

ZUCKERBERG WENT
DOWN TO GEORGIA:

How Zuckerbucks Influenced the Georgia Elections



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Hayden Dublois
Senior Research Analyst

Tyler Lamensky
Research Fellow



KEY FINDINGS

1

MARK ZUCKERBERG FUNNELED MORE THAN \$400 MILLION TO ELECTION OFFICES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

2

GEORGIA RECEIVED MORE THAN \$45 MILLION IN ZUCKERBUCKS, AMONG THE MOST IN THE NATION.

3

MORE THAN \$31 MILLION WENT TO THE GENERAL ELECTION AND \$14.5 MILLION TO SPECIAL SENATE ELECTIONS.

4

GRANTS WERE SIPHONED TO DEMOCRAT-LEANING COUNTIES AND BOOSTED DEMOCRAT TURNOUT.

5

BIDEN COUNTIES RECEIVED FOUR TIMES AS MANY ZUCKERBUCKS PER REGISTERED VOTER THAN TRUMP COUNTIES

6

DEMOCRAT COUNTIES WERE NEARLY TWICE AS LIKELY TO RECEIVE ZUCKERBUCKS.

7

MILLIONS OF ZUCKERBUCKS WERE SPENT ON NON-COVID ACTIVITIES.

**THE BOTTOM LINE:
STATES SHOULD PROHIBIT PRIVATE ENTITIES
FROM FINANCING PUBLIC ELECTIONS.**

Overview

The 2020 presidential election was marked by sparks flying on the debate stage. But there was much, much more happening behind the scenes, far from the public eye: While Donald Trump and Joe Biden sparred in the media spotlight, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative—an organization spearheaded by the wife of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg—was channeling millions of dollars into election offices all around the country.¹⁻²

In total, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative funneled more than \$400 million to election efforts, most of which was siphoned through the Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL), a non-profit run by a former Obama fellow.³⁻⁴

CTCL distributed hundreds of millions in “Zuckerbucks” to thousands of election jurisdictions in 48 states and Washington, D.C.⁵ These funds were pitched as “COVID-19 response grants” intended to simply assist election officials in the safe conduct of elections.⁶ However, the reality is much different. From Iowa to Florida, the infusion of Zuckerbergbucks into Democrat-leaning jurisdictions influenced the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.⁷⁻⁸ Indeed, much of the Zuckerbergbucks were not even spent on COVID-19 related expenses—with states reporting expenditures on advertising, vehicle purchases, registering teenagers to vote, and other non-COVID-related items.⁹

The pivotal state of Georgia was one of the biggest targets of these funds, ultimately receiving one of the largest allocations of Zuckerbergbucks in the nation. Unfortunately, these grants had an impact on not only the way the election was conducted, but also on how it turned out.

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Georgia Received More Than \$31 Million in Zuckerbucks, Among the Most in the Nation

According to data and responses to public records requests, Georgia received more than \$31 million in Zuckerbucks for the 2020 general election, one of the highest amounts in the nation.¹⁰

This represents nearly nine percent of all Zuckerbucks, despite Georgia accounting for just 3.2 percent of the nation’s population and three percent of the nation’s electoral votes.¹¹



GEORGIA RECEIVED MORE THAN \$31 MILLION IN ZUCKERBUCKS FOR THE 2020 GENERAL ELECTION, ONE OF THE HIGHEST AMOUNTS IN THE NATION.

