

## JUDGE TRENT BROWN - GEORGIA COURT OF APPEALS (R)

Key findings include:

- **Longtime Republican-Appointed Judge With Deep Local Roots:** Judge E. Trenton “Trent” Brown III is a lifelong Middle Georgian with deep ties to Putnam County. He has been appointed to each of his judicial elevations by Republican governors (Perdue and Deal) and has never faced a competitive statewide race. His professional trajectory reflects strong establishment ties within Georgia’s Republican legal and civic networks.
- **High-Profile Author of Opinion Disqualifying Fani Willis in Trump Election Case:** In December 2024, Brown authored the 2–1 Georgia Court of Appeals majority opinion disqualifying Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis from prosecuting Donald Trump’s 2020 election interference case, citing a “significant appearance of impropriety.” The ruling received national attention and elevated Brown’s profile in a politically charged election-related matter. The opinion did not dismiss the underlying case but removed the prosecuting office, raising questions about case viability and drawing scrutiny from democracy-focused advocates.
- **Prior Role in Nuwaubian Voter Roll Purge Hearing:** As acting chairman of the Putnam County Board of Registrars in 2000, Brown presided over a hearing that resulted in 23 voters (primarily members of the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors) being removed from voter rolls ahead of a primary election. Participants alleged discriminatory targeting; county officials framed the removals as residency enforcement. Brown’s role was procedural, but the episode involved allegations of profiling and voter suppression.
- **Strong Financial Support From Georgia Plaintiff-Bar Networks:** Brown’s 2020 re-election campaign raised approximately \$118,000, much of it from Georgia law firms and attorneys, including members of the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association network. Some donors have litigated in the Georgia Court of Appeals. Brown has recused in at least one case involving a donor firm. While no direct impropriety is evident, the concentration of contributions from active appellate practitioners presents potential optics issues.
- **Family Political Giving Pattern Aligns With Republican Officeholders Who Elevated Him:** Brown’s wife and parents have made repeated contributions to Republican candidates over the years, including to Governors Perdue and Deal prior to or around the time of Brown’s judicial appointments. Brown himself, through his committee, contributed to Republican candidates in 2006. There is no evidence of quid pro quo, but the timeline may present optics considerations.
- **Wife Donated to Election Denier:** Brown’s wife, Jill Brown, made a contribution in 2023 to a Georgia State Lawmaker who shared posts in 2021 doubting the results of the 2020 election.
- **Well-Embedded in Georgia Civic and Institutional Leadership Circles:** Brown has served on multiple governor-appointed boards (Judicial Retirement System, Consumer Protection Advisory Board, Court Reform Council) and is active in local civic organizations and church leadership. These affiliations reinforce establishment credibility but also situate him within traditional power structures.

The Georgia Court of Appeals is the intermediate appellate court for Georgia and hears most appeals that are not reserved to the Supreme Court of Georgia. The court has 15 judges who sit in five divisions of three judges each (with assignments made/changed pursuant to internal rules and statute) [[Georgia AOC](#), accessed, 2/18/2026].

Georgia’s intermediate appellate judges are chosen through statewide, nonpartisan elections at the general primary in even-numbered years, with terms structured on a six-year cycle under state law [[Justia](#), accessed, 2/18/2026]. For the 2026 cycle, the Georgia Secretary of State has published a list of

“Judges – Court of Appeals” offices appearing on the ballot in 2026 that includes “David Markle,” with a term end date shown as 12/31/2026 [[Georgia Secretary of State](#), accessed, 2/19/2026].

Demographically and politically, Georgia is a large and fast-growing state whose population is estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau at ~11.3M (July 1, 2025) and ~11.18M (July 1, 2024), with substantial metropolitan concentration and continued growth that has reshaped electoral and civic institutions [[United States Census](#), accessed, 2/19/2026]. The court’s statewide jurisdiction means judges campaign (and are evaluated by voters) in a context that includes: (a) a competitive statewide political environment; (b) intense scrutiny around election rules and election litigation; and (c) high salience of criminal justice, protest-related prosecutions, and separation-of-powers disputes [[Georgia Court of Appeals](#), 12/19/2024].

## **BACKGROUND**

### **PERSONAL BACKGROUND**

Trent (Enis Trenton) Brown III (b. ca. 1974) is a life-long middle Georgian. He grew up in Tifton and Eatonton.

Judge Brown lives in Eatonton (Putnam County) with his wife, Jill Brown (a public school teacher) and their two children. Brown’s wife Jill is the Director at [Prek 4](#), a program within the Lake Oconee Academy in Eatonton. At the time of his appointment to the Court of Appeals, Brown attended the First Baptist Church of Eatonton where Brown is a Deacon. The family is active locally – for example Brown served on the Putnam County Board of Registrars and as an Eagle Scout and Rotary Club member [[GA Appeals](#), [Middle GA CEO](#)].

