



Georgia Influencers

About the author

Aaron Gould Sheinin has covered Southern politics for more than a decade, primarily in Georgia and South Carolina. He has been a politics and government reporter at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* since 2007.



The Top 10 Democrats

Roy Barnes

The former governor is running again and is the odds-on favorite to be the party's nominee in a five-way primary. While that makes him a target for some, he has the name ID and the money to move the party in the direction he chooses.

Jane Kidd

The daughter of a former governor and a former lawmaker herself, Kidd is the party chairwoman and the acknowledged leader of the party.

Bobby Kahn

To Republicans, he's an evil genius. To Democrats, he's just a genius. Was Barnes' key ad and money man now playing the same role for other candidates.

Chris Carpenter

A lawyer who served in Roy Barnes' first administration, Carpenter is now leading Barnes' efforts to return to the Governor's Mansion.

Amy Morton

Blogger, activist and party leader, Morton is the voice of the grassroots.

Jeff DiSantis

One of only a handful of veteran Democratic operatives still working, DiSantis is also a former party executive director.

Matt Weylandt

The party's current executive director, Weylandt has the unenviable task of building a team that's grown too comfortable in the minority. Young and energetic.

Neill Herring

The veteran environmental lobbyist has been around the Gold Dome for decades. Knows absolutely everybody and has the sharpest tongue at the Capitol.

Shirley Franklin

The former Atlanta mayor just left office in January. Her role in the party since leaving the post is yet undefined, but she'll be an important asset or adversary when she chooses a direction.

Tharon Johnson

The former chief of staff to legendary U.S. Rep. John Lewis helped elect the new mayor of Atlanta

The Top 10 Republicans

Sue Everhart

The state party chairwoman is not cut from the same cloth as RNC head Michael Steele. She isn't flashy and is rarely controversial. What she is is effective. Since being elected in May 2007, she has helped successfully defend seven U.S. House seats and a U.S. Senate seat—all while navigating the GOP through intra-party strife that has felled lesser chairs.

Alec Poitevint

A former party chairman, Poitevint is doubly important. His service to the party as the GOP was learning to govern as a majority earned him friends and favors. But he is also a South Georgia man, which means he is among the few in the state who can command respect and attention from Atlanta to the rural hinterlands. He was Gov. Sonny Perdue's general campaign chairman in 2002 and led John McCain's successful bid for the state's 15 electoral votes in 2008.

Eric Tanenblatt

The consummate Republican insider. A top Atlanta lobbyist and senior managing director of the McKenna Long & Aldridge law firm, Tanenblatt has played a key role in nearly every successful Republican victory in Georgia. Served as Perdue's first chief of staff in 2003 and now serves as national co-chair of the Republican Governor's Association finance committee.

Randy Evans

The long-time former general counsel to the state party, Evans is another McKenna Long standout, where he serves as partner. Lawyer to former U.S. House speakers Newt Gingrich and Dennis Hastert. Has done legal work for Sarah Palin, although he refuses to divulge what kind of work.

Jamie Reynolds

Reynolds is perhaps the most important money man in Georgia. Has served on the finance committees for President George W. Bush's 2000 and 2004 campaigns and for McCain's 2008 bid. Developer of Reynolds Plantation east of Atlanta, a 5-star golf and Ritz-Carlton resort that has hosted both Bush and Cheney. Where Reynolds goes, Georgia's Republican money largely follows.

Erick Erickson

Three years ago, Erickson would not be on this list. Now, however, he is a singular force in state—and, increasingly, national—GOP politics. Erickson is the founder and operator of PeachPundit, the most influential Republican blog in the state. But Erickson has also developed a national following through his work at launching RedState.org, a country-wide Republican blog. Now a CNN contributor, Erickson has appeared on Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert's shows. He can mobilize thousands with a single blog post and has the ability to infuriate and influence with each measure.

Jay Morgan

Morgan helped create the grassroots program that Georgia's Republicans used first in the 1980s to start growing. Established himself as a top lobbyist by being successful when Democrats still controlled things. Now, with the GOP in the majority, he is at the top of his game. Clients include AT&T and other top utilities and extends to nearly every major industry from health care to liquor to trucking.

Sadie Fields

The president of the Georgia Christian Alliance, Fields is the unquestioned leader of the evangelical wing of the state GOP. Made a very public split from the national Christian Coalition after that organization's troubles in the previous decade. Created the new group herself and uses it to maximum advantage.

