanding the importance of the Georgia runoffs, Brown sought direction from Bruce and was referred to Jenkins. At the end of November Brown jumped into his car, drove to Cuthbert, the county seat of Randolph, got a hotel room and went to work, as a self-financing volunteer field director. Working with Jenkins, they mapped out a strategy focused on canvassing and began recruiting, training and supervising local Democrats for door-to-door voter contact. The numbers prove that the Jenkins/Brown team is making history.

Brown needed help with the data system that canvassers use on their cell phones and contacted a data management expert, Kitty Cox, who had been volunteering with the Georgia State Democratic Party in the general election. Cox is from Birmingham, AL, and went to college in Atlanta. She has been focused on Southwest Georgia ever since. Cox has been massaging the numbers, calling on everyone she knows for donations, helping with strategy and chairing team meetings on Zoom.

Along with leading the state in early voter turnout, Jenkin's organization has now grown into the two adjacent counties, Quitman and Stewart (currently vying with Randolph for first place in the state). What began as an operation without money or infrastructure now has a field director, a data manager, a finance director, an on-line donor account, and donors from thirteen states and the District of Columbia. A dozen trained local canvassers have been recruited, like grandmother Carolyn Baker, college student Derrick Gorsuch and high school football coach Wes Murphy. The locals are supplemented by canvassers from Florida and Alabama,

Jenkins says, “No one expected that we could achieve so much success in our corner of Georgia’s Black Belt, least of all me. But we have found out that we have like-minded friends all over the country who will support us when we do the work on the ground. Bringing together all of these people some have called ‘a Christmas miracle’ and we intend to continue to build our Democratic infrastructure after January 5th and create a model for other counties in this part of the state. Poor, rural, majority African American parts of the South have been written off by the political class in both parties. We intend to wake the Black sleeping giant by showing what can be done by determined local folks.”

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