Advancing Justice - Atlanta to Testify at Gwinnett Board of Elections Meeting About Issues Faced by Voters of Color

Atlanta, Georgia, November 13, 2018 — Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta (“Advancing Justice - Atlanta”) and impacted community members will testify today at 2pm at the Gwinnett County Board of Elections (455 Grayson Hwy, Suite 200, Lawrenceville, GA 30046) about the gross injustice faced by voters of color on or leading up to the election on November 6th. Advancing Justice - Atlanta, through nonpartisan advocacy, has been at the forefront of Election Protection efforts for immigrant communities.

In this election cycle alone, we identified countless voters of color who had issues with different parts of the election process:

Absentee ballots not received in time, or at all

ZJ applied for an absentee ballot in September, and her application request was rejected because of a signature mismatch. She applied for another ballot, which was issued on October 23 but never received by the voter. Because she is a law student in Michigan, she could not come to Gwinnett County to vote in person on Election Day. ZJ’s story is similar to many out-of-state, and in-state students who were not able to cast their ballots.

Anmaar Habib requested an absentee ballot October 29, and was told by the Gwinnett Board of Elections that it was mailed on October 30. She did not receive the ballot until the night of November 5. Upon receipt she noted that the ballot itself was not postmarked until November 2. Anmaar was able to complete her ballot and pay $40 overnight shipping via FedEx to the Gwinnett Elections Office. Her ballot was received on November 6, but not accepted until November 8. Anmaar was able to cast her ballot, but only after paying a $40 poll tax; other voters were not able to get their ballots in on time.

Provisional ballots for out-of-county voters

Michelle Cofer and her husband updated their voter registration documents once they moved to Gwinnett County. When she arrived at Ferguson Elementary, her husband’s change of address was processed, but hers was not. Michelle asked if she needed to drive to Conyers to her previous voting location, but the poll worker encouraged her to vote by provisional ballot. After the Election, she followed up and found that her provisional ballot would not be counted because her registration was out of county. Michelle’s story is shared by many who were able to cast a provisional ballot out-of-county, only to find out later that their ballot would not be counted.

Rejections due to date of birth/address issues

Dinesh Chandra has lived in Gwinnett County for 28 years. He has voted in person for most of his life, but decided to vote by mail-in absentee ballot because of his age (72 years). He returned his ballot in person at the Elections Office and was told that his signature was a match. Later, upon encouragement from Advancing Justice - Atlanta, Dinesh checked his My Voter Page to learn that his ballot was rejected because of a missing date of birth. As with many others, Dinesh’s ballot has not yet been counted.

As Gwinnett County is still working to certify their results, we demand the following remedies from the Gwinnett
Board of Elections to help ensure voters of color are able to have their votes counted:

We demand that all out-of-county ballots be treated as out-of-precinct ballots, allowing votes to be counted for statewide races.

We demand that the county accept ballots that were previously rejected for DOB/address issues, as per today’s ruling from Judge May in Martin v. Kemp.

We demand that the county revisit its policies and procedures regarding Absentee Ballots to ensure that voters will not have to deal with these issues in the future.

What: Public Hearing at Gwinnett County Board of Elections
Who: Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta, Gwinnett citizens, and supporters
Where: Gwinnett County Board of Elections, 455 Grayson Hwy, Suite 200, Lawrenceville, GA 30046
When: 2:00pm Tuesday November 13

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.