



2021

Georgia Reproductive Justice Voter Toolkit

The Reproductive Justice Voter Toolkit helps voters choose a candidate committed to upholding the values of reproductive justice and creating communities where we not only survive but thrive.



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This toolkit was created by the **[New Georgia Project](#)** and **[Amplify Georgia Collaborative](#)**.

Introduction

What is Reproductive Justice?

Simply put by the pioneering organization [SisterSong](#), reproductive justice is “the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities.”

Reproductive justice is considered the all-encompassing “mama” of social justice issues, which includes protecting abortion access for all people, advocating for free prenatal and postnatal pregnancy care, fighting for environmental and criminal justice so our families to live in safe and clean environments free from over-policing, and more. While founded for and by Black womxn, reproductive justice touches the lives of every person, and it speaks to issues that all communities face regardless of their identity(ies).

As we enter and exit election cycles with elected officials and elected hopefuls offering coded and loaded words, our goal with this voter toolkit is to empower voters to confidently choose candidates that embody the [four pillars of reproductive justice](#).

4 Pillars of Reproductive Justice

Bodily Autonomy

We have the right to decide what we do with our bodies, and we deserve an elected official that will fight for that right

The right to govern one's body should be an understood concept and a natural and inalienable right. Yet, in our state and across the United States, this is not the case. Unless you identify as a white, cisgender man, there is a high likelihood that your right to control your body is not respected or protected by your government. It is crucial that we elect representatives who believe that everyone has the right to choose what they want to do with their bodies and when, regardless of their gender identity, sex, race, and sexual orientation. These rights include, but are not limited to: the right to change your gender marker on legal documents, the right to refuse sex, the right to access to reproductive healthcare, including contraception and abortion care, and so much more.

Parent the Children We Have In Safe and Sustainable Communities

We envision communities with plentiful resources and safety and will not accept elected leadership that continue to strip our communities of resources and treat our communities as political pawns

Our children deserve to live in communities where they can enjoy affordable and nutritious food, receive high-quality and cost-effective healthcare, access sidewalks and public green spaces, breathe clean air, live without fear of interpersonal and state-sanctioned violence, and more. We need elected officials who will fight to stop the gentrification of neighborhoods that house Black and Brown people and advocate for education and employment for all of their respective communities. We have a chance to elect representatives who will fight to ensure that our children feel safe and supported by their community.

Have Children

We have the right to elect a governing body that will fight for healthcare access for all Georgians

A right that seems self-explanatory somehow needs not only an explanation but also legislation. In a state with the highest maternal death rate in the country, we need to elect a governing body that will fight to ensure that every person who wants to give birth has a safe and reliable option to do so. When politicians play politics with funding our healthcare, deny families access to healthcare but force individuals to have families, it is our duty to fire them. We refuse to have a representative who actively fights against our families, so we must hire someone who believes and will defend our right to have healthy families.

Furthermore, the right to have our children is not limited to solely birthing a child but doing so without shame or coercion. Unfortunately, the United States has a disturbing and bountiful history of reproductive coercion in Black, Brown, Indigenous, and most recently, immigrant communities. These communities have been pressured to use specific forms of birth control with known lasting effects (i.e., Depo), denied access to fertility treatment, shamed for having children in poverty (the infamous Welfare Queen), and experienced forced sterilization. Elected officials have to protect the right of every person who desires to have a child and make sure that the resources needed to do so are readily accessible to all people.

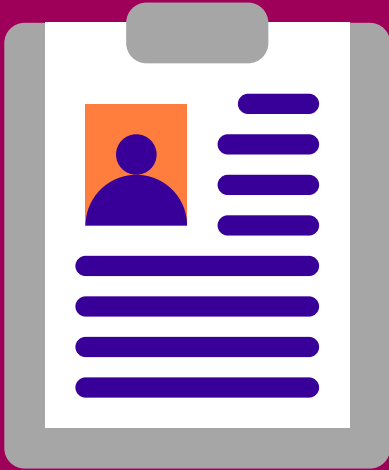
Not Have Children

We believe that deciding not to have a child should remain uncompromised by elected officials

It is not the decision of anyone outside of someone's pregnancy to decide what happens with said pregnancy. No one should be forced to carry a pregnancy to term. Everyone should have access to safe, affordable, and dignified abortion care so that they can make the best decision for themselves and their families. We must elect representatives who will create and pass legislation that protects and expands our access to birth control, emergency contraception, and abortion. We cannot afford to live in a state that denies our right to choose how and when to have or not have children.

What to Look for in a Candidate

Regardless of the position that the candidate is running for, their commitments and work should reflect the values laid out in the [4 Pillars of Reproductive Justice](#).



Red Flags to Watch Out For

- Anti-LGBTQ, anti-abortion or anti-birth control
- "Tough on crime," anti-immigrant, and wants to invest more in law enforcement
- Anti-union or worker
- Not interested in protecting and cleaning the environment



If they are an incumbent, have they voted for, advocated for, or written legislation that championed families, healthcare access?



If they are not an incumbent and are running for an election for the first time, what are their campaign promises, and what have they done to serve the community? What relationships do they have? What relevant experience do they have to the basic requirements of their job?



When we look at how many elected positions intersect with the world of RJ, many decisions center around budget and policy. What are they funding or suggesting needs funding?

An RJ candidate will want to invest in their school systems, healthcare (including reproductive healthcare and abortion access), and programs that create safe communities.

We need candidates who trust us to make the best decisions for ourselves and our families, want to keep families together, and plan to create environments that foster opportunities for advancement and success. A candidate who champions the most basic human rights for everyone, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, age, immigration status, or income, is likely an RJ candidate.

