Georgia Must Protect Democracy and Reform Elections

Voting rights leaders warn that failures of June 9 primary must not be repeated

Atlanta, GA, June 11, 2020 — In a telephone press briefing, leaders from All Voting is Local, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, the Coalition for the People’s Agenda, Common Cause Georgia, the Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials, Georgia NAACP, and the New Georgia Project, urged Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and State Election Board members to do their job to ensure the devastating failures of Tuesday’s primary are not repeated in November.

Raffensperger and state officials denied counties the necessary resources to run free and fair elections, silencing voters, many of them Black and Brown. Despite postponing the election twice, the state officials failed to prepare, resulting in chaos including: more than 7 hour wait times to cast a ballot, polling places not having basic equipment like ballot paper or functional voting machines, and police showing up at polling places to attempt to remove volunteers who were helping voters.

The audio recording of the briefing can be found [here](#).

“Institutional racism is alive – we need not look further than our failing elections,” said Aklima Khondoker, Georgia state director of All Voting is Local. “It’s unsurprising that long lines, voting machine break-downs, and lack of basics are most prevalent in Black and Brown communities. It’s not because of the pandemic. It’s not because of the poll workers or the boards of elections. Contrary to the secretary of state’s assertions, these problems are his doing. The secretary of state must act now to protect our elections and dismantle racist and longstanding barriers to voting.”

“We as voters are being blamed for voter suppression instead of the institution that’s suppressing our vote,” said Stephanie Cho, Executive Director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Atlanta. “We need to make huge overhauls to ensure this doesn’t happen in the general election.”

“Yesterday was completely avoidable,” said Nse Ufot, executive director of the New Georgia Project. “I have to wonder if we were all witness to a direct attack on our democracy, and a trial run for what we should expect to see for the runoffs in August, and possibly November. The silver lining from yesterday was watching Georgians of all races be determined to stand in line and cast their vote.”

“We have to ensure that our election officials do the job and the proper planning that they should have done, so that we would not have these barriers in our communities,” said Helen Butler, executive director of the Georgia Coalition for the People’s Agenda. “We will not tolerate the same things that happened yesterday. We expect better and we are going to demand better.”

“Despite the confusion, voters stood their ground and voted,” said Jerry Gonzalez, executive director of GALEO. “Voters in this state do want to exercise their right to vote and we need to ensure that voting is safe, free, and fair. The performance by our elections officials was abysmal.”

“During the chaos of yesterday, we saw a lot of finger-pointing, a lot of blame-shifting, and a lot of political ping pong, rather than efforts to mitigate or solve the problems,” said Aunna Dennis, Executive Director of Common
Cause Georgia. “This is simply unacceptable. We cannot let this happen again.”

“In many ways, the securing and administration of this year’s primary election has been a complete failure,” said James Woodall, state president of the Georgia NAACP. “The effect of Georgia’s lack of preparedness is compounded by the state’s failure to adhere to recommendations put forth by this coalition months ago and accountability is of the most urgent priority.”

Advocates previously sent a letter to Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and State Election Board members, urging them to fix ballot issues and polling place safety concerns before June 9. The letter can be found here.

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.