



House of Representatives
Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Election Procedures

Blue-Ribbon Study Committee Report

The Honorable Tim Fleming
Representative, 114th District
Chair

The Honorable Victor Anderson
Representative, 10th District
Vice Chair

The Honorable Saira Draper
Representative, 90th District

The Honorable Jan Jones
Speaker Pro Tempore, 47th District

The Honorable Trey Kelley
Representative, 16th District

The Honorable Rob Leverett
Representative, 123rd District

The Honorable Martin Momtahan
Representative, 17th District

March 2026

Introduction

The House Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Election Procedures was created by Speaker Jon Burns following the 2025 Legislative Session. The committee was established to study and evaluate Georgia's current election laws as well as statewide and local election administration. In Georgia, the Secretary of State, the State Election Board, and local county election officials work together to administer the state's current election process. The committee was tasked with examining that connection and considering any improvements that might be possible.

Speaker Jon Burns appointed the following members to the blue-ribbon study committee: Representative Tim Fleming, chair; Representative Victor Anderson, vice chair; Representative Saira Draper; Representative Jan Jones; Representative Trey Kelley; Representative Rob Leverett; and Representative Martin Momtahan.

Meeting Summary

The House Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Election Procedures held six meetings throughout the state between July and October of 2025. The committee heard from election stakeholders, experts, advocates, officials, and members of the public on various topics related to election administration in the state.

Date: Tuesday, July 15, 2025

Location: 341 Capitol – Atlanta, Georgia

Summary: The committee's first meeting included presentations with a focus on Georgia's existing election landscape. The committee heard testimony from the following individuals: Blake Evans, Elections Director, Office of the Secretary of State; Stuart Morelli, Deputy Legislative Counsel, Georgia General Assembly; Scot Turner, Executive Director, Eternal Vigilance Action; and Brad Carver, Chairman, 6th Congressional District Republican Party.

Committee members heard testimony on Georgia's current election procedures and processes. Testimony was provided on the statutory and constitutional requirements related to Georgia elections. The committee received an update on several Georgia Supreme Court decisions that impact elections in the state. Members of the public provided comment on various topics related to the elections process in Georgia.

Date: Friday, August 8, 2025

Location: Rockmart City Hall – Rockmart, Georgia

Summary: The committee's second meeting included presentations with a focus on local election officials. The committee heard testimony from the following individuals: Noah Beck, Director, Polk County Elections and Registration; Deidre Holden, Supervisor, Paulding County

Elections and Voter Registration; Veronica Johnson, Supervisor, Lee County Elections and Registration; Tom Braatz, Senior Elections Specialist, Hall County Elections; and Joseph Kirk, President-Elect, Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials (GAVREO).

Committee members heard testimony on Georgia's election process at the local level. The election officials provided information on how statewide laws and regulations impact election administration in small and large counties. Members of the public provided comment on various topics related to the elections process in Georgia.

Date: Thursday, August 28, 2025

Location: North Georgia Technical College – Clarkesville, Georgia

Summary: The committee's third meeting included presentations with a focus on Georgia's State Election Board. The committee heard testimony from the following individuals: John Fervier, Chair, Georgia State Election Board; Sara Tindall Ghazal, Member, Georgia State Election Board; Janelle King, Member, Georgia State Election Board; James Mills, Executive Director, Georgia State Election Board; David Worley, former member, Georgia State Election Board; and Brad Carver, Chair, Georgia Republican Party, District 6.

Committee members heard testimony on the role of the State Election Board in rulemaking, policy-setting, and investigations relating to elections in Georgia. The State Election Board chair, executive director, and members provided input, background, and context on their role in the process. Additionally, the committee heard from a republican representative and a democratic representative to provide context on the partisan view of the State Election Board.

Date: Thursday, September 18, 2025

Location: Savannah Technical College – Savannah, Georgia

Summary: The committee's fourth meeting included presentations which focused on Georgia's next election system as well as the state's compliance with SB 189 requirements (2024 Legislative Session). The committee heard testimony from the following individuals: Katy Owens Hubler, Elections and Redistricting Director, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL); Dr. Tyler Reinagel, Director of Policy and Research, Council of State Governments Southern Office (CSG South); Dr. Mark Lindeman, Policy and Strategy Director, Verified Voting; Philip B. Stark, Distinguished Professor, University of California, Berkeley; Blake Evans, Elections Division Director, Office of the Secretary of State; Billy Wooten, Elections Supervisor, Chatham County Board of Elections; and Ethan Compton, Elections Supervisor, Irwin County Board of Elections and Registrations.

