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Voting Advocates Urge Hall County, Georgia to Maintain Early Voting for January Runoff

Yesterday, Latino Justice (PRLDEF), the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), Latino Community Fund (LCF Georgia), GALEO, Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights (GLAHR), Hispanic Federation, MiJente Support Committee, All Voting is Local, Georgia, and ACLU of Georgia sent a letter to the Hall County Board of Commissioners, Hall County Board of Elections and Registration, and the Hall County Director of Elections expressing concern about early voting access for the January 5, 2021 runoff election.

The letter follows a decision from Hall County election officials to eliminate half of the county's early voting locations, transitioning from eight locations used for the 2020 general election to only four locations for the 2021 runoff. The polling closures disproportionately burden voters of color as many of these locations are in Black and Latino communities. The closures also increase voters' risk to COVID-19, which has disproportionately affected Black and Latino communities, resulting in crowds at polling sites, long lines, and forcing voters to choose between their health and their right to vote.

Hall County is one of several counties in Georgia to announce polling site closures. For example, Cobb County also announced major cuts to early voting locations, resulting in pressure and criticism from the public and voting rights advocates.

“Failing to reopen the Chicopee Woods Agricultural Center Activity Hall and Murrayville Library early voting sites is a direct blow to the Latino vote in Hall County,” said Miranda Galindo, Senior Counsel at PRLDEF. “The communities in Oakwood and along the SR 60 corridor south of Gainesville have no safe public transportation options and the closure of this site is especially harmful to voters living below the poverty level who are less likely to have access to a vehicle.”

“Hall County’s decision to eliminate half of its early voting sites is deeply concerning and will be especially harmful to voters of color,” said Michael Pernick, Georgia State Lead for LDF’s Prepared to Vote and Voting Rights Defender Projects. “It is imperative that Hall County’s election officials fulfill their responsibility to ensure that all eligible voters can exercise their constitutional right to vote and restore the closed sites for the remainder of the early voting period.”

“During a pandemic, voters need more options to vote rather than less options,” said Jerry Gonzalez, Chief Executive Officer at GALEO. “Hall County elections officials should ensure that minority voters have equal access to exercising their right to vote.”

“The Georgia Senate runoff elections highlight the importance of every election and the power of every vote,” said Frankie Miranda, President and CEO of Hispanic Federation. “With our nation still grappling with its history of disenfranchisement of voters of color, those charged with ensuring our elections are free and fair should do all they can to enable full voter participation. By closing half of the early voting locations used only weeks ago—particularly in communities with high numbers of Black and Brown voters—Hall County officials risk sowing confusion and doubt in the electoral process at a time when the entire nation is counting on the efficacy of our democratic system. We strongly encourage Hall County to do the right thing and reverse this decision.”

"Now more than ever, voters need safe, available, and equitable access to the ballot—closing voting sites in Black and Latinx communities is not the answer," said Aklima Khondoker, Georgia State Director of All Voting is Local. “Access to the ballot should never be determined by the whim of county representatives but must be guided by the needs of voters. Hall County voters should not be forced to choose between their health and their fundamental right to vote and at this critical time voters deserve more opportunities to cast a ballot, not less."

“The early voting closures in Hall County present real issues for Black and Latinx voters,” said Andrea Young, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia. “Substantial travel times, crowded polling locations, and long lines not only create undue burdens on these voters, but also fosters an environment ripe for the spread of COVID-19. Hall County must act quickly to restore the closed locations and ensure voters can cast a ballot safely and with ease.”

Read the letter to Hall County election officials [here](#).

*Using the terms “Latino” and “Latinx” interchangeably is done in an effort to reflect diversity and inclusion values.

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