

DIGESTING SOUTH CAROLINA'S 2026 MIDTERM PRIMARIES RESULTS

OVERVIEW

South Carolina voters finalized the major-party fields for the 2026 general election through the June 9 primaries and June 23 runoff elections. The results produced nominees for an open governor's office, the state's constitutional offices, the U.S. Senate, congressional seats, and several contested districts in the South Carolina House of Representatives.

The Republican primary attracted particular attention because of the open gubernatorial race and crowded contests for several statewide and congressional offices. No candidate secured a majority in the 7-candidate Republican gubernatorial primary, sending Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette and Attorney General Alan Wilson to a runoff. Wilson subsequently won the nomination with 68.6% of the runoff vote.

Runoffs were also required in the Republican contests for attorney general and commissioner of agriculture, both parties' primaries in the 1st Congressional District, the Democratic primary in the 2nd Congressional District, and 3 Republican state House contests. With approximately 99% of votes reported, all 9 runoff races produced clear winners.

THE PASSING OF SEN. LINDSEY GRAHAM

The tragic and sudden passing of Sen. Lindsey Graham on July 11, 2026, makes the discussion and analysis of this brief quite challenging. We will present the results and their implications, bearing the senator's passing in mind.

Sen. Darline Graham Nordone (Sen. Graham's sister) has been appointed to serve out the remainder of his term.

TURNOUT

A total of 856,005 ballots were reported in the June primary, representing approximately 25% of the state's 3.38 million registered voters. Republican participation exceeded Democratic participation in the statewide gubernatorial contests. Approximately 473,000 votes were cast in the Republican governor's primary, compared with approximately 372,000 in the Democratic contest.

South Carolina requires a candidate to receive more than 50% of the vote to win a party nomination. Where no candidate reaches that threshold, the top 2 candidates advance to a runoff. Nine contests in the primary required a second round of voting.

STATEWIDE RACES

Republican Gubernatorial Primary and Runoff

The Republican gubernatorial primary was the most consequential contest of the cycle. Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette led the initial vote with 28.9%, followed by Attorney General Alan Wilson with 26.1%. Former U.S. Rep. Ralph Norman finished third with 17.1%, while Rom Reddy received 14.2% and former U.S. Rep. Nancy Mace received 12.1%.

The runoff produced a substantial shift. Wilson received 218,506 votes, or 68.6%, while Evette received 100,208 votes, or 31.4%. Wilson's winning margin was 118,298 votes.

The result demonstrates the importance of coalition consolidation in runoff elections. Although Evette led the first round, Wilson gained enough support from voters who initially backed the other Republican candidates to win nearly 7 in 10 runoff votes.

Wilson will face Democratic nominee Jermaine Johnson in the November 3 general election. Johnson won the Democratic primary outright with 59.7%, avoiding a runoff against Billy Webster and Mullins McLeod.

Attorney General

The Republican primary for attorney general advanced to a runoff after Stephen Goldfinch received 40.0%, David Stumbo received 35.7%, and David Pascoe received 24.4%.

Stumbo overtook Goldfinch in the runoff, receiving 173,073 votes, or 55.7%. Goldfinch received 137,403 votes, or 44.3%.

The outcome marked another runoff in which the first-round leader did not secure the nomination.

Commissioner of Agriculture

Cody Simpson narrowly led the Republican primary with 38.1%, followed by Danny Ford with 37.3%. Simpson expanded that advantage in the runoff, receiving 192,994 votes, or 62.6%. Ford received 115,394 votes, or 37.4%.

Other constitutional Offices

Democratic voters also selected nominees for secretary of state, state treasurer, comptroller general, and superintendent of education. None of those contests required a runoff.

FEDERAL RACES

U.S. Senate

Both parties selected their nominees without runoffs.

Republican incumbent Lindsey Graham won renomination with 264,091 votes, or 56.8%. Mark Lynch finished second with 28.9%, while the remaining 4 candidates each received less than 6%.

Annie Andrews won the Democratic nomination with 226,075 votes, or 61.5%. Brandon Brown received 30.2%, and Kyle Freeman received 8.3%.

The November contest would therefore have featured Graham seeking a fifth term against Andrews. After his passing, a new candidate will be elected to face Andrews.

1st Congressional District

Both party primaries in the open 1st Congressional District advanced to runoffs.

Jenny Costa Honeycutt led the 11-candidate Republican primary with 22.1%, followed by Mark Smith with 18.0%. In the runoff, Honeycutt received 24,034 votes, or 53.7%, defeating Smith, who received 20,719 votes, or 46.3%.

Nancy Lacore led the 7-candidate Democratic primary with 36.5%, while Mac Deford received 28.9%. Lacore won the runoff with 12,821 votes, or 52.1%, compared with Deford's 11,772 votes, or 47.9%. The 1,049-vote margin made this the closest federal runoff.

Honeycutt and Lacore will meet in the general election for the seat previously held by Nancy Mace.

2nd Congressional District

Republican incumbent Joe Wilson won renomination with 74.2%, defeating Hamp Redmond and Sam Gibbons.

The Democratic primary required a runoff after David Robinson II received 41.0% and Zyon Khalifa received 34.1% in the first round. Khalifa reversed the initial order in the runoff, winning with 53.8%, while Robinson received 46.2%.

Other Congressional Results

Eunice Lehmacher won the Democratic nomination in the 3rd Congressional District with 53.4%. Mallory Dittmer won the Democratic nomination in the open 5th District with 55.8%.

Democratic incumbent James Clyburn won renomination in the 6th District with 90.3%.

John Peterson won the Republican nomination in that district with 74.0% of the vote.

FOCUSING ON THE U.S. HOUSE RACES

SOUTH CAROLINA 2026 GENERAL ELECTION MATCHUPS

Candidates Headed to the November 3, 2026 General Election



OFFICE / DISTRICT	REPUBLICAN NOMINEE	VS.	DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE
 U.S. HOUSE DISTRICT 1	Jenny Costa Honeycutt	vs.	Nancy Lacore
 U.S. HOUSE DISTRICT 2	Joe Wilson	vs.	Zyon Khalifa
 U.S. HOUSE DISTRICT 3	Sheri Biggs	vs.	Eunice Lehmacher
 U.S. HOUSE DISTRICT 4	William Timmons	vs.	Courtney McClain
 U.S. HOUSE DISTRICT 5	Wes Climer	vs.	Mallory Dittmer
 U.S. HOUSE DISTRICT 6	John Peterson	vs.	James Clyburn
 U.S. HOUSE DISTRICT 7	Russell Fry	vs.	John Vincent

Source: NPR (AP) – South Carolina Primary Election Results 2026

LOOKING AHEAD

The conclusion of the runoff elections shifts attention to the November 3 general election. The gubernatorial contest between Alan Wilson and Jermaine Johnson will lead the statewide ballot, while the open 1st and 5th congressional districts will receive additional attention because neither race includes an incumbent.

Candidate fundraising, party unity, voter mobilization, and regional turnout will shape the next phase of the campaign. Republican nominees enter the general election with the advantage of the party's recent statewide performance, while Democratic nominees will seek to increase participation in urban areas, the Interstate 95 corridor, and communities with lower primary turnout.

The primary and runoff results also provide an early indication of voter priorities within both parties. Republican voters generally favored established officeholders or candidates with statewide profiles, while Democratic voters selected nominees through a combination of decisive first-round victories and closely contested congressional runoffs.



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