

Stacey Abrams

Stacey Yvonne Abrams (born December 9, 1973) is an American politician, lawyer and author who served in the Georgia House of Representatives from 2007 to 2017, and served as minority leader from 2011 to 2017.^[1] A member of the Democratic Party, she was the party's nominee in the 2018 Georgia gubernatorial election, but lost to Brian Kemp without conceding the election. Abrams was the first black female major-party gubernatorial nominee in the history of the United States.^[2] In February 2019, she became the first African-American woman to deliver a response to the State of the Union address.

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Early life and education

Abrams, the second of six siblings, was born to Robert and Carolyn Abrams in Madison, Wisconsin, and raised in Gulfport, Mississippi.^{[3][4]} The family moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where her parents pursued graduate degrees and later became Methodist ministers.^{[5][6]} She attended Avondale High School, where she was selected for a Telluride Association Summer Program.^[7] While in high school, she was hired as a typist for a congressional campaign and at age 17 she was hired as a speechwriter based on the edits she made while typing.^[7]

In 1995 Abrams earned a Bachelor of Arts in interdisciplinary studies (political science, economics and sociology) from Spelman College, *magna cum laude*.^[1]

While in college she worked in the youth services department in the office of

Stacey Abrams



Minority Leader of the Georgia House of Representatives

In office

January 10, 2011 – July 1, 2017

Preceded by DuBose Porter

Succeeded by Bob Trammell

Member of the Georgia House of Representatives from the 89th district

In office

January 14, 2013 – August 25, 2017

Preceded by Earnest Williams

Succeeded by Bee Nguyen

Member of the Georgia House of Representatives from the 84th district

In office

January 8, 2007 – January 14, 2013

Preceded by JoAnn McClinton

Succeeded by Rahn Mayo

Personal details

Born Stacey Yvonne Abrams
December 9, 1973

Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson.^[7] She later interned at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.^[7] As a freshman in 1992, Abrams took part in a protest on the steps of the Georgia Capitol, in which she joined in burning the state flag. At the time Georgia's state flag incorporated the Confederate battle flag, which had been added to the state flag in 1956 as an anti-civil rights movement action. It was designed by Southern Democrat John Sammons Bell, a World War II veteran and attorney who was an outspoken supporter of segregation.^{[8][9]}

As a Harry S. Truman Scholar, Abrams studied public policy at the University of Texas at Austin's LBJ School of Public Affairs, where she earned a Master of Public Affairs degree in 1998. In 1999 she earned a J.D. degree from Yale Law School.^[1]

Legal and business career

After graduating from law school, Abrams worked as a tax attorney at the Sutherland Asbill & Brennan law firm in Atlanta, with a focus on tax-exempt organizations, health care, and public finance.^[1] In 2010, while a member of the Georgia General Assembly, Abrams co-founded and served as the Senior Vice President of NOW Corp. (formerly NOWaccount Network Corporation), a financial services firm.^{[10][11]}

Abrams also co-founded Nourish, Inc., a beverage company with a focus on infants and toddlers,^[12] and is CEO of Sage Works, a legal consulting firm that has represented clients including the Atlanta Dream of the WNBA.^[13]

Political career

In 2002, at age 29, Abrams was appointed the Deputy City Attorney for the City of Atlanta.^{[1][14]}

Georgia General Assembly, 2007–2017



Abrams with John Lewis in 2017

Abrams represented House District 89, which includes portions of the City of Atlanta and unincorporated DeKalb County,^[15] covering the communities of Candler Park, Cedar Grove, Columbia, Druid Hills, Edgewood, Highland Park, Kelley Lake, Kirkwood, Lake Claire, South DeKalb, Toney Valley, and Tilson.^[16] She served on the Appropriations, Ethics, Judiciary Non-Civil, Rules and Ways & Means committees.^[17]

Abrams's first major action as minority leader was to cooperate with Republican Governor Nathan Deal's administration to reform the HOPE Scholarship program. She co-sponsored the 2011 legislation that preserved the HOPE program by decreasing the scholarship amount paid to Georgia students and funded a 1% low-interest loan program for students.^[18]

According to Time magazine, Abrams "can credibly boast of having single-handedly stopped the largest tax increase in Georgia history."^[19] In 2011 Abrams argued that a Republican proposal to cut income taxes while increasing a tax on cable service would lead to a net increase in taxes paid by most people.^[19] She performed an analysis of the bill that showed that 82% of Georgians would see net tax increases, and left a copy of the analysis on the desk of every house legislator.^[19] The bill subsequently failed.^[19]

	Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.
Political party	Democratic
Relatives	Leslie Abrams (sister)
Education	Spelman College (BA) University of Texas at Austin (MPA) Yale University (JD)
Website	Official website (http://staceyabrams.com)

Abrams also worked with Deal on criminal-justice reforms that reduced prison costs without increasing crime,^[19] and with Republicans on the state's biggest-ever public transportation funding package.^[19]

On August 25, 2017, Abrams resigned from the General Assembly to focus on her gubernatorial campaign.^[20]

2018 gubernatorial campaign

Abrams ran for governor of Georgia in 2018.^[21] In the Democratic primary she ran against Stacey Evans, another member of the Georgia House of Representatives,^[21] in what some called "the battle of the Staceys". Abrams was endorsed by Bernie Sanders and Our Revolution.^{[22][23]} On May 22, she won the Democratic nomination, making her the first black woman in the U.S. to be a major party's nominee for governor.^[24]

After winning the primary, Abrams secured a number of high-profile endorsements, including one from former President Barack Obama.^{[25][26]}

Almost a week before election day, the Republican nominee, Brian Kemp, cancelled a debate scheduled seven weeks earlier in order to attend a Trump rally in Georgia. Kemp blamed Abrams for the cancellation, saying that she was unwilling to reschedule it. Abrams responded, "We refuse to callously take Georgians for granted and cancel on them. Just because Brian Kemp breaks his promises doesn't mean anyone else should."^[27]

As Georgia's Secretary of State, Kemp oversaw the very election he was competing in. Abrams lost the election by 50,000 votes and immediately sued the Georgia board of elections, citing widespread allegations of voter suppression.^[28]

Since losing the election, Abrams has repeatedly claimed that the election was not fairly conducted^[28] and that Kemp is not the legitimate governor of Georgia.^[29] Her position is that Kemp, who oversaw the election in his role as Secretary of State, had a conflict of interest and suppressed the election turnout by purging 670,000 voter registrations in 2017 and that about 53,000 voter registrations were pending a month before the election.^[28] She has said, "I have no empirical evidence that I would have achieved a higher number of votes. However, I have sufficient and I think legally sufficient doubt about the process to say that it was not a fair election."^[28]

Post-gubernatorial election

On January 29, 2019, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) announced that Abrams would deliver the response to the State of the Union address on February 5.^[30] She was the first African-American woman to give the rebuttal to the address, as well as the first and only non-office-holding person to do so since the SOTU responses began in 1966.^[31]

On April 30, 2019, Abrams announced that she would not run for the U.S. Senate in 2020.^[32]

On August 17, 2019, Abrams announced the founding of Fair Fight 2020^[33], an organization that will assist Democrats financially and technically to build voter protection teams in 20 states.^[34] Abrams is Fair Fight 2020's chair.^[35]

Political positions

Abrams is pro-choice, has called for expanded gun control, and opposes proposals for stricter voter ID laws, arguing that they disenfranchise minorities and the poor.^{[36][37]} Abrams pledged to oppose legislation similar to the religious liberty bill that Governor Deal vetoed in 2016.^{[38][39]}



Abrams campaigning in 2018.

Health care

In her campaign for governor, Abrams said her top priority was Medicaid expansion.^{[19][40]} She cited research showing that Medicaid expansion improved health care access for low-income residents and made hospitals in rural locations financially viable.^[40] She also created a plan to address Georgia's high maternal mortality rate.^[41]

Education

Abrams would like to increase spending on public education.^[19] She opposes private school vouchers, instead advocating improvements to the public education system. She supports smaller class sizes, more school counselors, protected pensions, better pay for teachers, and expanded early childhood education.^[42]

Criminal justice reform

Abrams supports criminal justice reform in the form of ending cash bail for poor defendants, ending the death penalty, and decriminalizing small amounts of marijuana possession.^{[43][36]}

Writing career

Abrams has published articles on public policy, taxation, and nonprofit organizations.^[44] Under the pen name Selena Montgomery, Abrams is the award-winning author of several romantic suspense novels. According to Abrams, she has sold more than 100,000 copies of her novels.^[17] Montgomery won both the Reviewer's Choice Award and the Reader's Favorite Award from Romance In Color for Best New Author, and was featured as a Rising Star.^[45] Abrams is also the author of *Minority Leader: How to Lead from the Outside and Make Real Change*, published by Henry Holt & Co. in April 2018.^[46]

