

NORTH GEORGIA NEWS

Election Results

Dyer to be next Union County Sheriff

Collins wins GOP race for Sole Commissioner; Akins defeats BOE challenger

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Results are in for the May 21 General Primary and Non-partisan Elections, and it's official: Shawn Dyer will be the next Union County Sheriff.

With 70% of the vote, Dyer achieved a resounding victory in the Republican Primary race for sheriff, earning 5,017 votes. Doug Loyd came in second with 22%, garnering 1,580 votes, while Tom Jones finished third with 8% at 592 votes.

Given that this was a three-way competition, there was always a chance for a Run-off Election in June, as the only way for a candidate to earn his or her party nomination is to secure more than 50% of the vote. And Dyer has done just that, guaranteeing his succession to Top Cop of Union County in 2025, as no Democrats qualified to challenge the Republican nominee in the Nov. 5 General Election.

Harold Collins won the Republican Sole Commissioner contest and will serve as the GOP nominee to go head-to-head with Lamar Paris in November. Paris is the longtime Sole Commissioner incumbent and lone Democrat qualifier in any of the local elections, so he succeeded in his primary by default.

Collins handily won his election, earning 3,734 votes to Patrice Kilpatrick's 2,364

votes, giving Collins the primary victory having received 61% of ballots cast.

For the Office of School Board District 1, Incumbent Janna Akins defeated Paige Thornton in a blowout victory by earning 80% of the vote in her Republican Primary. And like the sheriff's race, with no other Democrats having qualified for any local office besides Paris, Akins will appear on the General Election ballot without opposition, meaning she is all set to win re-election in November and be sworn in to another term on the Union County Board of Education next year.

In the state-level race for District 8 State Representative, Incumbent Stan Gunter defeated challenger Dick Mills to earn the Republican nomination. Gunter scored a decisive victory against Mills with 74% of the vote districtwide. Gunter received 9,933 votes to Mills' 3,532.

Similarly, Gunter won Union County with support from 72% of the voting electorate.

Come November, Gunter will face Democrat challenger Charlotte Sleczkowski, who qualified unopposed for her primary.

All other local and primary races that appeared on ballots May 21 featured unopposed qualifiers.

Tax Commissioner Lee Knight, Coroner Jeff Fortenberry, District 3 School Board Member Julia Barnett, Superi-

or Court Clerk Judy Odom and County Surveyor Jason Henson – all Republican incumbents – qualified without opposition for their primaries, and with no competition from Democrats, all five are set to cruise to victory in the General Election.

Cary Cox, the incumbent Magistrate Judge, also qualified unopposed for his nonpartisan office, so he won re-election to a new four-year term on Tuesday.

Longtime Probate Judge Dwain Brackett decided not to seek re-election this year, clearing the way for Associate Probate Judge Kristin Stanley from his office to succeed him as the lone candidate to appear in – and thereby win – the Nonpartisan Election.

Also at the state level, District 51 State Sen. Steve Gooch, who serves as the Majority Leader in the Georgia Senate, qualified for re-election unopposed in the Republican Primary, and he will not have a Democrat challenger in the General Election.

Incumbent Enotah Judicial Circuit Superior Court Chief Judge Joy Parks was the sole qualifier for her judgeship in the Nonpartisan Election, so she is receiving a new term after Tuesday.

As for Georgia's 9th Congressional District, Republican Incumbent Rep. Andrew Clyde did not face competition in his primary, but to keep his federal seat next year, he will have to overcome sole Democrat quali-

fier Tambrei Cash in November.

Turnout was lower than many in the community had hoped, with just 37% of the active Union County electorate casting ballots in the May 21 elections. Still, Union turnout has been trending higher than most other counties in the state, and almost certainly, the county will improve upon that turnout figure in the November General Election given that this is a presidential election year.

Overall, the General Primary and Nonpartisan Elections ran very smoothly Tuesday night, with Elections Board Chair Libby Stevens crediting the hard work done by the board, poll managers and poll workers of Union County's 11 voting precincts.

Stevens is also grateful for the dedication of the Registrar's Office that successfully ran three weeks of early voting out of the new Voting Center, and she is thankful to the Commissioner's Office and everyone else who made the new Voting Center possible for the 2024 elections.

The above results are unofficial until certified with the Secretary of State's Office on Tuesday, May 28.

There will be a statewide risk-limiting audit May 29-31, with the races being audited to be announced next week. The local audit will be open to the public at the Voting Center, located at 33 Roscoe Collins Drive across from Union County High School in Blairsville.