

# [***Robinson and Stein will face off in North Carolina governor's race, CNN projects***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BGM-SNJ1-JBSS-S14H-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; The gubernatorial showdown in North Carolina is set for what is expected to be one of the [*most competitive races of the year*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/super-tuesday-primary-03-05-24/index.html), after Democrats chose moderate, strait-laced state Attorney General Josh Stein to square off with Republican nominee [*Mark Robinson*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/17/politics/kfile-mark-robinson-abortion-ban-no-exceptions/index.html), a right-wing firebrand currently serving as lieutenant governor.

Stein and Robinson are vying to replace term-limited Gov. Roy Cooper, as Democrats try to protect one of their last-remaining footholds in the upper echelons of Southern ***politics*** - and attempt to flip the state in what's also expected to be a hotly contested presidential ballot.

Former President Donald Trump won the Tarheel State in 2016 and 2020, but Biden came within a little more than one percentage point of an upset. Biden's favorability might have dropped since then, but Republicans could face a harsher backlash in November over their party-line vote to override Cooper's veto of a 12-week abortion ban, which was passed last year by a GOP legislative supermajority.

Despite their total control of the state legislature, Republicans have been locked out of the governor's office since Cooper was elected to the first of two terms in 2016, on the same day Trump defeated Hillary Clinton to become the 45th president. Robinson, though exciting for the MAGA base, cuts a similar political figure to Trump, as a bombastic supporter of gun rights and abortion bans, along with a penchant for dabbling in antisemitic, misogynist and anti-LGBTQ rhetoric.

"Whenever they mention my name, they always mention my name in conjunction with social issues and how I hate everybody," Robinson said at the Conservative Political Action Conference last month. "According to them, I hate everybody. I hate people who walk and talk and walk upright. I hate people who drive cars. I don't hate anybody."

After he described "transgenderism" and "homosexuality" as "filth" in June 2021 remarks that went viral months later, Democrats up and down the ballot called for him to resign. Instead, Robinson doubled down.

"The language I used, I am not ashamed of it," he told Raleigh TV station WRAL that fall. "I will use it in the future because, again, it is time for parents in this state to take a strong stand for their children."

Robinson, in social media posts, downplayed the atrocities of Nazi Germany and argued that socialism was - and should have always been - a greater concern than European fascism.

"We often speak of the 'appeasement' of Hitler. But the biggest 'appeasement' of ALL TIME is how we turned a blind eye to the clear and present danger of MARXISM," he wrote in 2019.

Stein has deep political roots in the state. His father, Adam, is a celebrated civil rights attorney, who, along with Julius Chambers and James Ferguson, founded the North Carolina's first integrated law firm.

The Supreme Court's decision overturning Roe v. Wade, which cleared the way for North Carolina Republicans to pass their abortion ban, is sure to become a focal point of the contest. Robinson has expressed support for even stricter measures while Stein is warning that the GOP could run riot without an even modest check in the governor's mansion.

"Reproductive freedom is on the line in North Carolina as far-right politicians seek total control over women's rights to make decisions about their bodies, families, and futures," Stein said last year after receiving the endorsement of Reproductive Freedom for All, formerly NARAL Pro-Choice America.

Trump officially endorsed Robinson days before the election, but their political similarities run deep. Calling the lieutenant governor, who is Black, "Martin Luther King on steroids" and a "great, natural speaker," Trump blessed his candidacy over the weekend. (Robinson defeated two other Republican candidates.)

Biden and national Democrats have mostly stayed away from North Carolina so far, in part because of Biden's wobbly standing in the state. Still, both the presidential and gubernatorial races are expected to be neck-and-neck contests.

By Gregory Krieg, CNN

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