



2018 POLICY PRIORITIES

Immigrant Rights | Voting Rights | Economic Justice | Education

DEFEND IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

We support the Access to Public Services for Non-English Speakers Act (HB 177), which would require agencies, boards, commissions, and government authorities to make a reasonable effort to accommodate Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals who need access to public services. In particular, the bill would require in-house translation services or bilingual staff in cases where agencies are regularly interacting with LEP individuals. Additionally, any public documents published by the agency would have to be translated into languages spoken by at least 3% of the population served by the authority. If passed, this bill would reduce language barriers and help LEP individuals access important benefits and services, understand and exercise their rights, and comply with applicable responsibilities. On a state level, that would mean that documents would have to be translated into Spanish. On a county level, Gwinnett agencies, for example, would have to provide materials in Spanish, Korean, and other languages spoken by over 3% of the county population.

We oppose the labeling of noncitizens on driver's licenses and ID cards (HB 324 & SB 161). As in previous years, attempts have been made to target immigrants and single them out through their driver's licenses and identification cards. This year's HB 324 and SB 161 continue that trend by targeting all noncitizens. HB 324 would require that any license or identification card issued by the Department of Drivers Services have "noncitizen" clearly written on them. Similarly, SB 161 differentiates between citizen and noncitizen licenses by changing the orientation: citizen cards would be horizontal, and noncitizen cards would be vertical. Nearly one-third of Asian Americans living in Georgia are not citizens; these bills would put them at an unnecessary risk of being discriminated against for not being a citizen. In addition, the costs of redesigning, processing, and retraining employees are estimated to cost more than \$1 million in taxpayer resources.

We oppose attempts to differentiate drivers licenses for noncitizens with deferred status (HB 484 & SB 417). Nearly identical, under these proposed bills, DACA recipients and other noncitizens with deferred action status who are eligible to drive would only be issued a "driver safety card." The driver safety card as recommended by HB 484 & SB 417, would be vertical in appearance and would bear the words "NOT FOR IDENTIFICATION," "NO LAWFUL STATUS," and "NOT ACCEPTABLE FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES." These cards would authorize use of a driver safety card for driving privileges only and specifically prohibit the cardholder from using the card to verify his or her identity, residency, or citizenship status. Use of a driver safety card for identification, other than presentation to a law enforcement officer, is a

misdemeanor under this proposed law. Should an individual with deferred status wish to acquire a card valid for identification, they would need to also pay and apply for a special identification card which would bear the phrase “NO LAWFUL STATUS.” These types of bills only serve to further burden the lives of undocumented individuals by making them acquire two different forms of ID. Lastly, demarcating driver safety and identification cards with the words “NO LAWFUL STATUS” opens the door for discrimination against deferred action recipients and puts them at increased risk of being wrongfully detained by immigration officials.

We oppose the English as the Official Language Resolution (SR 587 & SR 613), which would amend the Georgia Constitution to make English the official language of the State and prohibit state agencies and government actors from using any language other than English for official purposes. First, it would restrict the ability of Asian Americans, who are the fastest growing demographic in Georgia with an increase of more than 80 percent in the last decade, to communicate with their state and local government. Specifically, it would eliminate the ability of LEP Asian Americans to access state services, such as Medicaid, and to take the driver’s license test in a language other than English. Second, with its anti-immigrant undertones, it would tarnish Georgia’s brand as a welcoming state. In addition to being home to 317 Asian based companies, Georgia also has over 50,000 Asian-owned small businesses¹. This amendment would prompt current and future Asian American business owners to take their business elsewhere, costing the state millions in jobs and revenue.

We oppose HB 623, which would require the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to retain fingerprints submitted for employment licensing, permitting, or registration. In the proposed law, this aims to allow the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) to retain fingerprints submitted for employment licensing, permitting, or registration background checks. The database of noncriminal fingerprints would then be shared with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), allowing them to be searched by any law enforcement agency. By sharing the fingerprinting information with the FBI, this makes it easier for the federal government to retain unnecessary personal information on every American. There is no guarantee that the information provided to the GBI or the FBI will not be used for unauthorized purposes or even unfairly link innocent Americans to crimes. Lastly, fingerprints for noncitizens in particular could be a risk for them, pending any changes to their status or federal immigration law. In today’s political climate where immigrants and Muslims are subject to increasingly anti-immigrant and Islamophobic rhetoric and policies, handing over fingerprint information to the FBI for retention puts Georgia’s immigrant and Muslim communities at risk.

