

# CURRENT CONDITIONS OF VOTING DISCRIMINATION IN GEORGIA

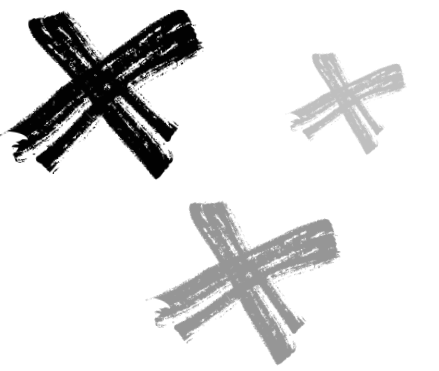
**Black and brown Georgians deserve a democracy that allows for and encourages their full participation; sadly, the state remains relentless in its pursuit of racial discrimination in voting.**

The following are illustrative examples of current disenfranchisement in Georgia, which takes many forms, and is recounted, chapter and verse, in the [Fair Fight Action Report](#).

## **GEORGIA HAS CLOSED HUNDREDS OF POLLING PLACES, WHICH HAS DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED COMMUNITIES OF COLOR.**

- Georgia has a long history of closing or moving polling places, particularly affecting neighborhoods with more Black voters.
- During the Reconstruction Era, local governments relocated polling places far from Black communities, often without notice, and destabilized common modes of transportation to access polling places.
- The pattern of polling location closures or relocations persisted through the 20th century and continues today.

**THEY TRY TO SILENCE ME. SCARE ME. SUPPRESS ME. ERASE ME.**



- Dr. Michael Herron, a Professor of Government at Dartmouth College, identified 459 polling places used in 2014 that no longer existed in 2018 because of either closure *or* relocation.
- According to The Leadership Conference, Georgia has shuttered at least 214 polling places since the *Shelby County* Supreme Court ruling, and certain counties have been hit far harder than others.
- And a 2019 Atlanta-Journal Constitution analysis showed a clear relationship between voting access and turnout, finding the farther you live from your precinct, the less likely you are to vote. According to the analysis, approximately 30% of Black voters travel across half of their precinct to their polling place, compared to less than 20% of White voters. The analysis further found that longer travel distances to precincts likely stymied approximately 54,000 to 85,000 voters from voting on Election Day in 2018, resulting in a 1.2% to 1.8% reduction in overall turnout, with a 20% larger impact on Black voters than White voters.
- In 2020, Georgians were forced to wait in extremely long lines, enduring 8+ hours in the elements, to exercise their right to vote.

**GEORGIA RUSHED TO ENACT S.B. 202 FOLLOWING THE 2020/2021 ELECTION'S HISTORIC TURNOUT AND RESULTS, AND WILL CONTINUE TO ENACT DISCRIMINATORY BARRIERS FOR VOTERS OF COLOR.**

- For further proof that attacks on voting represent an escalating threat to the rights of Georgians of color, look no further than S.B. 202.
- Just months after historic turnout and participation by voters of color in 2020 and 2021 elected the state's first Black U.S. Senator, Georgia's Republican-controlled legislature and Governor Brian Kemp hastily enacted S.B. 202.
- S.B. 202 includes provisions to reduce the mandatory minimum for early voting in runoff elections, limit access to drop boxes, allow for mass challenges and the takeover of local boards of elections, and prohibit most out-of-precinct voting.
- The restrictions of S.B. 202, which will disproportionately affect voters of color, particularly those with limited resources and time to navigate the complex requirements, have been challenged in no fewer than eight lawsuits by private parties and the Department of Justice.

## **THE STATE OF GEORGIA VIOLATED THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT WITH TWO CHANGES TO METHODS OF ELECTION ACCORDING TO FINAL COURT JUDGEMENTS**

- In 1997, a court struck down the City of LaGrange's at-large city council district plan under Section 2 of the VRA. The Court found the plan deprived voters of color of the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice and noted the long history of discrimination in LaGrange and Georgia.
- In 2018, a federal court struck down Sumter County's redrawn school board district map under Section 2 of the VRA, finding the reduction in single-member districts and addition of two new at-large districts severely infringed on Black voters' right to vote.
  - ◆ The court specifically found there was a “glaring lack of success for African American candidates running for county-wide office, both historically and recently, despite their plurality in voting-age population.”
  - ◆ And the court found that the low rate of Black turnout was attributable to the indisputable history of discrimination in Sumter County and in Georgia.
  - ◆ In November 2020, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit affirmed the District Court's ruling that the county violated the VRA.

## **DOJ OBJECTED TO AT LEAST 12 VOTING CHANGES BETWEEN 1996 AND 2013.**

- In 2012, DOJ objected to Georgia's proposal to move election dates, finding it would depress turnout for voters of color. Specifically, the state submitted for preclearance a change to the election code that required all nonpartisan elections for members of consolidated governments to be held in conjunction with the July primary, rather than in November. DOJ found that, because Black voters were less likely to vote in July, the change would depress turnout for voters of color in Augusta-Richmond County, where Black voters had just become a majority.
- In 2009, DOJ objected to Georgia's attempt to adopt an earlier version of its now-notorious Exact Match policy, a voter verification program that resulted in improperly cancelling voters' registrations. Georgia had implemented the program without first seeking preclearance, in violation of Section 5 of the VRA. DOJ found the program to be “seriously flawed” and to have disproportionate impact on voters of color.

