AALAC Executive Director Reacts to Georgia Secretary of State's Recent Charges of Voter Registration Fraud against Nonprofit New Georgia

Atlanta, GA, September 18, 2014 — Last week the Georgia Secretary of State sent a subpoena alleging voter registration fraud of a nonprofit group called New Georgia who conducts nonpartisan voter registration work focused on increasing minority voters particularly African American voters. Yesterday the Secretary of State called a special meeting of the Georgia Election Board to discuss, and their own Chief investigator Chris Harvey reported that only 25 registration applications were confirmed to be forged. Only 25 out of 85,000 registration applications -- just 0.06% of all registration applications collected -- were found to be problematic.

AALAC earlier in the week signed an open letter to the Secretary of State with several other faith leaders and civic engagement groups asking the office rescind the subpoena so New Georgia could continue its work.

Said Helen Ho: “We are disappointed by the decision of our Secretary of State to subpoena a charitable nonprofit focused on registering more minority voters in Georgia. There are approximately 800,000 Asians, Latinos and African Americans that are eligible to vote but haven’t yet registered. The current Secretary of State’s investigation has spent an inordinate amount of energy and tax dollars investigating 25 forged forms while not focusing on processing the 51,000 voter registration forms that have been submitted! When the real issue historically has been too few people voting, why make laws and policies making it even harder to vote?”

"AALAC believes that when more people vote in Georgia, everyone benefits. Since the beginning AALAC has worked tirelessly to increase the number of Asian voters that register and vote -- voting exerts influence on how laws are made and gets our voices heard which is why it is a primary focus of our work. In 2012 AALAC helped to register more than 1,400 mostly Asian new voters, but found -- similar to New Georgia -- that a large percentage of those we helped were not processed to vote just a week before the Presidential election. When we sent a letter to the Secretary of State's office asking to clear these voters, their response was to open an investigation against AALAC alleging improper voter registration efforts! Of course there was no finding of wrongdoing. But I share because we too have experienced this type of backlash."

"This isn’t about politics in my mind, but fairness and equal rights. Don't be convinced into inaction because some people say you shouldn't speak out about ‘politics’ -- at AALAC we stand by our principles and values regardless of which political party agrees or disagrees, no matter how powerful they are. True power belongs with our communities and we should dictate how our state is governed by voting for people that represents our interests. But we must pick up that tool and use it."

"I hope our community takes what is going on as an impetus to fight alongside AALAC by spreading the word to others about the importance of protecting our votes, and showing through the number of Asians that vote November 4th that our voices will not be silenced."

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.