Honors and awards

In 2012 Abrams received the John F. Kennedy New Frontier Award from the Kennedy Library and Harvard University's Institute of Politics, which honors an elected official under 40 whose work demonstrates the impact of elective public service as a way to address public challenges.^[47] In 2014 *Governing Magazine* named her a Public Official of the Year, an award that recognizes state and local official for outstanding accomplishments.^[48] Abrams was recognized as one of "12 Rising Legislators to Watch" by the same publication in 2012^[49] and one of the "100 Most Influential Georgians" by *Georgia Trend* for 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.^[50]

EMILY's List recognized Abrams as the inaugural recipient of the Gabrielle Giffords Rising Star Award in 2014.^[51] She was selected as an Aspen Rodel Fellow^[52] and a Hunt-Kean Fellow.^[53] She was also named as #11 on The Root 100 by The Root.^[54] Abrams was named Legislator of the Year by the Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals, Public Servant of the Year by the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Outstanding Public Service by the Latin American Association, Champion for Georgia Cities by the Georgia Municipal Association, and Legislator of the Year by the DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce.^[55]

Abrams received the Georgia Legislative Service Award from the Association County Commissioners Georgia, the Democratic Legislator of the Year from the Young Democrats of Georgia and Red Clay Democrats, and an Environmental Leader Award from the Georgia Conservation Voters.^[55] She is a lifetime member of the Council on Foreign Relations,^[56] a Next Generation Fellow of the American Assembly,^[57] an American Marshall Memorial Fellow,^[57] a Salzburg Seminar–Freeman Fellow on U.S.–East Asian Relations,^[58] and a Yukos Fellow for U.S.–Russian Relations.^[58]

Abrams received the Stevens Award for Outstanding Legal Contributions and the Elmer Staats Award for Public Service, both national honors presented by the Harry S. Truman Foundation.^{[59][60]} She was also a 1994 Harry S. Truman Scholar.^[61]

In 2001 Ebony Magazine named Abrams one of "30 Leaders of the Future".^[62] In 2004 she was named to Georgia Trend's "40 Under 40" list,^[63] and the Atlanta Business Chronicle named Abrams to its Top 50 Under 40 list. In 2006 she was named a Georgia Rising Star by Atlanta Magazine and Law & Politics Magazine.^[64]

Abrams received a single vote, from Rep. Kathleen Rice, in the 2019 election for Speaker of the U.S. House.^[65]

Other work

Abrams serves on the boards of directors for Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, Atlanta Metropolitan State College Foundation, Gateway Center for the Homeless, and the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education; and on the advisory boards for Literacy Action and Health Students Taking Action Together (HSTAT). She also serves on the Board of Visitors for Agnes Scott College and the University of Georgia,^[66] as well as on the Board of Advisors for Let America Vote (a voting rights organization founded by former Missouri Secretary of State Jason Kander).^[67]

Personal life

Abrams is the second of six children born to Reverend Carolyn and Reverend Robert Abrams, originally of Mississippi.^[5] Her siblings include Dr. Andrea Abrams, Judge Leslie Abrams Gardner, Richard Abrams, Walter Abrams and Dr. Jeanine Abrams McLean. Her sister, Leslie Abrams, is a federal judge in the Middle District of Georgia.^{[68][69]}

In April 2018 Abrams wrote an op-ed for Fortune revealing that she owed \$54,000 in federal back taxes and held \$174,000 in credit card and student loan debt.^[70] Abrams was repaying the IRS incrementally on a payment plan after deferring her 2015 and 2016 taxes, which she stated was necessary to help with her family's medical bills. During the 2018 Georgia gubernatorial election it emerged that she nonetheless donated \$50,000 to her own campaign.^{[71][72]} In 2019 she completed payment of her back taxes to the IRS in addition to other outstanding credit card and student loan debt reported during the gubernatorial campaign.^[73]

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External links

- Georgia House of Representatives bio (<http://www.house.ga.gov/representatives/en-US/Member.aspx?Member=58&Session=24>)
- Campaign website (<https://staceyabrams.com/>)
- Appearances (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?staceyabrams>) on C-SPAN
- Stacey Abrams (https://ballotpedia.org/Stacey_Abrams) at Ballotpedia

Georgia House of Representatives		
Preceded by JoAnn McClinton	Member of the Georgia House of Representatives from the 84th district 2007–2013	Succeeded by Rahn Mayo
Preceded by Earnest Williams	Member of the Georgia House of Representatives from the 89th district 2013–2017	Succeeded by Bee Nguyen
Preceded by DuBose Porter	Minority Leader of the Georgia House of Representatives 2011–2017	Succeeded by Bob Trammell
Party political offices		
Preceded by Jason Carter	Democratic nominee for Governor of Georgia 2018	Most recent
Preceded by Joe Kennedy III	Response to the State of the Union address 2019	

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