



# *Board of Elections & Registrations* *Irwin County Georgia*

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*Waymond Harris, Chairman*

*Ethan Compton, Election Supervisor*

*Patricia Thurman, Democratic Party Representative / Vice-Chair*

*Wyatt Thompson, Republican Party Representative*

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## **Board Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026 @ 4pm

Call to Order: *Invocation and Pledge led by Chairman Harris*

Approval of Agenda: *Vice-Chair Thurman motions to approve agenda, Chairman Harris seconds, agenda approved 2-0.*

Approval of Minutes: *Vice-Chair Thurman motions to approve minutes as presented, Chairman Harris seconds, agenda approved 2-0.*

Old Business: *A brief update was given regarding one of the sustained voter challenge cases for a voter residing in a business, where the voter's daughter contacted our office and informed us of the voter at that time being a recent widow and living in her business to avoid personal trauma, and that she has since relocated to a valid Irwin County residential address and will re-register to vote. We have relayed these facts to the relevant authorities to encourage no further action be taken on this case in regard to potential prosecution.*

*Representative Thompson joins the meeting at this time, at 4:05pm.*

### New Business:

#### 1. Qualified Candidates for 2026

- a. The following candidates, listed per office in the order of their qualifying, have qualified to run for office during the statewide qualifying period from March 2-6, 2026:
  - i. Clerk of Superior Court (Special Election- all candidates will appear on all ballots):
    1. Independents:
      - a. Triteasha Jones
      - b. Melissa Drawdy
      - c. Cindi Dunlap

- ii. County Commission District 2:
    - 1. Republicans:
      - a. Don Hickey
  - iii. County Commission District 4:
    - 1. Republicans:
      - a. Hal Roach
    - 2. Democrats:
      - a. Helen Rainey
  - iv. School Board District 1:
    - 1. Chase Phillips
    - 2. Tina Moody
  - v. School Board District 3:
    - 1. Scott Hudson
  - vi. School Board District 5:
    - 1. James Curtis
- b. Also on the ballot will be party primaries for Governor, Lt. Governor, State House District 169, State Senate District 13, US Congressional District 8, US Senate, Attorney General, Secretary of State, School Superintendent, Commissioner of Agriculture, Commissioner of Insurance, Commissioner of Labor, Public Service Commission District 3, Public Service Commission District 5, as well as the nonpartisan contests for 2 Tift Circuit Superior Court seats, State Appeals Court seats, State Supreme Court seats and a School Board SPLOST referendum.
- i. Without party straw poll questions, voters will have the following number of candidate options on their May ballots:
    - 1. Republican Voters:
      - a. 67 candidates/options across 30 contests
    - 2. Democrat Voters:
      - a. 64 candidates/options across 28 contests
    - 3. Nonpartisan Voters:
      - a. 23 candidates/options across 15 contests
  - ii. As a comparison, there were a maximum of 35 candidates/options across 27 contests on the 2024 primary ballot.
- c. There may also be approximately 8 non-binding state party questions on their respective party ballots, so expect a full ballot bordering on the potential need for multiple page ballots, as well as for voters to need multiple minutes in the voting booth to vote their ballots in this election.
- i. Wide distribution of sample ballots is recommended for voters for this upcoming election to lessen lines at the polls and ensure proper voter preparation.

- ii. To prevent lines, it may be wise to invest in additional paper advertisements recommending getting a sample ballot beforehand as a public service announcement.
  - 1. I ask that local shareholders such as the county parties please spread the message and, where possible, aid their party's voters in obtaining sample ballots and to communicate to them to expect to spend roughly twice as long as normal in the voting booth to complete their ballots.

- d. Collected qualifying fees:
  - i. \$4,739.10 for our office
  - ii. \$54 to Irwin County Democratic Party
  - iii. \$54 to Georgia Republican Party

