

2020 GwinnettForum candidate questionnaire

NAME: Sally Harrell
PARTY: Democratic
SEEKING: Senate District 40

1. Why are you seeking your office?

More than ever, people are realizing that who they elect to office, at all levels of government, can have major impacts on their personal lives. I have always believed that good government can help individuals, families and communities meet their highest potential. All our citizens deserve affordable healthcare; universal, quality public education; efficient transportation options; and clean air and water. I have enjoyed listening to the people of Senate District 40, shaping an agenda that works to improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods and throughout Georgia.

2. What do you expect to accomplish if elected?

2021 will be a busy year for the Georgia legislature. We must closely monitor the state revenues and create a budget that stimulates an economy so families can thrive again. We must continue to work with the Georgia Dept. of Public Health to control the spread of the virus so schools, healthcare, and businesses can thrive. And finally, we will meet in a special session to utilize census numbers to rebalance and redraw political districts from school board to congress. How we approach this will determine the health of our state and democracy for decades to come.

3. What distinguishes your candidacy?

We are living during a time when leadership matters on a very personal level. I bring several years of experience to policy making at Georgia's Gold Dome, having served three terms in the Georgia House (1999 - 2005) and one term in the Georgia Senate (2018 - 2020). During these times, I have served under a Democratic majority and a Republican majority. Working in these diverse political settings requires flexibility and adaptability, and a vision that focuses on the people, rather than hard-line political party ideologies.

4. Pick any one issue. Expand on how you will address it.

Hundreds of thousands of Georgians have lost their jobs, and with it their health insurance. A COVID hospitalization can cost tens of thousands of dollars. Georgia was unprepared for the pandemic because we never expanded Medicaid. And now, all of us continue to pay federal taxes, but lose out on the economic returns because we are not taking advantage of the 90% federal match we would get if we expanded Medicaid. Our healthcare infrastructure suffers across the state. I will continue to be a loud voice for Medicaid expansion in Georgia.

5. Suggest ways to jump-start the economy after COVID-19.

Surprisingly, Georgia's revenue for the first two months of the current fiscal year was up by around 12%. But Georgia families are quietly suffering, especially in hard hit industries such as hospitality and

entertainment. We need to fix the administrative problems at the Department of Labor that are leaving hundreds of thousands of claims unpaid, and continue enhancing our unemployment system. If these families have some discretionary income, they will spend it and it will help small businesses. Medicaid expansion will stabilize our healthcare infrastructure and create needed jobs, especially in rural Georgia.

6. Please give a 100 word summary on your background

Indiana born and Georgia educated, I completed a Bachelor of Social Work at GSU and a Master of Social Work at the UGA. I have worked as a non-profit executive, specializing in child welfare. During my six years in the Georgia House and two years in the Georgia Senate, I have fought for quality public schools, maternal and child health, and quality care for our seniors and the disabled. My husband, Jay, and I have raised two children who are now attending Georgia universities. In my spare time, I climb 60-foot walls at our local rock climbing gym.