Atlanta, Georgia, November 29, 2018 — In a move that protects the rights of thousands of immigrant voters, the Georgia Secretary of State today settled a lawsuit filed on Wednesday by Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta (Advancing Justice-Atlanta), Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles (Advancing Justice-LA), and pro bono law firms Buckley Beal, LLP and Alston & Bird, LLP. The lawsuit asked a federal judge to block a Georgia law that bars limited-English proficient (LEP) voters from selecting an interpreter of their choice in state and local elections. Through the settlement, the law will not be enforced in the upcoming December 2018 runoff election, the March 2019 special election, or any subsequent election.

“This law should have never been passed in the first place, but we are very pleased that the Secretary of State was willing to work with us to swiftly end it,” said Phi Nguyen, Litigation Director at Advancing Justice-Atlanta. “Today is a victory not only for Mr. Kwon but also for all LEP voters across the state of Georgia who will now have the right in every election to bring an interpreter of their choice.”

Voter suppression and intimidation tactics in Georgia had been closely watched in the wake of the November gubernatorial election, but remained focused on tactics such as the “exact match” policy and rejection of absentee ballots for “signature mismatches”. Advancing Justice-Atlanta and Advancing Justice-LA brought the focus on LEP voter rights and immigrant voter suppression, filing the lawsuit to remove a restriction that was not as widely reported on.

“There is only one county in Georgia that offers any bilingual voting materials for voters at the polls, and those materials are only in Spanish,” said Christopher Lapinig, Staff Attorney at Advancing Justice-LA. “There are over 500,000 Georgians who are LEP - we were concerned about the rights of AAPI voters who have no access to bilingual materials during elections. It was important to ensure that these voters had the same freedom to choose an assistant or interpreter that they had in the election earlier this month.”

The Georgia law severely restricted an LEP voter’s access to language assistance by allowing only a family member or registered voter in the same precinct to serve as an interpreter. Section 208 of the federal Voting Rights Act, on the other hand, gives LEP voters wide latitude to use any interpreter of their choice at polls, other than a representative of their employer or union.

Beginning with the December runoff election, for which early voting has already started, LEP voters will be allowed to bring with them any interpreter that under the VRA. Additionally, the office of the Secretary of State must notify and train election officials regarding the new parameters for LEP interpreters.

Jin Kwon, a 65-year-old Korean LEP voter who was a plaintiff in the case expressed his gratitude through an interpreter. “Thank you for helping me and my wife vote in the elections. My interpreter would not have been able to help me vote in this election because she is not my family or registered to vote in the same precinct as me. Because of this settlement, I feel relieved that I will be able to continue voting moving forward.”
Asian Americans Advancing Justice continues to fight for the full participation of AAPI and immigrant communities in our democracy, and celebrates that this settlement will assist in bridging equal access to voting for all.

**About Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta**

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta (formerly Asian American Legal Advocacy Center or AALAC) is the first non-profit law center dedicated to Asian immigrants and refugees (“Asian Americans”) in the Southeast.

Our goal is to engage, educate and empower under-represented Asian Americans to greater civic participation.

We are one of five independent organizations that make up the national Asian Americans Advancing Justice. Together with our affiliates in Chicago, DC, Los Angeles and San Francisco, we bring more than 100 years of collective experience in addressing the civil rights issues faced by Asian Americans and other vulnerable and underserved communities. Visit [www.advancingjustice-atlanta.org](http://www.advancingjustice-atlanta.org).