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HAROLD COLLINS ELECTED NEXT SOLE COMMISSIONER

84% of local voters cast ballots in major turnout

UNION COUNTY UNOFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Editor

Nationally, votes were still being tallied at press time for the 2024 General Election, but local results are in following the close of polls on Tuesday, Nov. 5 – and Republican Harold Collins will be the next Sole Commissioner of Union County.

A political newcomer, Collins earned 54.7% of the vote with 9,604 ballots cast in his favor, defeating longtime Democratic incumbent Lamar Paris, who garnered 45.3% electoral support with 7,953 votes.

Surrounded by family and friends at the Union County Voting Center Tuesday night, Collins thanked God once his victory became clear; he led from the get-go with the reporting of early voting results just after 7 p.m., and his lead only grew throughout the night.

“My prayer has been from the start that His will be done, and I believe His will has been done,” Collins said. “I want to say to the citizens of Union County, thank you for having confidence in me to vote for me for this job. I’ll do my best to be honest with you and be accountable for my actions.”

The longest serving commissioner in county history, Paris will be wrapping up his sixth term this year, and with his defeat, voters have made clear that they are “ready for a change” after 24 years of his administration.

Commissioner-Elect Col-

lins commended Paris on the job he has done over the decades but said that he will certainly be running the Commissioner’s Office differently. Once sworn into his four-year term in 2025, Collins said he will be digging into the details of the office to start.

“I don’t have no plans to build nothing new or anything like that,” Collins said. “Just try to save the people some property taxes, try to reduce the spending in the county if we can. We’re not going to cut nobody short, the Fire Department or anything like that.

“But if we can find wasteful spending, we’re going to cut it out so we can save people on their property taxes.”

Sole commissioner was the only contested county seat up for grabs Nov. 5, as Paris was the lone Democrat to qualify for local election this year, meaning the remaining winners of the Union County Republican Primary in May appeared without challengers in the General Election.

Unchallenged Republicans to be sworn into local office in 2025 are: Shawn Dyer for Sheriff; Incumbent Judy Odom for Superior Court Clerk; Incumbent Lee Knight for Tax Commissioner; Incumbent Jeff Fortenberry for Coroner; Incumbent Janna Akins for School Board District 1; Incumbent Julia Barnett for School Board District 3; and Incumbent Jason Henson for Surveyor.

District 51 State Sen. Steve

Gooch, the Republican incumbent, also ran unopposed in the General Election to earn re-election to another two-year term in the Georgia General Assembly.

Once again, Union County voter turnout was incredibly strong. The 2024 General Election featured 84% of the local electorate casting ballots, greater than the 2020 turnout of 81.4%, putting Union County in the top of state rankings in voter turnout for another year running.

Here’s the total ballot breakdown from Union: 13,253 early in-person, 985 mail-in ballots and 3,767 on Election Day for a total of 18,005 votes.

As they have the past two presidential elections, Union County voters heavily favored Republican Donald Trump, handing him 80.97% of the vote compared with 18.51% for Democrat Kamala Harris.

Statewide votes for “battle-ground” Georgia were still being counted at press time to determine which presidential nominee would earn the Peach State’s 16 Electoral College votes, though Trump appeared to have the advantage.

In Union County, Republican nominees convincingly won each of the contested state and federal-level seats on the ballot this year, with each going on to win re-election in their wider contests.

Districtwide, in Georgia’s 9th Congressional District race

for U.S. House of Representatives, Incumbent Andrew Clyde defeated his Democratic opponent, Tambrei Cash. Clyde earned 77.09% of the vote compared with 22.91% for Cash.

For District 8 State Representative, Incumbent Stan Gunter was re-elected with 84.83% of the vote, defeating Democratic challenger Charlotte Sleczkowski.

Also appearing on the ballot were two proposed amendments to the Georgia Constitution and one statewide referendum question.

Constitutional Amendment 1 passed locally with 69.01% of Union Countians voting “YES” to establish a statewide floating homestead exemption to cap inflationary increases to annual property valuations at 3%. Statewide, the “YES” vote was leading at press time.

Constitutional Amendment 2 passed locally with 51.11% of Union Countians voting “YES” to create a statewide Georgia Tax Court. Statewide, the “YES” vote was leading at press time.

The referendum question to raise the amount of tangible personal property tax exemption from \$7,500 to \$20,000 passed locally with 74.44% of the Union County electorate voting “YES.” Statewide, the “YES” vote was leading at press time.

All results are unofficial until certified in the coming days.