Committee members heard testimony from national and regional experts on elections systems in use throughout the country, with a particular focus on the southern region. The committee heard from statewide and local county officials on the implementation of SB 189 (2024 Legislative Session), particularly as it relates to the removal of QR codes from Georgia ballots. Members of the public provided comment on various topics related to the elections process in Georgia.

Date: Thursday, October 2, 2025

Location: Georgia Piedmont Technical College – Covington, Georgia

Summary: The committee’s fifth meeting included presentations with a focus on voter roll maintenance. The committee heard testimony from the following individuals: Shane Hamlin, Executive Director, Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC); Blake Evans, Elections Division Director, Office of the Secretary of State; Mark Davis, President, Data Productions, Inc.; Matt Bernhard, Security and Audits Director, Enhanced Voting; Garland Favorito, Co-Founder, Voters Organized for Trusted Election Results in Georgia (VoterGA); and Erik Christensen, CPA, retired.

Committee members heard testimony on various topics related to voter roll maintenance; the security implications for Georgia’s current and potential future voting systems; and accounting and auditing, generally, in Georgia elections. Members of the public provided comment on various topics related to the elections process in Georgia.

Date: Thursday, October 16, 2025

Location: South Georgia Technical College – Americus, Georgia

Summary: The committee’s sixth meeting included presentations with a focus on the federal guidelines that impact state elections and voting accessibility. The committee heard testimony from the following individuals: Stuart Morelli, Deputy Legislative Counsel, Georgia General Assembly; Cody Allen, Senior Policy Analyst, Council of State Governments Southern Office (CSG South); Kaylon Day, Governmental Affairs Associate, Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG); DJ Waller, Government Relations Associate, Georgia Municipal Association (GMA); Brian Allen, Vice Chair, Libertarian Party of Georgia; Rachel Glover, Associate Director, Voter Access, ACLU of Georgia; Dom Kelly, President/CEO, New Disabled South; AJ Link, Director of Policy, New Disabled South; Jennifer Lee, Policy Director, Asian Americans Advancing Justice Atlanta; Dr. Anar Parikh, Senior Policy Associate, Asian Americans Advancing Justice Atlanta; and Dr. Janice Johnston, Member, Georgia State Election Board (SEB).

Committee members heard testimony on the federal impact on elections, including elections-related executive orders and the ‘National Voter Registration Act’ (NVRA). The committee

heard presentations related to voting accessibility and ballot access. Representatives from the state’s cities and counties shared on the cost and impact of advance voting at the local level. The committee heard more on the State Election Board’s impact on elections from an SEB member. Members of the public provided comment on various topics related to the elections process in Georgia.

Committee Findings

Through the testimony, presentations, and data provided to the blue-ribbon study committee, the following was gathered:

- Elections at the Local Level
 - Deadlines and timing set at the state-level does not always translate seamlessly to the actual running of elections. The committee heard that changes to some of the deadlines within the election process would lead to smoother and more efficient implementation. A specific change requested by a local election official included changing the absentee ballot application deadline from 12:00 AM 11 days prior to the election date to 5:00 PM that same day. This change would align the deadline more closely with the normal operations of a local election office.¹
- Implementation of SB 189 (2024 Legislative Session)
 - Local election officials and the Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials (GAVREO) expressed concerns related to the timely compliance with the requirements of SB 189 (2024 Legislative Session). Specifically, officials pointed out the need for statutory clarity on the process that will replace the current use of QR codes as well as additional time and funding to implement the changes.²
 - SB 189 instructed the secretary of state to conduct a pilot program utilizing optical character recognition (OCR) technology to audit and verify the human-readable text portion of paper ballots. The audits conducted as a result of this pilot found the scanner tabulations to match the human-readable text with 100% accuracy. The Secretary of State’s Office recommends making this pilot program permanent and conducting double-blind vote counts following upcoming elections to verify that results are accurate.³

¹ Noah Beck, Polk County Board of Elections and Registration, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025.

² Joseph Kirk, Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025.

³ Blake Evans, Georgia’s Secure and Accurate Voting System, presentation to committee on September 18, 2025.

