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LDF and ACLU of Georgia send joint letter to Georgia Election Officials urging against discriminatory polling place changes

Washington, D.C. | The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) and the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia (ACLU of Georgia) sent a letter today to election officials in each of Georgia’s 159 counties, urging them to avoid polling place changes that could impede the franchise of low-income, elderly, disabled, and Black voters. States formerly had to clear such changes with the federal government under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but the Supreme Court’s 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* ended that requirement. The letter comes as election officials in rural Randolph County, which is predominately Black, weigh a proposal to close seven of the county’s nine polling places.

“Polling place changes and closures have long been used to suppress the voting rights of Black Americans, and in the wake of *Shelby County*, we have to be especially vigilant against these kinds of tactics,” said LDF’s Deputy Director of Litigation Leah Aden. “Election officials everywhere should know that we are watching closely to ensure that all eligible voters have an equal opportunity to cast their ballots this November. And they should understand, as this letter makes clear, that we are prepared to help them fulfill their responsibility to hold a free and fair election.”

The letter advises local officials to seek public input on any proposed polling site changes, and it urges them to conduct a thorough and transparent analysis of the discriminatory effects that might arise from any changes or closures. It also reminds officials that racial minorities in Georgia are less likely to own cars, making the closure of local polling places especially burdensome for communities of color and those without access to public transportation. That is the case in rural Randolph County, where the proposed closures would leave many voters miles from the nearest polling place, with no reliable means for traveling to the two sites slated to remain open.