Parents: Brown’s father is Enis Trenton (“Trenton”) Brown, Jr. (born 1946), a longtime real-estate and development entrepreneur in Eatonton. Trenton Brown, Jr. and his wife Brenda own a Lake Oconee-area real estate/construction firm. Trenton Brown Sr. runs the business and Brenda Brown is its Secretary/CFO [[Loop](#), [GA SOS](#)]. There is no indication that his father’s real estate work overlaps with cases Judge Brown handles.

Brown was appointed to the Judicial Retirement System Board and to the Governor’s Court Reform Council (both by Gov. Deal), and to the Governor’s Consumer Protection Advisory Board (appointed by Govs. Perdue and Deal). He is also a member of the Lawyers Club of Atlanta (a bar association historically focused on women lawyers, now co-ed) and served on the local Chamber of Commerce executive board. He and his wife are Leadership Georgia 2014 alumni [[GA Appeals](#)].

### **PROFESSIONAL & LEGAL BACKGROUND**

Brown earned a B.A. in economics from the University of Georgia in 1995 and his J.D. from Mercer University (1999) [[Middle GA CEO](#)]. After law school he practiced as a sole attorney in Eatonton (at Trenton Brown III, P.C.) for about a decade. Brown was acting Chairman of the Putnam County Board of Registrars in at least 2000 [The Augusta Chronicle, 6/24/2000]. In 2008 Governor Sonny Perdue (R) appointed Brown as judge of the Putnam County State Court; Brown then won the 2008 election for that seat against an opponent [[Mercer](#)].

In 2012 Governor Nathan Deal (R) appointed him to the Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Superior Court (serving Baldwin, Greene, Putnam, Jasper, Morgan, Jones, Hancock, and Wilkinson counties). He was re-elected unopposed as Superior Court judge in 2014 and again in 2018 [[GA Appeals](#), [Mercer](#)].

In May 2018 Gov. Deal appointed Judge Brown to the Georgia Court of Appeals. Brown succeeded Judge W. Tripp Self III (who became a federal judge) and was sworn in mid-2018. He then ran as the incumbent for a full term in 2020, winning 100% of the vote (he was effectively unopposed statewide) [[Eighth District](#), [Ballotpedia](#)]. His current term runs through 2026. In June 2023 he was sworn in as the Court's Vice Chief Judge (a rotating leadership post).

### CAMPAIGN & POLITICAL BACKGROUND

**2020 campaign finances:** Brown raised about \$118,000 in his 2020 re-election bid, largely from law firms and local businesses (e.g. Barnes Law Group, Cook Law Group, etc.). [[Transparency USA](#)]. He spent roughly \$30,000 [[GA.gov](#)].

**2026 campaign finances:** As of the latest campaign filing statement, Brown has \$60,524.32 cash on hand, the vast majority of it carried over from his previous campaign [[Ethics GA](#)].

2025 contributions:

Contributor	State	Transaction Date	Amount	Election	Contributor Type	Contribution Type	Report
Adam D Land LLC	GA	06/30/2025	\$250.00	Primary - 2026	Other	Monetary Itemized	<a href="#">Campaign Contribution Disclosure Report - Non-Election Year - June 30 / June December</a>
Fulcher Hagler LLP	GA	06/30/2025	\$250.00	Primary - 2026	Other	Monetary Itemized	<a href="#">Campaign Contribution Disclosure Report - Non-Election Year - June 30 / June December</a>
Law Office Of J. Pete Theodocion	GA	06/30/2025	\$250.00	Primary - 2026	Other	Monetary Itemized	<a href="#">Campaign Contribution Disclosure Report - Non-Election Year - June 30 / June December</a>
Overstreet, J. Carlisle	GA	06/30/2025	\$500.00	Primary - 2026	Individual	Monetary Itemized	<a href="#">Campaign Contribution Disclosure Report - Non-Election Year - June 30 / June December</a>
People For Barry Fleming	GA	06/30/2025	\$250.00	Primary - 2026	Committee	Monetary Itemized	<a href="#">Campaign Contribution Disclosure Report - Non-Election Year - June 30 / June December</a>
Trotter Jones, LLP	GA	06/30/2025	\$250.00	Primary - 2026	Other	Monetary Itemized	<a href="#">Campaign Contribution Disclosure Report - Non-Election Year - June 30 / June December</a>
Troy A. Lanier, P.C.	GA	06/30/2025	\$250.00	Primary - 2026	Other	Monetary Itemized	<a href="#">Campaign Contribution Disclosure Report - Non-Election Year - June 30 / June December</a>
Wills Law Firm LLC	GA	06/30/2025	\$250.00	Primary - 2026	Other	Monetary Itemized	<a href="#">Campaign Contribution Disclosure Report - Non-Election Year - June 30 / June December</a>
Jolly, Sheryl	GA	06/18/2025	\$200.00	Primary - 2026	Individual	Monetary Itemized	<a href="#">Campaign Contribution Disclosure Report - Non-Election Year - June 30 / June December</a>

