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McBath Leads Handel in Competitive Rematch

Key Findings from a Survey of Likely Voters in Georgia's 6th Congressional District

To: Interested Parties

From: GQR

Democratic incumbent Lucy McBath holds a 3-point edge over Republican Karen Handel, earning 50 percent of the vote to Handel's 47 percent.¹ Handel won the special election in 2017, but lost to McBath by 1 point the following year and is back for a rematch this November.

Prior to 2016, Georgia's 6th Congressional District was a Republican stronghold, but the environment has become more favorable toward Democrats in recent years—Donald Trump won the district by 1.5 points in 2016, while Stacy Abrams bested Brian Kemp by 3.5 points two years later. The survey finds Trump now trailing Biden by 7 points, capturing just 45 percent to Biden's 52 percent.

The former congresswoman's poor record on money in politics is broad and deep, and voters react strongly to information. Once voters hear more about Handel's transgressions, they are more likely to describe her as "corrupt" and "too close to corporate special interests."

Key Findings

Voters know Handel... and dislike her. More than eight in ten voters (84 percent) recall Handel and a large bloc offer negative ratings overall. Her negatives outweigh her positives by 8 points among self-identified independents. Meanwhile, 80 percent of voters know McBath and they are more likely to view her positively, particularly independent voters who approve of the job she is doing by a 17-point margin.

Handel's record on corporate special interests drives voters further away from her. At the outset, voters say "too close to corporate special interests" describes Handel better than McBath by an 18-point margin. After voters hear about Handel's record and close connections to special interest money, this difference grows to 40 points, with 54 percent of voters saying that phrase describes Handel better.

Conclusion

The corrupting influence of big money can play a central role in this swing district. Handel has a long history of being on the wrong side of this issue and it does not take much to remind voters of why they gave her the boot after just 16 months in office.

¹ On behalf of End Citizens United, GQR conducted a live telephone survey of 401 likely general election voters in GA CD-06 from August 11-16, 2020. Fifty-three percent of the interviews were conducted on cell phones. The margin of error is +/- 4.9% at a 95 percent confidence interval.