

NAME: Rebecca Mitchell
PARTY: Democratic
SEEKING: House District 106

1. Why are you seeking your office?

I was inspired to become a candidate this spring during the 6-week-abortion-bill debate. This seat was 56% Democratic voters in the last election. We do not have to stand outside the capitol asking for votes. We can be inside the Capitol casting them. I want to affect change I want to see healthcare affordable and accessible. I want reproductive rights and accompanying family support systems. I want sustainable transit and housing that our community can afford. I want to see us address systematic bias in healthcare and in criminal justice policy and fight to change it.

2. What do you expect to accomplish if elected?

What we accomplish during this next session is highly dependent on our path to economic recovery and on the balance of the statehouse. I expect to see us as a caucus striving for greater investment in the health and wellbeing of our community via Medicaid expansion. We need to prioritize jobs that provide wages that allow workers to thrive, healthcare that serves all Georgians, and progress on transit that gives us the ability to get to and from jobs where we live. I expect to focus on decreasing recidivism through education and housing support for those who were incarcerated.

3. What distinguishes your candidacy?

I bring an analytic skillset that will help build robust policy, particularly in the development of public health policies. We have a lack of sufficient healthcare coverage and lack of sufficient programs targeting maternal and child health. Our lack of investment in public mental health support structure leaves us with only 9.3 psychiatric beds per 100,000 Georgians. These are areas in which public health research experience gives me a unique ability to interpret the effectiveness of proposed solutions.

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

Supporting education in Georgia: In a survey in 2017, the majority of Georgia teachers (61%) had children coming to class hungry. I will aim to develop state policies on school lunch access and fund state assistance to school districts to assess whether they can qualify for federal funded free breakfast and lunch programs. I will strive for universal access to PreK. The impact of quality PreK programs is well proven, and through this we can decrease total costs to Georgia by decreasing later interventions needed to catch students up who currently cannot access these vital early education programs.

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

We have two objectives following the COVID-19 outbreak that work on differing timescales: immediate economic and structural support, and sustained systems for protecting housing, jobs, and security for Georgians. CAPS and expansion of PreK will help families continue to return to work. Small business grant or loan support will allow businesses reopening to survive the initial phase where there will be less non-essential spending. Revising our tax structure may prove integral to economic growth- we need novel solutions to this novel problem to ensure that the burden of taxes does not disproportionately affect those most impacted by the recession.

6. Please give a 100 word summary on your background.

I grew up on farm in very-upstate New York and moved to Georgia 6.5 years ago. My undergraduate degree is in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology from Harvard (magna cum laude). I have a veterinary degree from Cornell University (2010) and a PhD from Cornell as well (2011). My PhD research in Epidemiology was on transmission dynamics of infectious disease. I have worked on global health research problems including transmitted antiviral resistance in HIV, outbreak detection algorithms for large surveillance systems, and multi-strain infection with malaria.