ZUCKERBUCKS INFLUENCED GEORGIA’S GENERAL ELECTION

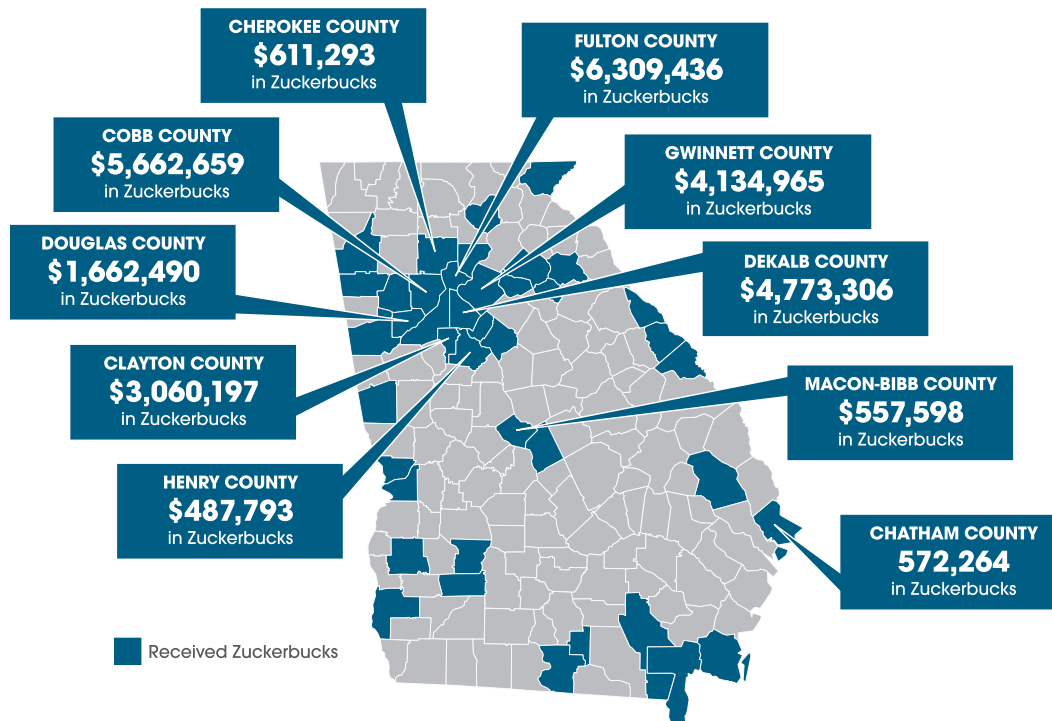
COUNTY	ZUCKERBUCKS	REGISTERED VOTERS	ZUCKERBUCKS PER REGISTERED VOTER	OUTCOME
Fulton	\$6,309,436.00	848,258	\$7.44	Biden
Cobb	\$5,662,659.00	561,913	\$10.08	Biden
Dekalb	\$4,773,306.00	573,492	\$8.32	Biden
Gwinnett	\$4,134,965.00	622,424	\$6.64	Biden
Clayton	\$3,060,197.00	204,530	\$14.96	Biden
Douglas	\$1,662,490.00	107,236	\$15.50	Biden
Cherokee	\$611,293.00	198,015	\$3.09	Trump
Chatham	\$572,264.06	224,669	\$2.55	Biden
Macon-Bibb	\$557,598.00	115,880	\$4.81	Biden
Henry	\$487,793.75	181,639	\$2.69	Biden
Muscogee	\$412,245.00	138,476	\$2.98	Biden
Richmond	\$386,279.00	150,452	\$2.57	Biden
Lowndes	\$346,457.75	82,113	\$4.22	Trump
Forsyth	\$340,461.00	171,003	\$1.99	Trump
Columbia	\$329,764.00	117,256	\$2.81	Trump
Dougherty	\$295,235.00	67,140	\$4.40	Biden
Rockdale	\$276,681.25	68,694	\$4.03	Biden

COUNTY	ZUCKERBUCKS	REGISTERED VOTERS	ZUCKERBUCKS PER REGISTERED VOTER	OUTCOME
Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County	\$115,875.00	82,255	\$1.41	Biden
Carroll	\$66,776.00	86,074	\$0.78	Trump
Newton	\$65,408.00	83,605	\$0.78	Biden
Bulloch	\$60,081.00	48,121	\$1.25	Trump
Troup	\$57,482.75	46,669	\$1.23	Trump
Floyd	\$54,924.00	62,273	\$0.88	Trump
Spalding	\$54,343.25	49,110	\$1.11	Trump
Ware	\$52,840.75	21,993	\$2.40	Trump
Barrow	\$40,632.00	58,503	\$0.69	Trump
Lee	\$40,252.00	24,401	\$1.65	Trump
Camden	\$34,195.50	40,292	\$0.85	Trump
Jackson	\$31,185.00	54,280	\$0.57	Trump
Early	\$26,864.00	7,752	\$3.47	Trump
Polk	\$22,788.00	25,483	\$0.89	Trump
Lanier	\$17,995.75	6,291	\$2.86	Trump
Madison	\$14,826.00	21,492	\$0.69	Trump
Lumpkin	\$14,604.00	23,157	\$0.63	Trump
Charlton	\$9,864.75	7,224	\$1.37	Trump
Rabun	\$8,956.50	13,430	\$0.67	Trump
Chattahoochee	\$8,765.00	4,355	\$2.01	Trump
Randolph	\$8,145.00	4,483	\$1.82	Biden
Twiggs	\$7,682.00	6,494	\$1.18	Trump
Lincoln	\$5,562.00	6,397	\$0.87	Trump
TOTAL/AVERAGE	\$31,039,173.06	5,217,324	\$5.95	

Source: Authors' Calculations, Georgia Secretary of State's Office

While Zuckerbucks-receiving counties won by Donald Trump were granted nearly \$2.3 million—at a rate of \$1.91 per registered voter—Joe Biden counties that received Zuckerbucks were given nearly \$29 million, at a far higher rate of \$7.13 per registered voter. **Put simply, Zuckerbucks counties in the Biden column were granted nearly four times as many Zuckerbucks per registered voter than were Zuckerbucks counties won by Trump.**

Unsurprisingly, the six counties receiving grant amounts above \$1 million were all won by Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Joe Biden in 2020. Additionally, nine out of the 10 highest recipient counties were also won by both Clinton and Biden.¹²



Source: Foundation for Government Accountability

Grants Were Siphoned to Democrat-Leaning Counties and Boosted Democrat Turnout

Not only did Biden counties rake in the big bucks, but they were generally more likely to receive any Zuckerbucks at all.