- According to testimony, election officials would be forced to utilize potentially costly emergency backup procedures in order to remain in compliance with legal mandates if a new system is not in place by July 1, 2026.⁴
- Voter Roll Maintenance
 - The state currently uses many tools for voter roll maintenance including, but not limited to, the following: the Georgia Registered Voter Information System (GARViS), the Department of Driver Services (DDS), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Department of Community Supervision (DCS), the Georgia Bureau of Investigations (GBI), the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), Social Security Death Master File, USPS National Change of Address (NCOA), the Department of Homeland Security, superior courts, probate courts, and individual state-to-state agreements.⁵
 - Georgia has state and federal laws guiding voter roll maintenance, with the primary federal law being the ‘National Voter Registration Act’ (NVRA). The secretary of state recommends that Georgia call on Congress to amend the NVRA by shortening the 90-day “blackout period” before federal elections and by eliminating the signature requirement to cancel voter registration records for voters who have moved out of jurisdictions.⁶
 - In order to identify outdated records, the secretary of state recommends changing the requirement for active voters to be on the “no contact” list from 5 years to 4 years.⁷
- Advance Voting
 - Local election officials expressed frustrations with the one-size-fits-all nature of statutory requirements for advance voting. What is needed in a large county might not be necessary in a smaller county. What is affordable for a large county might not be affordable for a small county.⁸ Local officials requested more discretion in setting hours and days for advance voting based on individual county needs, or based on population thresholds.⁹ Additionally, according to testimony given by the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) and the Association County Commissioners Georgia (ACCG) at the committee’s October 16th meeting, the cost of extensive advance voting can be quite prohibitive for smaller counties and municipalities throughout the state.

⁴ Ethan Compton, Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials, presentation to committee on September 18, 2025.

⁵ Blake Evans, Georgia Leads in Secure and Accurate Voter Lists, presentation to committee on October 2, 2025.

⁶ Blake Evans, Georgia Leads in Secure and Accurate Voter Lists, presentation to committee on October 2, 2025.

⁷ Blake Evans, Georgia Leads in Secure and Accurate Voter Lists, presentation to committee on October 2, 2025.

⁸ Veronica Johnson, Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Election Procedures, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025; Tom Braatz, Hall County, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025; Joseph Kirk, Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025.

⁹ Joseph Kirk, Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025.

- Georgia’s Election System – Current and Future
 - Georgia’s current election system consists of poll books, ballot marking devices (BMDs), ImageCast Precinct Scanners (ICPs), and ImageCast Central Scanners (ICCs). Additionally, all ballots are produced on security paper with a unique watermark. The state’s current system was selected by the General Assembly through HB 316 (2019 Legislative Session). The system vendor, Dominion Voting Systems, was selected in 2019 through a competitive bidding process; that contract runs through 2028.¹⁰
 - Because of the ‘Help America Vote Act of 2002’ (HAVA), no matter which system Georgia implements, at least one accessible voting device is required at each polling place. Minimum standards established through HAVA must be met by Georgia’s next voting system.¹¹
 - The use of hand marked paper ballots is the most common system in the United States with over 69% of voters living in jurisdictions where this is the primary method of casting a vote.¹²
- Federal Impacts on Georgia Elections
 - Congress has constitutional authority to adopt or amend procedures related to the time, place, and manner of federal elections.¹³
 - According to a March 25, 2025, Presidential Executive Order, certain federal agencies are directed to take specified actions to ensure non-citizens are not able to register or vote. Additionally, the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines are to be updated to include a prohibition on voting equipment which utilize barcodes or QR codes for vote counting; voting systems should provide a voter-verifiable paper record. The Executive Order directs the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to recertify voting systems under these new standards.¹⁴
 - Based on federal guidelines for voter registration, Georgia allows for “opt-out” registration through the Department of Driver Services (DDS). Local election officials requested a change from “opt-out” to “opt-in” registration to cut down on duplicative, incomplete, or invalid registrations that must then be sorted out by local election officials.¹⁵
- Ballot Access
 - Updating petition requirements and qualifying mechanisms for third-parties would allow for easier ballot access.¹⁶

¹⁰ Blake Evans, Georgia’s Secure and Accurate Voting System, presentation to committee on September 18, 2025.

¹¹ Katy Owens Hubler, Voting Technology: State Perspectives, presentation to committee on September 18, 2025.

¹² Katy Owens Hubler, Voting Technology: State Perspectives, presentation to committee on September 18, 2025.

¹³ Stuart Morelli, presentation to committee on October 16, 2026.

¹⁴ Stuart Morelli, presentation to committee on October 16, 2025.

¹⁵ Deidre B. Holden, Paulding County Board of Elections, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025.

¹⁶ Brian Allen, Georgia Ballot Access, presentation to the committee on October 16, 2025.

