



ASIAN AMERICANS
**ADVANCING
JUSTICE**
ATLANTA

December 11, 2020

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VIA EMAIL

Dear Members of the Board:

Thank you for all your hard work during this ongoing election cycle. On September 11, 2020 and November 11, 2020 we reached out in regards to concerns following the November election and the growing needs for language access for limited English proficiency voters in Forsyth. Despite our efforts, we have been unable to speak with you in regards to these matters. We are also aware of your closing of 6 early voting locations in Forsyth county that were in service in November and believe this will reduce access for some Asian voters. Our concern for voters in Forsyth grows, as the early voting period for the January runoffs starts in 3 days.

The January runoff is predicted to break runoff elections turnout records. Forsyth must act now in the best interest of its voters. We understand that hard work has been put into effectively administering the upcoming runoff. We share that same goal with you and want to ensure that all community members can vote. That is why we come to you once again to highlight issues in eight critical areas in advance of the upcoming runoffs. Including but not limited to, here they are as follows:

Polling Location Changes

- **If a polling location changes within two weeks of an election due to an emergency or unavoidable event as described under O.C.G.A. § 21-2-265, notify all affected voters of the change by mailing a new registration card pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 21-2-226 as soon as possible; and if the polling place changes within seven days of an election, notify affected voters prior to the election additionally by phone call, robocall, or text using the phone number on file.** Provide these notifications in different languages, particularly in areas with a high number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) voters.

Absentee Ballots

- **Given the unprecedented vote by mail and early voting turnout in November, ensure that there are adequate numbers of early voting locations and absentee ballot drop boxes in Forsyth County.** We most recently were made aware of the closing of six early voting locations. We believe that this will reduce

access for some Asian voters. We strongly suggest you review the current locations and ensure that Asian voters are given access to participate in early voting.

- **Mail a letter to all Forsyth County voters informing them of absentee ballot drop box details and locations, including that a stamp is not required for ballots that are dropped off.** The mailing should provide the information in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, and Mandarin Chinese.

Provisional Ballots

- **Provide a sufficient number of provisional ballots at each polling place, with such number to be no less than 5% of the number of registered voters in that precinct; and establish a means of delivery of additional provisional ballots immediately upon request to any precinct in Forsyth County in the event of a ballot shortage.**

In-Language Materials for LEP voters

- **Provide sample ballots in Korean and Spanish on Forsyth County's website and in hard copy at the polls.** Providing sample ballots in Korean and Spanish would assist LEP voters greatly and permit them to more easily cast an informed ballot.
- **Disseminate information about Advancing Justice-Atlanta's multilingual nonpartisan voter hotline to poll workers to be displayed and available to provide to voters at polling locations.** This hotline serves as a system of support for LEP voters and poll workers who assist LEP voters. The voter will be able to connect directly to someone in their preferred language who can help answer questions about the voting process.
- **Ensure that poll workers display the language assistance statute notice prominently at polling locations as required by law.**

Bilingual Poll Worker Recruitment

- **Increase the number of bilingual poll workers.** Identify which precincts serve LEP voters and ensure that there is a poll worker at every precinct to assist with translation for LEP voters. At the very least, focus recruitment efforts on Spanish speaking poll workers, but also poll workers who speak other languages, including Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

COVID-19 Precautions

- **Encourage voters to use face masks inside polling places.** Display signs promoting the use of face masks, and train poll workers to encourage voters as well.

Education for Poll Workers

- **Improve poll worker training on all aspects of running an election,** with particular emphasis on the following topics:
 - Rights of voters to language assistance at the polls
 - Absentee ballot drop box details and locations
 - Process for cancelling absentee ballots when people decide to vote in-person, including when the voter does not have their ballot with them. We are aware of voters in other counties being incorrectly told to vote a provisional ballot after cancelling their absentee ballots.

- When to use provisional ballots and what follow up information to provide to voters who vote provisionally. Of particular concern, we are aware of voters in other counties who were told that they could vote provisionally if they were **out of the county** and that their votes would count for statewide races. Many provisional votes were not counted in the 2018 general election because of this incorrect understanding of current Georgia law, yet poll workers continue to unintentionally disenfranchise voters by giving this misinformation.
 - Distinction between poll monitors and poll watchers and what each is permitted to do under Georgia law.
 - Monitoring for and managing intimidation and harassment of poll monitors and voters, including by poll watchers.
- **Provide each polling location with a reference sheet that poll workers can consult for guidance on how to address frequently occurring issues, such as provisional ballot voting and cancellation of absentee ballots.**

Polling Hours

- **Implement a system for notifying all polling places in Forsyth if there are extensions of polling hours, ordered by a court or otherwise.**

There is still time for Forsyth to institute necessary corrections, education and training in order to make sure voters and their votes are protected. We would like to ensure that the upcoming run-offs run as smoothly as possible for voters, volunteers, and county workers alike. **Please let us know what steps, if any, you are already taking to address any of the issues described above, as well as your availability for a meeting.** If you have any questions, please also do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best



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