Personal financial reports were currently unavailable on the [Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission](#) due to the implementation of HB 199.

Brown's wife, Jill Brown, is a teacher. She is a Republican and has made contributions to Georgia politicians through the years, including to the figures who appointed Brown to his judicial appointments (see vulnerabilities section).

Brown's father, Enis Brown, ran for congress in 2004 and lost in the general election [[GA SOS](#)].

### VULNERABILITIES & ADVERSE FINDINGS OF NOTE CONNECTIONS TO CAMPAIGN FROM GEORGIA LAWYERS

Of the \$118,000 Judge Brown has raised since 2019, the two most significant flags came from one State Supreme Court Justice who has ties to the Federalist Society and another Georgia judge who has ties to anti-democratic voter initiatives:

- **[People For Barry Fleming](#)**: Campaign committee tied to Barry Fleming (Republican GA lawmaker; later appointed to a judgeship). Fleming was a leading figure behind controversial Georgia voting legislation in the 2021 era (and related election-policy initiatives), drawing protests and pushback [[GPB](#)].
- **Christopher J. McFadden**: A State Bar of Georgia CLE/program page identifies Justice Christopher J. McFadden (Georgia Supreme Court) and notes memberships including the Federalist Society and American Constitution Society [[State Bar of Georgia](#)].

There are a number of donors with ties to Georgia law firms, some who have litigated in Georgia Court of Appeals and are in the Georgia lawyer community. It was not apparent that any of the judges appeared in Brown's courts through the years:

- **Jason B. Branch / Philips (Philips) Branch & Hodges**: A 2025 Georgia Court of Appeals filing (A25A0935) identifies Jason B. Branch as President of the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association (GTLA) and counsel on an amicus brief. Public bios also place him at Philips/Philips Branch & Hodges [[Phillips Branch](#)].
- **Cook Law Group LLC**: In the same 2025 Georgia Court of Appeals matter (A25A0935), the appellee's brief lists Cook Law Group lawyers (Matthew Cook, Kate Cook, etc.) as counsel for appellee R. Shane Lazenby [[GA Court of Appeals](#)]. Brown recused himself from one unrelated case involving that firm [[Cook Law Group](#)].
- **R. Shane Lazenby / Lazenby Law Group**: The same case is styled Cambre & Associates v. R. Shane Lazenby, and the publicly indexed opinion/briefs describe allegations involving "runners" and solicitation practices in a civil RICO context. The Court of Appeals opinion snippet I found lists a panel of Barnes, Gobeil, and Watkins (not Brown) [[Justia](#), [GA Court of Appeals](#)].
- **Charles Gower / Shaun O'Hara / Miranda Brasch**: Gower Attorneys' site publicly lists Charles Gower, Shaun O'Hara, and Miranda Brash/Brasch together, matching multiple names on your donor list and showing a tight donor cluster from one Columbus plaintiff-side firm [[Gower](#)].
- **Joel O. Wooten / Brandon L. Peak**: Peak Wooten's site lists Joel O. Wooten and Brandon L. Peak as partners. The firm's news page also highlights Wooten's public-facing roles (including being quoted as Chairman of the Georgia Ports Authority) and mentions State Bar committee leadership for partners [[Peak Wooten](#)].
- **Buzzell, Welsh & Hill LLP**: A Macon Chamber item reports a Buzzell, Welsh & Hill partner (Joshua Carroll) becoming GTLA president, and explicitly notes Jason Branch as immediate past GTLA president [[Macon Chamber](#)].
- **Adam D Land LLC**: Public directory material identifies Adam D. Land as an Evans, GA attorney focused on civil litigation (incl. domestic relations/criminal defense) at a firm listing; "Adam D Land LLC" likely reflects an entity used for practice/administrative purposes.
- **Fulcher Hagler LLP**: Augusta-area law firm (business/civil litigation, real estate, etc.).
- **Law Office of J. Pete Theodocion**: Augusta-based criminal defense lawyer's site/office listing.
- **Trotter Jones, LLP**: Augusta-based firm doing real estate/business/civil work (firm and local business coverage)
- **Troy A. Lanier, P.C.**: Augusta-area civil litigation trial lawyer (firm bio notes long practice, trial credentials, etc.).
- **Wills Law Firm LLC**: Thomson, GA firm with practice areas including bankruptcy, real estate, estate/probate, civil litigation (per firm profile).
- **Overstreet, J. Carlisle**: "James Carlisle Overstreet Jr." appears in public lawyer-directory material as a bankruptcy/real estate lawyer with Klosinski Overstreet LLP.