## 2. May 19, 2026 Primary/General/Special Election Details

- a. Absentee by Mail ballots can be requested now through May 8<sup>th</sup> either using applications from our office or online at <https://securemyabsenteeballot.sos.ga.gov>
- b. Equipment testing is scheduled from April 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> from 9:30am until 4pm and any party or member of the public is invited to observe, although the ones who do frequently get bored and leave after a few minutes.
  - i. This is the process where, using a rubric made each election by Supervisor Compton to incorporate every selection option and every ballot style per precinct, loads the election firmware onto the elections equipment then opens the polls and votes using said rubric to make an unpredictable test deck of ballots unique to our county and this election in particular, then compares the votes to the expected results from said rubric to ensure proper logging of votes. Then the public facing counters are reset to zero and the test images, results and logs backed up then reset to ensure everything is at zero for when real voting begins. All seals are logged at testing and equipment is secured to ensure documented chain of custody is in place and that no use of the equipment can be made between testing and the start of voting on that equipment.
- c. Early voting for the whole county will be at our office from 8am until 5pm on the following days:
  - i. Monday – Saturday April 27<sup>th</sup> – May 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - ii. Monday – Saturday May 4<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>
  - iii. Monday – Friday May 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>
- d. Election Day will be 7am – 7pm on May 19<sup>th</sup> using assigned precincts for each voter as normal, with those precincts being our office and the Irwinville Community Center.
- e. We anticipate approximately 1,000 ballots cast during early voting, 750 ballots cast in Ocilla for Election Day and 500 ballots cast in Irwinville, as well as 50 Absentee by Mail ballots for just about 2,300 total ballots cast, with an expected total range between 1,800 and 3,000 for expected

possible variance for this primary.

- i. We'll staff and dispatch a full deployment of equipment to account not only for the high end of this expected turnout but also to accommodate for the additional expected time for voters to complete their ballots for this election given how many candidates and offices are being considered.
- f. We also heavily expect a runoff in at least one contest, which if one occurs, equipment testing will be from June 1<sup>st</sup> until 3<sup>rd</sup>, Early Voting from June 8<sup>th</sup> until 12<sup>th</sup>, and the runoff day would be June 16<sup>th</sup>.
    - i. It is Supervisor Compton's expectation that Governor for both parties, Lt. Governor for both parties, School Superintendent for both parties, Secretary of State for both parties, Democratic Insurance Commissioner, Public Service Commission District 5 for both parties, Democratic Labor Commissioner and Democratic Attorney General to go to runoffs.

*Questions were made by Vice-Chair Thurman and Representative Thompson asking about the splitting of qualifying fees to parties. Supervisor Compton explained that since the Irwin County Democratic Party sent qualifying officers during the qualifying period, their local party gets a 50% cut of any candidates who qualified through them as Democrats. Conversely, all Republicans who qualified through the county as no local Republican qualifying officers were sent have a 25% cut of their qualifying fees sent to the Georgia Republican Party, as mandated by code.*

### 3. GAVREO Training Conference Information

- a. The annual training conference for Georgia elections officials is held by the Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Elections Officials and is scheduled for March 22<sup>nd</sup> through 25<sup>th</sup> in Athens.
  - i. Supervisor Compton will be teaching a course on precinct equipment security and chain of custody documentation using new state-required forms jointly developed by Irwin, Gordon, Jackson, and Whitfield Counties, and Gwinnett County will be teaching a course on candidate challenge procedure, where our recent case will be highlighted as one instance of how to properly navigate a complex challenge.
  - ii. Supervisor Compton is also being considered for election for the position of Vice President of the association during the conference, having been nominated by multiple other counties to help lead GAVREO for the remainder of the decade and drive the conversation to ensure that the next elections system chosen for the state of Georgia is decided by experts who actually use them, and that it is safe, secure, accurate, transparent and with a responsible cost for the taxpayers of Georgia, on both the state and county level.
    1. The determination of the Nominating Committee should be made known soon, with other candidates potentially being nominated during the business meeting from the floor, which if there are any, will result in an election throughout the convention.

#### Public Comment:

N/A

Board Comment:

*Representative Thompson asked how, given it was a partisan position that would normally require a primary, the 2020 Senate Elections led to a runoff in January 2021.*

*Supervisor Compton explained that one contest was a special election with many candidates which led to no candidates receiving the legally required 50%+1 votes to prevent a runoff, and the other contest was at a time where the Green and Libertarian parties still had ballot access and their candidates were also able to, through the spoiler effect, trigger a runoff. SB202 of 2021 changed to require special primary elections for offices such as senate, which would prevent the large number of candidates from appearing for such special general elections moving forward.*

Executive Session: N/A

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Meeting Adjourned:

1. Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026 @ 4pm Vice-Chair Thurman motions to adjourn, Rep. Thompson seconds, meeting adjourned 3-0 at 4:35pm.