Anne Lewis

General counsel to the state party, Lewis is also an expert in redistricting, a skill set that will be even more important in the next few years.

Bernie Marcus

Co-founder of Atlanta-based Home Depot, Marcus is a top-five Republican money guy in the state who is often wooed by national and state candidates.

The Next 40 Democrats

Joseph Lowery

The civil rights icon can still mobilize base voters.

Sid Cottingham

A south Georgia lawyer, Cottingham's blog keeps the party close to its rural roots.

Caroline McNulty

The best professional Democratic fundraiser in the state.

Sally Rosser

A member of the DNC and state party vice chairwoman.

Jason Carter

The grandson of former President Jimmy Carter is a successful trial lawyer now running for the state Senate.

Emil Runge

A policy wonk and researcher, Runge is a former party spokesman who remains behind the scenes by choice, but his impact is widely felt.

Trevor Southerland

The party's future in terms of activists and operatives.

Keith Mason

A party veteran who remains relevant through his checkbook and activism. The Clinton administration aide is now at McKenna Long & Aldridge.

David J. Worley

One of the top Democratic lawyers in the state, Worley is a member of the DNC.

Jim Martin

He nearly rescued the party in 2008 when his U.S. Senate bid pushed Republican Saxby Chambliss into a runoff.

George W. "Buddy" Darden

The former congressman is now senior counsel at McKenna Long and is regularly named one of the most influential Georgians.

Michael Coles

Made a fortune in the cookie and coffee business and made spirited bid for U.S. Senate in the 1990s. Hosted Barack Obama at his palatial home in 2008.

Gordon Giffin

McKenna's chair of public policy and international department spent four years as the ambassador to Canada.

Terry Matthews

Another of the top Democratic lobbyists in the state, Matthews is a former aide to U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn.

Martin Matheny

A former state party spokesman, Matheny has a growing a campaign consulting business.

Mark Taylor

The former lieutenant governor challenged Sonny Perdue in 2006.

Alan Essig

He would probably protest the party label, but his progressive work at the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute has served Democrats well.

Richard Ray

President of the AFL-CIO in Georgia, Ray has been a leadership presence for years. A member of the DNC.

Tasso Knight

Political director and lobbyist for the local United Food and Commercial Workers Union.

Ben Myers

Chairman of the party's 6th Congressional District operation.

Steve Anthony

The former party executive director and aide to House Speaker Tom Murphy now runs his own lobbying and consulting firm.

Don Weigel

Director of the House Democratic Caucus

Drew Westen

Emory University professor is an author and political consultant specializing in messaging.

Lee Goodall

State director of Organizing for America, Goodall is the party's hope with the grassroots.

Michael Jablonski

General counsel to the state party and a veteran communications strategist.

Emmett Bondurant

The dean of Democratic lawyers, Bondurant is an institution in politics.

Jim Coonan

An Atlanta-based political consultant, Coonan is expert at breaking down voting trends.

Jim Butler

A middle Georgia native, Butler is one of the top trial lawyers in the country. Often mentioned as a potential candidate.

Kirk Dornbush

Top fundraiser has brought in hundreds of thousands for Obama.

Laura Turner Seydel

A major Democratic donor, environmentalist, Obama supporter—and daughter of mogul Ted Turner.

Terry Coleman

Former House speaker, now assistant commissioner of agriculture.

Lewis Massey

A former secretary of state, now one of the top lobbyists with Republican partner Bruce Bowers.

Vernon Jones

Was a controversial yet effective leader of DeKalb County. Made a quixotic bid for Senate but lost in a runoff. Now challenging Democratic Rep. Hank Johnson.

Angela Trigg

A member of the DNC and founder of CampaignWindow, a political Web design firm.

Page Gleason

A new member of the DNC, Gleason is a pro at grassroots organizing and fundraising.

Wycliffe "Wyc" Orr

A north Georgia lawyer and former state House member. One of the most popular Democrats in the state.

Dan Halpern

A member of the DNC's executive committee and confidant to several Atlanta mayors.

Scott Maxwell

Sen. Sam Nunn's press secretary, now partner in a lobbying firm, has remained successful by earning respect from both sides of the aisle.

Howard Franklin

An up-and-comer among party operatives, Franklin could have a bright future as a candidate.

Pete Robinson

Former member of the Senate Democratic leadership is a master of behind-the-scenes operations.

