Running for Office the First Time

Local Government

So where do you begin? The larger the city or town is that you live in; the more important it is to talk with people who have the knowledge you need. The first stop you should always make is at your local government clerk's office or Board of Elections. They are the ones who have all the information you need on available offices. You should also speak to the local League of Women Voters chapter, politicians, political parties and government officials to find out what they entry level offices are available. These are all good places to begin your search and some resources for these groups are listed below.

Finding the right race is important. There is nothing more frustrating than running in an election that you're not ready for and getting discouraged. It is important to do your research so you know what you're getting into. With the right preparation and planning, you can build a successful campaign even if you're running for the first time.

The good news is that there are plenty of offices in Chatham County and the City of Savannah that you can run for, which means there is an office out there for you. However, it's important to note that there is no single form of government for cities and towns and since we can't list each individual office we're going to give you an idea of the type of office you should be looking at for your first race.

Mayor

This position is the executive of the local form of government. In some cities, the Mayor serves in the full executive role, and has distinct powers separate from that of the city council. In other cities, a City Manager is hired by the Mayor and city council and performs most executive responsibilities under the direction of those officers. In this case the Mayor is more ceremonial, and basically shares the same powers of a city council member.

City Council

These officers are responsible for the hiring of executive staff positions, adopting policy, and approving and monitoring the municipal/ township budget as it relate to local government operations (e.g. trash pick-up, parks and recreation, economic development, public safety, etc). Other responsibilities may be prescribed by city/township charter, constitutional mandate, or other laws.

School Board Members

Members are the trustees of the school district and responsible for hiring a Superintendent, approving curriculum and general education policy, and adopting and overseeing overall budget for a school district's operations.

Townships

In some places, communities are organized into townships rather than by city. In these communities, the Township Supervisor is the executive function of township government. There are other officers usually with executive powers (e.g. clerk, treasurer) that have specific powers. Instead of a city council, these communities have Township Trustees.

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Candidate Resources

For more information on finding local offices to run for and becoming a candidate visit:
Chatham County Board of Elections – http://elections.chathamcounty.org/Home.aspx
Georgia Secretary of State Election Division – http://www.sos.ga.gov/elections/
Georgia Democratic Party – http://democraticpartyofgeorgia.ngphost.com/
Chatham County Republican Party – www.chathamgop.com/
Georgia Green Party – http://georgiagreenparty.org/
Georgia Libertarian Party – www.ga.lp.org/
Georgia League of Women Voters – http://lwvga.org/

Campaign and Leadership Training Organizations
Progressive Majority – www.progressivemajority.org
Wellstone Action – www.wellstone.org
Emily's List – www.emilyslist.org
Truman Project – www.trumanproject.org
Democracia USA – www.mydemocracia.org
Emerge America – www.emergeamerica.org
Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund – www.victoryfund.org
New Organizing Institute – www.neworganizing.com

For more organizations visit Progressive Majority at www.progressivemajority.org/partners-and-allies

Elected Positions in Savannah and Chatham County

Citywide Offices
Mayor – Up for election in 2011
Council At-Large Post 1 – Up for election in 2011
Council At-Large Post 2 – Up for election in 2011

City Council
District 1 – Up for election in 2011
District 2 – Up for election in 2011
District 3 – Up for election in 2011
District 4 – Up for election in 2011
District 5 – Up for election in 2011
District 6 – Up for election in 2011

Countywide Positions
District Attorney – Up for election in 2012
Sherriff – Up for election in 2012
Tax Commissioner – Up for election in 2012
Surveyor – Up for election in 2012
Coroner – Up for election in 2012

County Commission
Chair – Up for election in 2012
District 1 – Up for election in 2012
District 2 – Up for election in 2012
District 3 – Up for election in 2012
District 4 – Up for election in 2012
District 5 – Up for election in 2012
District 6 – Up for election in 2012
District 7 – Up for election in 2012
District 8 – Up for election in 2012

County Board of Education
President – Up for election in 2014
District 1 – Up for election in 2014
District 2 – Up for election in 2014
District 3 – Up for election in 2014
District 4 – Up for election in 2012
District 5 – Up for election in 2012
District 6 – Up for election in 2012
District 7 – Up for election in 2014
District 8 – Up for election in 2012