The following individuals are formally a part of Brown's campaign apparatus:

- **James Barton Manley, Jr.:** Public lawyer directories list James Barton Manley, Jr. as an attorney in Atlanta and associated with **Troutman Sanders / Troutman Pepper** (firm branding has evolved over time) [[Legal.com](#)]. Mercer University's alumni magazine reports that James Barton "Jim" Manley Jr. (LAW '96) was appointed to Georgia's Judicial Nominating Commission by Gov. Brian Kemp in 2025 [[Mercer](#)].
- **Jack Sawyer:** John "Jack" Sawyer is a long-tenured Georgia tax/estates lawyer whose work centers on wealth planning, asset protection, fiduciary & tax litigation, conservation easements, and exempt organizations. A separate University of Georgia alumni profile (from when he was at Taylor English Duma) also describes him as a former U.S. Marine Corps judge advocate, and notes a long stretch at Alston & Bird before moving to Taylor English Duma [[UGA](#)].

## FAMILY POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Judge Brown's wife and parents have made contributions to Republican candidates in Georgia since the early 2000s [[GA Ethics](#)].

- **Wife's Contributions to Republicans:** Brown's wife, Jill, has made many contributions to Republican candidates since 2012, totalling \$2,360 given to Republicans. In 2018, Brown's wife, Jill, donated \$200 to Brian Kemp, \$100 to Trey Rhodes (state rep), Burt Jones (Lieutenant Governor), and Court of Appeals Judge Amanda Mercier. In 2017 she donated to Republican Casey Kelly's special election win. In 2014 she donated to Brian Kemp's Secretary of State campaign, Nathan Deal's campaign for governor and Burt Jones in 2013, and Johnny Grant's 2012 campaign for GA State Senate.
- **Parent Donated to Sonny Perdue Prior to 2008 Judicial Appointment:** Brown's parent's company, Trenton Brown and Associates Inc, donated \$1,000 to Governor Perdue's campaign in 2006. Perdue appointed Brown judge of the Putnam County State Court in 2008.
- **Mom's Contribution to Nathan Deal Prior to 2012 Judicial Appointment:** Brown's mom, Brenda Brown, contributed \$250 to Nathan Deal's Gubernatorial Campaign in 2010, two years before Deal appointed Brown to the Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Superior Court.
- **Wife's Contribution to Nathan Deal After 2012 and Prior to 2018 Judicial Appointments:** Jill Brown contributed \$250 to Nathan Deal's campaign in 2013, one year after he appointed Brown to the Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit Superior Court and five years before he appointed Brown to the Georgia Court of Appeals in 2018.
- **Wife's Contribution to Ralph Lanier Rhodes:** Jill Brown donated \$101 to Republican State Rep. Ralph (Trey) Lanier Rhodes in November 2023 [[Peach File](#), accessed 2/25/2026]. Rhodes voted with Republicans on 2025 changes to the state's elections. He also posted following the 2020 election saying he was "concerned about how this election was handled on every level." In July 2021, he posted a letter from Georgia State House Speaker of the House David Ralston to the Fulton County Elections Director which stated "media reports have surfaced which call into question the way in which Fulton County conducted, counted, and audited the November 2020 presidential election" [[Facebook](#)]. Rhodes said he was "100% behind the request from our speaker."


 **Trey Rhodes**  
November 6, 2020 · 🌐

I hear your calls and emails loud and clear. I too, am concerned about how this election was handled on every level. I have spoken to the Governor's office, and have a call in at the Secretary of State's office. At this moment, all I know is the Georgia GOP attorneys, Trump's team attorneys, as well as the Governor's attorneys are engaged in the matter. As for the fraud allegations, that will have to be proven in a court of law. I am... [See more](#)


👍❤️ 163      56 comments   20 shares

👍 Like      💬 Comment      ➦ Share

View more comments

 **Pam Gilbert**  
Legal. How do you know when the mail in votes were post marked if they threw the envelopes away 🤔🙄🙄

5y Like Reply

 Write a comment... 🗨️ 😊 🎬 📷

## BROWN CONTRIBUTED TO REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES IN 2006

Brown's committee, Committee to Elect Trent Brown, contributed to two Republican candidates in 2006: \$200 to The Committee to Elect R.M. Channell (GA State House 1992-2015) and \$250 to Casey Cagle for Lt Governor (served as Lt. Governor from 2007-2019) [[GA Ethics](#)].