If you are someone who identifies as an RJ warrior, advocate, or voter, [voting your conscience](#) is a safe barometer.

Voting Your Conscience

While created for Black and Brown womxn, reproductive justice is an expansive movement that encompasses the injustices of all communities. Suppose a candidate's plans and actions are not consistent with the pillars of RJ, and they are ambivalent about issues relevant to our community—in that case, we know where they stand, and it is *not* with reproductive justice. The candidate we choose to support must advocate for historically excluded communities and plan to solve the issues these communities face—regardless of office.

The current climate of our communities, state, and country demands that we elect bold and courageous leaders. When you vote, are you voting for the most progressive candidate? Are you voting for the candidate that will speak out on behalf of you and your family, even when it is not the popular opinion?

Voting your conscience works both ways. We must elect representatives that will also vote their conscience. Unfortunately, many elected officials make grand promises when campaigning, then compromise as soon as they step into their elected office. Electing representatives that will hold steadfast to their campaign promises and vote the voices of their community and their conscience is a requirement to gain the vote of an RJ voter. And, if they don't follow through, we must hold them accountable.



2021: Georgia Offices on the Ballot

POSITION	DETAILS	WE CARE BECAUSE
 <p>STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Currently holds 180 elected officials from the state of Georgia• When a new bill is presented, it must go through the State House before it can go through the State Senate• Initiates state appropriation processes to determine how hospitals, schools, and businesses are funded	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They can propose laws to ban abortion, criminal justice reform, and state preemption on cash bail reform
 <p>MAYOR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presides over all meetings of the council and generally ensuring that city departments run smoothly• Serves as the official spokesperson for the city government• Often empowered with the authority to vote in the event of a tie and may or may not have veto power over legislation approved by council• Responsible for signing contracts, ordinances, and other instruments executed by the governing body which by law are required to be in writing (see GMA's Georgia Model Municipal Charter for details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They work with City Council to create and balance budget—determines what is funded, like sex education, testing, access to reproductive healthcare, etc.• They work with city council to create municipal ordinances and laws• They can issue citywide mandates by executive order (depends on charter, powers may be more limited)
 <p>CITY COUNCIL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empowered to make policy decisions and to approve ordinances, resolutions, and other local legislation to govern the health, welfare, comfort, and safety of the city's residents.• Sets policy guidelines for the administrative and fiscal operations of the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They create, balance, and approve the city budget• They determine what kind of local programs to fund or create• They pass policies for the city
 <p>SCHOOL BOARD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversees all aspects of its respected school district• Elects the superintendent and supports them throughout their endeavors• Establish school attendance areas• Consider and act on recommendations based on the school superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They determine what type of programs are in schools and establish policies that directly affect school programs

Creating a Voting Plan

It is important for every voter to have a plan and a backup plan to insure their vote is counted.

Step 1: Decide if you want to vote in-person or absentee

Step 2: Review your sample ballot. You can access your sample ballot on the [Georgia My Voter Page](#) and research which candidates you want to vote for and any other issues on the ballot

Step 3: Cast your vote!

Step 4: Check to make sure your vote was counted by visiting the [Georgia My Voter Page](#)

Step 5: Call the NGP Election Protection at **1-888-910-1368** to report what you experienced if you run into any issues while voting

IN-PERSON VOTING

Early Voting

During the three weeks leading up to the election, most counties have designated voting precincts that allow anyone to vote at the location closest to them instead of their assigned precinct.

Before voting early, the first thing you must do is find out which locations are open for early voting by visiting your county board of elections website. Secondly, confirm the hours and days they are available. Hours vary by location, with some open on Saturdays and Sundays and others not.

Day-Of Voting

In Georgia, polls will be open the day of the election from 7:00am to 7:00pm.

In some cases, polls will stay open late to accommodate long lines, higher-than-expected turnout, or a late opening. Never assume a polling location will

be available later. In some cases, poll workers have attempted to turn people away that have been in line at 7:00pm, violating their rights—this is a form of voter suppression, and it is ILLEGAL. If you arrive close to or after 7:00pm at a polling location with extended hours, know that you are within your rights to stay and vote.



ABSENTEE VOTING

Voting by Mail

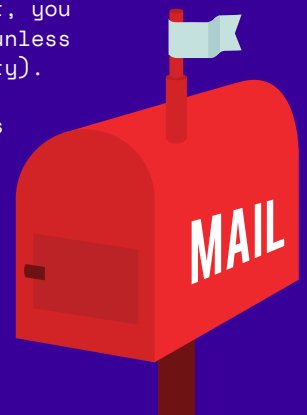
The most common form of absentee voting is to mail in your ballot. In this case, you need to factor in time to request your ballot via mail, receive your ballot in the mail, and mail your ballot back in—all before election day. You can request an absentee ballot as early as two months before the election; however, they will not begin to be mailed typically until one month before the election.

If you plan to vote by mail, please request your ballot as early as possible and mail it back as quickly as possible. You can check to see if your ballot has been received and counted at [Georgia My Voter Page](#).

Ballot Drop-Off

If you prefer to vote absentee but do not want to place the ballot back in the mail, you can drop it off at your local board of elections office. But, you must drop the ballot off yourself (unless you are an elder or have a disability).

Some counties may have ballot drop boxes to receive absentee ballots as an added convenience; you can find where they are located on your county board of election website.



Resources and Suggested Readings

- [Georgia My Voter Page—Check voter registration, voting precinct, absentee ballot status, and sample ballot](#)
- [National Partnership: Why the Right to Vote is a Reproductive Justice Issue](#)
- [Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity: 3 Reasons Why Voting Rights are a Reproductive Justice Issue](#)
- [National Women's Law Center: Why Voter Suppression Is a Problem for Reproductive Rights and Justice](#)