



Prepared Remarks

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My name is Sean Young, and I am the Legal Director of the ACLU of Georgia. The ACLU of Georgia is a nonpartisan organization whose goal is to protect the sacred, constitutional right to vote, especially for those who are the most vulnerable among us. We take our nonpartisan status very seriously – in fact, we have sued, and are suing right now, both Democrat and Republican county officials who have failed to protect our democracy.

I want to focus particularly on two issues that have plagued our elections and bruised Georgia's reputation: long lines on Election Day, particularly in lower-income communities; and the belated processing of absentee ballots. Though state statutes and indifferent elections officials are to blame for many of these problems, you have the opportunity to seriously tackle these issues by revising the regulations.

We put forward four recommendations.

First, all polling places must be tested well in advance to ensure that they can carry the substantial electrical capacity required for electronic poll

books and new voting machines. For instance, Jennifer Logan, the elections director of Jackson County, is *already* testing their polling places for electrical capacity, and all counties should and must follow her lead. The last election had numerous malfunctioning machines or blacked out polling places, which disenfranchises people in lower-income communities where such electrical issues are more likely to occur. Many people cannot afford to take off 4-5 hours of work or childcare to wait for the machines to be up and running again.

Second, the regulations must provide that emergency paper ballots be available to *all* voters in case of an emergency, such as malfunctioning machines. In fact, that's exactly what Georgia law requires in Section 21-2-281, and yet the regulations aren't implementing it. Even one machine being down can double or triple wait times, and voters must be given the option to immediately vote an emergency paper ballot if they cannot afford to wait that long.

Third, the regulations should require every polling place to have an easy mechanism for poll workers to determine a voter's correct polling place, such as visiting the "My Voter Page" website, and poll workers should be *required* to tell voters that if it is not practicable to go to the correct polling place, then the voter may cast a provisional ballot on the spot. We

have received countless reports of voters being illegally turned away from the polls, without being offered such a provisional ballot option and without voters knowing the correct place to cast their ballot.

Fourth, absentee ballot processing is haphazard and dysfunctional. We recommend that the regulations require that all absentee ballot applications, absentee ballots, and registration forms, be processed within 24 hours of receipt, and that voters be called or e-mailed immediately if there are any problems. We have received numerous reports of voters not receiving absentee ballots until the last minute even when they submitted their application weeks before; voters showing up to vote early only to find that their voter registration form hadn't been processed; and voters being told of any problems through snail mail, when it is far too late to fix the problem by the time they receive the notice. The statute requires that such processing be "prompt"—24 hours is more than enough time to act promptly especially in this digital age.

2020 gives Georgia the chance to rise above partisan politics and ensure that everyone, especially the most vulnerable among us, can easily participate in our democracy. Thank you for your time.



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