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The Next 40 Republicans

Michael Griffin

Lobbyist for Georgia Right to Life

Dan McLagan

One of the best, if not *the* best, Republican campaign spokesman in the state. A former Perdue spokesman, he knows how to feed journalists with one hand and smack them with the other.

Shawn Davis

The insider's insider, Davis is a former protégé of communications and lobbyist guru Joe Tanner. Davis is more comfortable and effective working behind the scenes but is always plugged in.

John Watson

A former lobbyist and Perdue chief of staff, Watson is chairing the campaign of one of the top Republican gubernatorial hopefuls.

Phil Kent

A former journalist, Kent is a leading conservative author and pundit. Works with businesses to develop public affairs and communications strategies.

Craig Lesser

A former Georgia Power executive, Lesser served as the state's economic development director. Co-founded Pendleton Consulting Group.

Kelly McCutchen

Head of the Georgia Public Policy Foundation, a conservative think tank that drives major policy discussions

Bart Gobeil

A former utility lobbyist, Gobeil is chief of staff to Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle. Business before the Senate usually comes before him first.

Spiro Amburn

Chief of staff to Speaker David Ralston. A former deputy legislative director in Perdue's shop, this is Amburn's most high-profile role.

Rusty Paul

A two-time state party chairman and former state senator, Paul runs iSquared Communications, a top consulting firm.

Clint Austin

One of the top young lobbyists represents a slew of healthcare clients. When Republicans took over the state House in '94, Austin was with the new speaker.

Matt Towery

A former state lawmaker and aide to Newt Gingrich, Towery runs the influential InsiderAdvantage media and polling firm.

Ed Holcombe

A former lobbyist for Georgia Power, he now serves as chief of staff to Perdue.

Dave McCleary

A grassroots expert, McCleary has been a man on the ground for Republican candidates since Ronald Reagan's campaign.

Pat Tippet

Chairwoman of coastal 1st District GOP, Tippet is a leading figure in the state's evangelical wing with her good friend ...

Kay Godwin

A key south Georgia activist and grassroots organizer with influence in the evangelical wing.

John Sours

A former chairman of the Fulton County party, Sours is a state party veteran and helped run McCain's Georgia operation.

Scott Johnson

Chairman of the Cobb County GOP, the metro Atlanta suburb home to Newt Gingrich and much of the party's elite.

Linda Parker

Former chair of the party in Cherokee County, an important Atlanta suburb.

Doug Chalmers

The go-to lawyer for candidates and parties; an expert in state ethics laws.

Dwight Davis

Lobbyist with King & Spalding, and solid source of GOP campaign money.



Toby Carr

The current executive director of the state party cut his teeth on the 2008 re-election campaign of Sen. Saxby Chambliss.

Frank Strickland

A top GOP lawyer who has argued, and won, redistricting and Section 5 Voting Rights Act cases in federal court.

Oscar Harper

Georgia Power executive and major GOP contributor

Rufus Montgomery

Atlanta lobbyist and 2008 RNC delegate

Leigh Ann Gillis

One of the most-sought after Republican fundraisers

Linda Herren

National committeewoman

Sunny Park

Entrepreneur and donor, Park serves as vice chairman of the Georgia Ports Authority.

Arthur "Skin" Edge

A former Senate Republican leader, now one of the top five lobbyists under the Gold Dome.

Fred Cooper

An investment banker, Cooper chairs a leading gubernatorial campaign and was on Romney's Georgia leadership committee.

Anna Cablik

Leading Hispanic businesswoman, was a Bush Pioneer

Steve Croy

A major donor who has been on the finance committee of seemingly every major GOP campaign

Suzi Voyles

Head of the Georgia Federation of Republican Women, who are a force in a party led by a woman.

Maria Stollo Zack

Founder of her own lobbying firm, which was named one of the top small firms in the state.

Craig Dowdy

Another big horse in the McKenna Long stable, he is a key utility and regulatory lobbyist.

Robert Highsmith

A former staff lawyer for Perdue, Highsmith leads the lobbying efforts of Atlanta law firm Holland & Knight

BJ Van Gundy

A management consultant, he's the new second vice chair of the state party.

Steve Dillard

A Macon lawyer and Federalist Society member, Dillard clerked in the federal appeals court and led an anti-Giuliani organization.

Chuck Clay

Former state party chairman and president of InsiderAdvantage, the political news and polling firm.

Art Morris

Former state party finance director, confidant to Ralph Reed.



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