## TRUMP-GEORGIA ELECTION INTERFERENCE CASE

Judge Brown III has received significant attention in the news for his involvement in the case involving Trump's interference in the 2020 Georgia election.

**December 2024: The Georgia Court Of Appeals Issued A Published Opinion In The Election-Interference Case Involving Trump, Disqualifying Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis And Her Office From Prosecuting The Matter.** "A Georgia Court of Appeals on Thursday disqualified Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis from prosecuting the case against President-elect Donald Trump and his alleged co-conspirators over their efforts to overturn the 2020 election. The long-awaited decision, in a state criminal case against Trump that was already on hold, raises questions about whether the case can move forward in court. The appeals court found that Willis' office can't prosecute the case, so a new special prosecutor would need to be appointed for the case to continue. The appeals court found that a "significant appearance of impropriety" was enough to potentially taint the case in the public eye. The appellate court decided, however, it wouldn't dismiss the sprawling racketeering conspiracy case entirely." [[CNN](#), 12/19/2024]

### **The Majority Opinion Was Authored By Judge E. Trenton Brown And Markle Joined Him.**

"In their 2-1 majority opinion, Judges Trenton Brown III and Todd Markle wrote that trial judge Scott McAfee's March ruling allowing Willis to continue on the case "did nothing to prevent an ongoing appearance of impropriety that existed at times when DA Willis was exercising her broad pretrial discretion about who to prosecute and what charges to bring." [[CNN](#), 12/19/2024]

**The Appellate Court Found That A “Significant Appearance Of Impropriety” Was Sufficient To “Potentially Taint The Case In The Public Eye.”** “The long-awaited decision, in a state criminal case against Trump that was already on hold, raises questions about whether the case can move forward in court. The appeals court found that Willis’ office can’t prosecute the case, so a new special prosecutor would need to be appointed for the case to continue. The appeals court found that a “significant appearance of impropriety” was enough to potentially taint the case in the public eye. The appellate court decided, however, it wouldn’t dismiss the sprawling racketeering conspiracy case entirely.” [[CNN](#), 12/19/2024]

**The Court Wrote: “While We Recognize That An Appearance Of Impropriety Generally Is Not Enough To Support Disqualification This Is The Rare Case In Which Disqualification Is Mandated.”** ““While we recognize that an appearance of impropriety generally is not enough to support disqualification, this is the rare case in which disqualification is mandated and no other remedy will suffice to restore public confidence in the integrity of these proceedings,’ the court wrote in Thursday’s opinion.” [[CNN](#), 12/19/2024]

## NUWABIAN VOTER PURGE

During a Putnam County Board of Registrars hearing in 2000, 23 voters were purged from the voter rolls following challenges to their residency status. The hearing was the first of three planned proceedings and was prompted after 117 voters were notified that their registration status was in question. The majority of those appearing were members of the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors, who alleged the process targeted them ahead of a July 18 primary election.

Registrar Marianne Tanner stated the review was triggered by unusually high numbers of registrations listing the same residential addresses (including one property with 35 registrants). Of the 117 challenged voters:

- 23 were removed from the rolls
- 3 were retained
- 46 attendees who refused to take an oath had their cases continued
- 45 non-attendees also had cases continued

As acting chairman of the Board of Registrars, Trenton Brown III presided over the hearing and required individuals to swear an oath before providing testimony. Members of the Nuwaubian group refused, arguing no statute required them to take an oath and accusing the county of discriminatory targeting.

Sheriff Howard Sills stated that driver’s license checks showed several registrants had moved or were not residing in Putnam County; five individuals were found to have outstanding warrants, resulting in arrests. The 23 removals were based on information provided by the sheriff’s office.

The incident appears to have been framed locally as a residency enforcement matter, though Nuwaubian participants publicly characterized it as discriminatory voter suppression. Members of the Nuwaubian Nation refused to take an oath during the proceedings, claiming the “oath is something they contrived because they think we’re ignorant of the law” [The Macon Telegraph, 6/16/2000]. Brown’s role was procedural—administering the hearing and requiring sworn testimony—but the episode may be viewed as politically sensitive due to allegations of profiling and the timing ahead of a primary election [The Augusta Chronicle, 6/24/2000].

## **SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS**

[Campaign Facebook](#)

[Campaign website](#) (inactive)