



Warnock outpaces Walker on campaign trail in final weekend of Senate runoff

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

POLITICS

By Tia Mitchell, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock kicked off a busy day of campaigning on Saturday in the final weekend ahead of the runoff election with a rally featuring some of the nation's largest labor unions.

Those representing Unite Here, a union for hospitality industry workers, wore red and black. The Service Employees International Union workers were clad in purple. And the Amalgamated Transit Union members wore blue shirts that said in yellow and white: "We're riding with Warnock."

While Warnock had three public events scheduled, his opponent, Republican Herschel Walker, announced none.

Walker did attend tailgating outside the SEC Championship football game in Atlanta, but he did not speak or take questions from the media who followed him there. Instead, the University of Georgia football icon mingled with fans clad in the school's signature red and black before the game against LSU at Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

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Some of the union members who came to the downtown rally for Warnock had traveled from out of state to knock on doors and make phone calls on his behalf ahead of election day. Liz Shuler, national president of the AFL-CIO, an umbrella organization for 58 unions comprised of 12.5 million members, said "they're fed up, they're fired up and they're ready to go."

Warnock, a Democrat, had proven himself as a friend of unions and deserved another term in Washington, Shuler said.

"His opponent would like to see us poor and divided, and we can't let that stand," she said. "We know Senator Warnock supports our freedoms; we know his opponent supports werewolves."

Douglasville resident James Riley brought his two young sons to the rally, attending with other members of the Black Male Initiative Fund. He said it was important that his sons see him involved in the political process.

"I just wanted my boys to be a part of this so they can be out here with Mr. Warnock and, when they get older, I can show them the pictures from today and let them know that this is part of your civic duty," he said. "Raise awareness, and when it's your turn, you gotta vote."

Riley said there are Black man who are discouraged after supporting Stacey Abrams in 2018 and 2022 in the governor's race only to see her lose both times to Brian Kemp, but he tells them every vote counts and not to give up.

"You have to play to win," he said. "You don't play; you can't win."

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Warnock's second Saturday event in the Augusta suburb Hephzibah will feature his U.S. Senate counterpart and fellow Democrat, Jon Ossoff.

Ossoff will also speak at an evening rally in Atlanta specifically targeting the Asian American-Pacific Islander community and young voters. Several members of the U.S. House Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus were also scheduled to attend.

But the event also features a list of celebrities that include K-pop star Eric Nam, actor and activist Daniel Dae Kim and talk show host Jeannie Mai Jenkins.

Walker has announced a rally on Sunday in Loganville.

Meanwhile, Warnock's schedule Sunday includes two events in Athens, a stop in Gainesville and a virtual fundraiser with Stevie Wonder, whose song "Higher Ground" has become Warnock's preferred walk-up music at rallies. Warnock is also expected to deliver the sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church, where he is the pastor, as he does most Sundays.

About the Author

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Tia Mitchell is the AJC's Washington correspondent. In this role, she writes about Georgia's congressional delegation, campaigns, elections and the impact that decisions made in D.C. have on residents of the Peach State.

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