

# Georgia social studies teachers exuberant about Harris' VP pick



Credit: AP

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Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris and her running mate Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz arrive at a campaign rally in Philadelphia, Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2024. (AP Photo/Matt Rourke)

Social studies teachers in Georgia reacted with enthusiasm after one of their own became a vice-presidential contender Tuesday, saying that his presence in the U.S. Capitol could boost their own status.

Vice President Kamala Harris' decision to pick Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as her Democratic Party running mate "feels good" to Kai Uchimura, a social studies teacher in DeKalb County.

Should Harris win, Uchimura thinks her administration would raise the profile of teachers, given that Walz once taught social studies. It's a boost for a profession that to him often feels denigrated by conservatives as "untrustworthy."

Ernie Lee II, a former [Georgia teacher of the year](#), said he was excited when he saw the news about Walz.

"I haven't done a lot of research on him but when I saw that he was a former teacher and coach I thought 'Ahh, finally somebody may really get it,'" said Lee, who teaches at the Savannah Arts Academy. "Finally, we've got somebody who has been in the trenches, and understands what teachers go through, what education's about."

Explore [What Georgia Democrats are saying about selection of Tim Walz as VP candidate](#)

Taylor Richardson was just getting home from teaching her fifth-grade class in Atlanta when a reporter informed her of the news.

“I think that that’s really neat,” said Richardson. The current teacher of the year in Atlanta Public Schools said she was excited by the prospect of a former social studies teacher holding such a high office. She assumes his background in education means he will have more empathy and that he will be “knowledgeable about history.”

That sentiment was echoed by Chris Davis, who teaches ninth grade civics at Decatur High School.

“Knowing what’s happened through our history is definitely a good background to have for someone to be vice president and potentially president,” he said.

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Walz was a high school teacher in Nebraska before moving to Minnesota and working as a social studies teacher and football coach at Mankato West High School in Mankato, Minnesota, [Ed Week reported](#) Tuesday. His wife, Gwen Walz, also taught at the school before becoming a district administrator, according to Ed Week.

Walz nearly resigned his teaching position after he pleaded guilty in 1996 to a reckless driving charge, [The Washington Post reported](#) Tuesday. Police records say he was driving 96 m.p.h. in a 55 m.p.h. zone outside Alliance, Nebraska, and failed a field sobriety test, The Post reported. Walz made his first run for Congress in 2006, defeating incumbent Republican Gil Gutknecht.

As Minnesota’s governor, Walz signed legislation making school breakfast and lunch free for all students. He also signed a [free college tuition program](#) for Minnesota families earning less than \$80,000 a year.

Davis said he’ll be teaching current events as part of his course this semester. There will be a lot to discuss, starting with President Joe Biden’s decision to hand his presidential candidacy to Harris. There may be too much to talk about, he added, especially in late fall as Election Day approaches.

“How do I teach the standards I’m supposed to teach and all of this other stuff,” he said.

### **Kamala Harris introduces Gov. Tim Walz as VP pick**

Kamala Harris introduced Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz to the nation at a rally in the critical battleground state of Pennsylvania.

Explore [Harris-Walz campaign to leverage VP pick’s military tie to Georgia](#)