In fact, **nearly 50 percent of counties that voted for Biden received Zuckerbucks, compared to approximately 20 percent of counties that voted for Trump.**¹³ As noted above, Biden counties received far higher levels of Zuckerbucks per registered voter than did Trump counties.

As in other states, Georgia’s election results were not unrelated to the allocation of Zuckerbucks. In fact, there appears to be a direct relationship between the distribution of Zuckerbucks and the election outcome in Georgia.

On average, as a share of the two-party vote, most Georgia counties moved to the left by less than one percentage point between 2016 and 2020.¹⁴ But counties that did not receive any Zuckerbucks barely budged at all—while **Zuckerbucks counties swung by, on average, 2.3 percentage points towards Biden**, suggesting these counties carried the state’s leftward shift.¹⁵



ZUCKERBUCKS COUNTIES SWUNG BY, ON AVERAGE, 2.3 PERCENTAGE POINTS TOWARDS BIDEN.

The 2020 presidential election marked record turnout, and Georgia was not immune to this trend. However, Zuckerbucks affected the distribution of turnout differently depending on where they were distributed. In Georgia counties that did not receive Zuckerbucks, roughly half saw an increase in Democrat votes that offset the increase in Republican votes, while roughly half saw the opposite trend.¹⁶ Shockingly, **75 percent of Zuckerbucks-receiving counties saw a significant uptick in Democrat votes that offset any upward change in Republican votes.**¹⁷ This trend is true for highly populated counties such as Fulton, Gwinnett, Cobb, and Dekalb.¹⁸

In other words, Zuckerbucks appear to have had a great deal of influence on changes in partisan voter turnout and results in Georgia.

Millions of Zuckerbucks Were Spent on Non-COVID Activities

While data on how these grants were spent is opaque and incomplete, public records requests have shed some light on Zuckerbucks expenditures. Despite being messaged as “COVID-19 response grants,” the funds were largely spent on items not directly related to COVID-19.

Many counties reported spending virtually nothing on personal protective equipment (PPE).¹⁹ For example, among the three counties which received the most Zuckerbucks—Fulton, Cobb, and Dekalb—**PPE expenses made up only 1.3 percent of total Zuckerbucks spending** in these jurisdictions.²⁰ Based on available data, Nearly 10 times as much was spent on mail-in voting as was spent on PPE.²¹ Counties reported spending Zuckerbucks grants—which were allegedly intended to respond to COVID-19 and shore-up safety efforts—on items such as salaries, laptops, vehicle rentals, and even attorneys’ fees for public records requests.²²



**NEARLY 10 TIMES AS MUCH
WAS SPENT ON MAIL-IN VOTING
AS WAS SPENT ON PPE.**

The true use of Zuckerbucks was quite often not related to COVID-19. In many cases, expenditures were entirely unrelated to the pandemic.

Another \$14.5 Million Was Allocated for the Special Senate Elections

In addition to the more than \$31 million in Zuckerbucks funneled into Georgia for the 2020 general election, at least \$14.5 million also infiltrated the Georgia Senate Runoff Elections in January 2021.²³ Of these funds, **more than 60 percent were allocated to the Democrat strongholds of Fulton and Dekalb counties alone.**²⁴ Yet again, Democrat districts were targeted, and Democrat votes were boosted.²⁵

Much like in the 2020 general election, funding was appropriated towards vote-by-mail efforts, election education, and poll worker pay.²⁶

ZUCKERBUCKS FLOWED INTO GEORGIA FOR THE SPECIAL SENATE ELECTIONS

COUNTY	ZUCKERBUCKS (RUNOFF ELECTION)
Dekalb	\$4,851,735.44
Fulton	\$4,389,395.00
Gwinnett	\$2,263,560.00
Clayton	\$772,105.00
Douglas	\$656,407.00
Forsyth	\$542,000.00
Chatham	\$458,522.00
Macon-Bibb	\$241,848.11
Cherokee	\$154,000.00
Carroll	\$103,956.96
Spalding	\$42,450.00
Lee	\$21,700.00
Wilkinson	\$17,350.00
Chattahoochee	\$8,502.00
Ware	\$5,500.00
Total	\$14,529,031.51

Source: Foundation for Government Accountability

Bottom Line: States Should Prohibit Private Entities from Financing the Conduct of Elections

Private and other third-party resources should have no role in financing the conduct of elections. Unfortunately, in the 2020 general election cycle, they did. Much like other states, Georgia was not immune to the influence of Zuckerbucks. In fact, the influence was even more obvious.

Georgia counties received more than \$45 million in total to finance their elections—supposedly for expenses related to COVID-19. Yet the record shows that these counties were pushed leftward disproportionately compared to their non-Zuckerbucks receiving counterparts, while grant expenditures found their way towards items unrelated to the pandemic.

During the 2021 legislative session, Georgia lawmakers wisely restricted the ability of private funding, such as Zuckerbucks, to influence future elections and was soon followed by other states like Arizona.²⁷⁻²⁸ Officials in other states seeking to protect the integrity of their elections should learn from this experience and prohibit private entities from funding the conduct of elections.

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15275 Collier Boulevard | Suite 201-279

Naples, Florida 34119

(239) 244-8808

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