- Local officials requested statutory clarity on the process surrounding political party association on the ballot.¹⁷
- Voting Accessibility
 - State and federal guidelines require polling places to be accessible to disabled and elderly voters; advocates pointed out that more funding and resources are needed to properly achieve this outcome.¹⁸
 - According to advocates, additional poll worker training is needed on the rights of voters with disabilities. Designated disability liaisons could help bridge the gap between the county election offices and voters with disabilities.¹⁹
 - Clarifying or simplifying who can assist disabled voters with absentee ballots would increase access for voters who need assistance.²⁰
 - Advocates requested the implementation of curbside voting to increase accessibility for disabled voters. Curbside voting allows eligible voters to cast an in-person ballot outside of a polling place.²¹
 - The federal ‘Voting Rights Act’ requires certain language access accommodations be made depending on the demographics of a given jurisdiction. Coverage determinations for those federal requirements are made every five years with the next determination scheduled for 2026.²²
- State Election Board
 - Local election officials expressed frustration with rule changes made within 90 days prior to an election. Changes made by SEB close to an upcoming election can lead to confusion, a need for re-training of workers, and additional expense.²³
- General Election Topics
 - Local election officials pointed to the need for electronic ballot return for ‘Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act’ (UOCAVA) voters. Allowing military and overseas voters to submit their ballots electronically would cut down on the time needed to return the ballots as well as lower the cost of return that falls on the voter.²⁴
 - Local election officials expressed pain points surrounding Georgia’s runoff process. Because so many elections end up in runoffs, the staffing and financial burden on counties can be quite high.²⁵

¹⁷ Noah Beck, Polk County Board of Elections and Registration, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025.

¹⁸ Rachel Glover, Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Election Procedures, presentation to committee on October 16, 2025.

¹⁹ Rachel Glover, Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Election Procedures, presentation to committee on October 16, 2025.

²⁰ Rachel Glover, Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Election Procedures, presentation to committee on October 16, 2025.

²¹ Dom Kelly and AJ Link, Georgia Curbside Voting, presentation to committee on October 16, 2025.

²² Jennifer Lee and Dr. Anar Parikh, Language Access in Elections, presentation to committee on October 16, 2025.

²³ Deidre B. Holden, Paulding County Board of Elections, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025; Joseph Kirk, Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025.

²⁴ Deidre B. Holden, Paulding County Board of Elections, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025.

²⁵ Deidre B. Holden, Paulding County Board of Elections, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025.

- Local election officials expressed a need for expanded voter outreach and voter education. Statewide efforts to inform and educate voters could help improve the elections process for all involved.²⁶
- Local election officials pointed out the need for adjustments to ballot drop box regulations. Because of the restricted access to the ballot boxes, the benefit of the boxes (ability to drop off ballots at any time) no longer exists. Changing the restrictions or eliminating the boxes all together would improve voter experience.²⁷

²⁶ Deidre B. Holden, Paulding County Board of Elections, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025.

²⁷ Veronica Johnson, Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Election Procedures, presentation to committee on August 8, 2025.

Recommendations

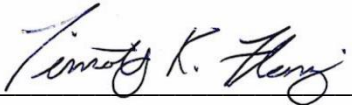
Given these findings, the following recommendations are offered by the study committee²⁸ related to the effectiveness, efficiency, and integrity of election procedures in this state:

1. In order to lessen the burden imposed on local election officials, the General Assembly should adopt legislation to shorten the advance voting period for county and municipal elections.
2. In order to align Georgia with its adjoining neighbor states, the General Assembly should transition automatic voter registration through the Department of Driver Services (DDS) from an “opt-out” option to an “opt-in” option.
3. The General Assembly should adopt legislation requiring the secretary of state to work with the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to develop a national voter roll maintenance process to replace Georgia’s reliance on the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC).
4. The General Assembly should adopt legislation prohibiting the State Election Board from adopting non-emergency rules within 60 days of any election.
5. The General Assembly should adopt legislation to further clarify permissible access for poll watchers in polling places, including access to the tabulation process.
6. The committee recommends further investigation and study of curbside voting as an option to increase accessibility for disabled voters. The secretary of state should conduct a pilot program in conjunction with the 2027 election cycle to ascertain the feasibility of curbside voting statewide.
7. The General Assembly should adopt legislation that provides preferential treatment to voters accompanied by children aged two years and under that permits them to move to the front of the voting line when voting in person.

²⁸ Representative Saira Draper (D-Atlanta) diverges with the recommendations of the committee at large. Representative Draper agrees with recommendations 4, 6, and 7; takes a neutral position on recommendations 1 and 5; and strongly opposes recommendations 2 and 3.

Speaker Burns, these are the findings and recommendations of the House Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Election Procedures.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Timothy K. Fleming". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

**The Honorable Tim Fleming
Representative, 114th District
Chair**