

# TERESA TOMLINSON *for* SENATE

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Interested Parties

**FROM:** Teresa Tomlinson for US Senate Campaign

**RE:** Cook GA Rating: Don't Squander the Perdue Opportunity

**DATE:** May 17, 2020

### Perdue Is Vulnerable

The Cook Political Report just upgraded the GA Perdue senate race to “lean Republican” from “likely Republican.” Governor Kemp’s anemic approval rating of 39% in the midst of his reckless reopening is a drag on Perdue and the combination of Perdue’s invisibility, an extremely unpopular Republican governor and an increasingly unpopular president present Democrats with the biggest opportunity to win this US Senate seat in nearly two decades. This rating makes the Perdue seat more competitive than other marquee senate races in South Carolina, Texas and Kentucky.

### Squandering the Opportunity

The Cook Political Report provides an incisive analysis of Jon Ossoff, who has \$30M in name recognition, yet cannot pull a majority in votes or polls. To quote their piece:

*“That [2017] special election, which received outsized attention as one of the first in the Trump era, elevated Ossoff’s name ID in the state, and especially in the Atlanta metro area due to the northern suburban district he ran in. But, it also drove up his negatives and gave Republicans what they believe is plenty of fodder to use against him. Ossoff amassed a grassroots following and subsequently large donor database and list, but it’s unclear how much that was behind him or as a vehicle to send a message to Trump only*

*a few months into his term. At times Ossoff also came off as robotic on the trail (as the [Washington Post's](#) Dave Weigel and Travis Highfield put it, he was "preternaturally on-message." **Many Republicans relish and are practically salivating, at the chance to take on, and hopefully take down, Ossoff again.**" (emphasis added)*

In other words, despite a \$30M war chest, Ossoff lost a seat that Lucy McBath won just two years later with a fraction of the funds. Furthermore, recent polls show that Perdue thumps Ossoff by 31% outside of metro Atlanta. Given that he can't carry his home district in Metro-Atlanta and that he trails Perdue terribly outside of Atlanta, he certainly can't carry the state.

## How Democrats Win

Democrats have to be very strategic about whom they nominate to send into the ring with David Perdue. While many national players have stayed on the sidelines, opting not to take sides in a primary, they are risking Ossoff winning simply because of his national fundraising edge and name ID. And while the Cook analysis repeatedly emphasizes "Ossoff has plenty of flaws for Republicans to exploit," it does not give Tomlinson her proper due as the more formidable candidate.

**Tomlinson has proven appeal in-state, has won elections and has governed as a two-term successful Mayor and Public Safety Director--an excellent profile for these times.** In this era of Trump-Kemp governmental incompetence and chaos, Tomlinson's record of leading Columbus from the depths of the Great Recession to be one of the "Top 25 Best Run Cities" in America provides a stark contrast. She is an enormously talented and dynamic candidate who has not only won elections decisively--winning both mayoral races with well over 60% in a majority African American city--she has also proven her leadership as mayor during times of crisis and economic hardship. With this record, Tomlinson can take the fight to Perdue in a way that a 33-year-old part owner of a documentary film company with a very thin resume could never do. In fact, those aspects of Ossoff's bio were already targets of negative ads in his 2017 special election run.

**The Cook piece fails to note that Tomlinson actually outraised Ossoff by nearly 50% in-state, raising \$1.3M to Ossoff's \$900K, showing her appeal as a statewide candidate.** According to the candidates' FEC filings, Tomlinson has garnered 2559 Georgia donors to Ossoff's 735 Georgia donors. We know from Stacey Abrams' close election in 2018 that winning Atlanta and its suburbs is not quite enough. Tomlinson--who was mayor of one of Georgia's largest cities outside the Metro region and has deep roots throughout the state--would help to expand the Abrams model and increase the likelihood of defeating Perdue. But Tomlinson also has deep ties to Atlanta, where she grew up, went to high school, law school and practiced law; she will leave no Atlanta votes on the table. In contrast, Ossoff has no real connection to the non-Atlanta areas of the state.

And while Ossoff has the backing of Congressman John Lewis--for whom Ossoff interned in high school--Tomlinson boasts the backing of Civil Rights icon, ambassador, congressman and Atlanta Mayor, Andrew Young. She follows that endorsement with an army of significant supporters across the state. To name but a few of the more than 65 endorsements she has amassed, she has civil rights icons from both the previous and current generations in addition to Ambassador Andrew Young: Hank Aaron, Martin Luther King III, former president of the GA NAACP and the youngest in its history Francys Johnson, and activist Gerald Griggs; she has a tremendous array of support from the African American faith community, including the personal support of A.M.E. Bishop Reginald Jackson, whose District represents 500 churches throughout Georgia, and the support of 21 Columbus clergy who have united behind her; she has the support of former Senator Max Cleland, former Governor Roy Barnes, former gubernatorial candidate Jason Carter, and former Congressman Buddy Darden; and a slew of elected officials ranging from Atlanta City Councilors to mayors across the state of Georgia, State Senators and Representatives. Her national and organizational endorsements include Obama Secretary of DHS Jeh Johnson, Congressman Eric Swalwell, the National Organization for Women PAC, Democracy for America, the Asian American Advocacy Fund and the recommendations of #VoteProChoice and Moms Demand Action.

If you would like any additional information or to set up an interview with Mayor Tomlinson, please contact Communications Director Nicole Henderson at [nicole@teresatomlinson.com](mailto:nicole@teresatomlinson.com).