EXPAND VOTING RIGHTS

We support legislation, such as HR 2, that would enact procedures and standards for state legislative and congressional reapportionment and redistricting. Currently, the Georgia General Assembly draws district lines for both congressional and state legislative districts without public input and with few state-imposed criteria. The only current state-imposed requirement for drawing district lines is that state legislative districts be contiguous. This lack of transparency and absence of standards make the redistricting process vulnerable to

¹ AARP, Asian Quick Facts: Georgia-Atlanta (2013)
http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/general/2013/Asian-Quick-Facts-Sheet-Atlanta-Georgia-AARP-rsa-gen.pdf

political and racial gerrymandering. HR 2 would help alleviate this risk by prohibiting districts to be drawn with the intent to favor or disfavor a political party or with the intent or result of diluting the vote of racial or language minorities. HR 2 would also require judicial approval of all redistricting plans. While HR 2 is a step in the right direction, we recommend legislation that goes much further by, at the minimum, creating robust opportunities for public input and providing a mechanism to judicially enforce redistricting standards.

We support increased access to the polls, as proposed in the Any Precinct Act (HB 22), which would allow a voter to cast a ballot in any precinct located in their county. Currently, voters must cast their ballot in the specific precinct they have been assigned. Most voters work or go to school on Election Day and are not necessarily within driving or walking distance of their assigned precinct. Thus, many prospective voters miss the opportunity to cast their ballots simply because it becomes inconvenient for them to do so. Passing this bill would provide more flexibility for voters on Election Day. It would result in increased voter turnout, which is always a win for democracy.

We oppose measures to limit voter participation in SB 309, which limits voter participation by disallowing large cities, like the City of Atlanta, from keeping their polls open until 8 pm. Currently only Atlanta utilizes this extra hour, but this proposed law would affect any future cities that meet the 300,000-population threshold. Studies have shown that voters of color are less likely to have flexible work hours or own cars. Longer polling hours help increase the access to vote for such voters by allowing them to vote outside work hours or on their commute home. By reducing polling hours, even by an hour, the bill would further disenfranchise voters of color whose civic participation is already limited.

CHAMPION ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We oppose the Remittances Bill (HB 66), which imposes a fee, or tax, on money transmission transactions for individuals. This bill, if enacted, would levy a tax of \$10 (or 2% of the total transfer amount for transactions above \$500) on money transfers inside or outside the State of Georgia. Not included in the transactions taxed are money transfers that are to be received at a physical location in-state or transactions made by financial institutions on behalf of a depositor. First, this will significantly impact many immigrant families who regularly send money abroad or to their families out-of-state. Although the bill allows for individuals to get reimbursed at the end of the year by filing a claim on their annual tax return, this process is burdensome and would not benefit undocumented immigrants. Second, the bill will impact small businesses who offer money transfer services in over 327 cities and towns across Georgia. Lastly, taxing remittances would force individuals to use alternate informal channels. These informal channels are often subject to abuse and reduce the capability of the state to monitor or reduce financial abuse and money laundering.

We support increasing the minimum wage (HB 315 & SB 28), to \$15 an hour, which would help low-wage earners. Increasing the minimum wage will help many Asian Americans and communities of color that work in the retail and food industries. Asian Americans were disproportionately affected by the Great Recession, as Asian households faced a median net worth drop of 54% from 2005 to

2009 while white households only saw a 16% decrease². An increased minimum wage would support local families of color.

We support the Expand Medicaid Now Act (HB 669), which would authorize the state to obtain further financial assistance to expand Medicaid benefits for Georgia residents. More than 25% of Asian-Americans in Georgia do not have healthcare coverage. When sick, these Asian Americans are forced to delay going to the doctor until their needs become critical. This not only affects the health of low-income and uninsured individuals but also passes on the costs of medical care on to hospitals. This has resulted in as many as eight hospitals closing in Georgia over the last nine years. This bill would ensure that more Georgians have access to healthcare and that hospitals throughout the state do not close down because of increased costs.

INCREASE ACCESS TO EDUCATION

We oppose any bill which would restrict colleges and universities from investigating and punishing crimes involving one or more students (HB 51). This bill would take control away from postsecondary institutions and hand it to law enforcement agencies. The bill would require universities to report any crimes to law enforcement without the victim's consent. In many cases, such as sexual assault, victims are less likely to report an incident if they believe law enforcement will get involved. Additionally, college campuses currently work closely with victims of sexual assault to provide support and services. This bill would not allow those university officials to take disciplinary actions against the student involved. Lastly, given current federal immigration policy, it would put many Georgia students, those on green cards, on student visas, and those who are undocumented at risk for deportation, just for being charged with a crime, even if they were never proven guilty.

² *Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks, Hispanics*, Pew Social Trends, 2011
<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/07/26/wealth-gaps-rise-to-record-highs-between-whites-blacks-hispanics/>