

# What's all the Fuss About SB202?



Some people are upset about SB202. Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian called Georgia's new voting law "unacceptable". His words were echoed by Coca-Cola CEO James Quincey, who in an interview on CCN stated the election reform bill was "unacceptable" and a "step backward." Major League Baseball moved the 2021 All-Star Game and the 2021 MLB Draft out of Georgia in response to SB 202. President Biden and others have likened it to Jim Crow laws. While discussion of the bill was held, protestors left water bottles outside the State Capital. A member of the state legislature was arrested for disrupting the signing when she repeatedly knocked on the governor's door while Kemp signed the bill into law.

On the other hand, before its passage Governor Kemp stated "I know in my heart what is in this bill. This bill is creating more accessibility and for us to continue to have better processes in the state that are secure, for every voter". SB202 must be quite a law! Let's find out what is in it.

**SB202, titled the Election Integrity Act**, is a comprehensive revision of elections and voting in the state of Georgia. You can read all 98 pages of it here: [Georgia General Assembly - SB 202 \(ga.gov\)](https://www.ga.gov/ga/general-assembly/sb202)

I know you don't want to read all 98 pages, so I'll describe some major points for you.

## **Voter ID for Absentee Ballots**

In Georgia, we must show a voter ID when voting in person. Previously, people could vote absentee with only a signature match, but now some form of identification must also be shown. It can be your Driver's License number, State ID, or other acceptable form of ID such as a power bill or a copy of a birth certificate. The voter must sign an oath to affirm that the information is true.

Opponents claim that the ID requirements disproportionately affect black voters, who are less likely than white voters to have ID numbers matched to their voter registrations, according to election data. A study shows that 56% of voters without current ID are black. Will this law suppress the black vote? [Research](#) (and common sense) shows voters will simply obtain ID or update their ID, and then vote.

## **Early Voting**

The law expands early voting for most counties by adding a mandatory Saturday and formally codifying Sunday voting hours as optional. Counties

can have early voting open as long as 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., or 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at minimum. During early voting, counties must publicly report daily how many people have voted in person, how many absentee ballots have been issued, returned, accepted and rejected. Early voting sites and times must be published publicly ahead of time.

### **Absentee Ballots**

The time to request (11 weeks early) and return absentee ballots (2 Fridays before election day) has been shortened and made more uniform. Counties will begin mailing out absentee ballots about three weeks later than before, starting four weeks before the election. SB 202 requires absentee ballots to be printed on special security paper with the precinct name printed on the top. Third party groups may no longer send applications for ballots to people who didn't ask for them. Those requests must say "This is not a Ballot" on their forms. These will lesson confusion, increase voter confidence, and keep the vote more secure.

### **Military Ballots**

Military ballots will have ranked choices on them to be used in case of a run-off for logistical purposes. Military ballots are a special form of absentee ballots.

### **Drop off Boxes**

All counties must provide at least one early drop off box, but the boxes must be inside early voting sites so they can be monitored. This is to prevent tampering, which was a major concern last November.

### **Voting on a Bus**

No voting will occur inside mobile voting sites like the buses previously used in Fulton County. Did you know that the idea of mobile voting buses came from the popularity of food trucks? The main concern with voting on buses is protecting the security of the votes.

### **Thirsty Voters?**

The law will prohibit anyone except poll workers from handing out water to voters in line, and outlaw passing out food and water to voters within 150 feet of the building that serves as a poll, inside a polling place or within 25 feet of any voter standing in line. This is to prevent the practice of "line warming". Line warming is when someone makes friendly conversation and gives drinks or snacks to people waiting in line. Once they've become friendly, the line warmer starts chatting about candidates or issues in order to influence the way the voter will vote.

According to SB202, election workers can set up self service water stations for voters in lines. You can also bring your own personal water bottles and snacks.

### **Provisional Ballots**

Out-of-precinct provisional ballots will not count unless cast after 5 p.m. on election day and a voter signs a statement saying they could not make it to their home precinct in time.

### **Counting Ballots**

Counties must count all the ballots nonstop as soon as polls close and finish by 5 p.m. the next day or potentially face investigation. To save time, they can begin processing but not tabulating, absentee votes two weeks before the election. Local officials are required to post and report the total number of ballots cast on election day, during early voting, via absentee voting and provisional ballots, all by 10:00 p.m. on election night. This is to avoid what happened so famously in Fulton County in 2020.

### **Less Wait Time**

Large polling places with long lines must take action if wait times surpass an hour at certain times during the day. Those massive polls with more than 2,000 voters and wait times longer than an hour would have to hire more staff, add more workers or split up the precinct after that election. Fayette County does a fantastic job of this, but some other counties make it a nightmare to vote. I'm looking at you, Dekalb. In fact, in some of these counties, a voter may find themselves standing in the hot sun waiting so long to vote that they start to wish a line warmer would come along with a nice cool drink.

### **Increased State Oversight**

The State Election Board — and by extension, the legislature — will have more power to intervene in county elections boards that are deemed underperforming.

### **Poll Watchers**

The law requires poll watchers be trained before allowing them to work and gives local officials the authority to set where those watchers can observe from.

### **Voter Hotline**

The Attorney General's office shall set up a hotline for people to file complaints about voter intimidation and "illegal election activities," including

anonymous tips. Given the problems and accusations flying from both sides in the last few election cycles, Georgia should set up a hotline to quickly identify and resolve voter complaints.

## **Lots of Lawsuits**

There is a lot more to this law, but these are the most hotly debated parts of it. Naturally, various leftwing groups and Biden's DOJ quickly filed suit to overturn SB202.

According to the Epoch Times: "The Department of Justice (DOJ) ...opposes key provisions of the law, including voter identification requirements, drop-box limits, provisional ballot rejections, and others. The DOJ, along with top state and federal Democrats, have argued the law is an effort to suppress voter turnout rates among minority groups, while Republicans have said it would safeguard future elections in the Peach State."

Gov. Kemp said on [Facebook](#) that the "lawsuit is born out of the lies and misinformation the Biden administration has pushed against Georgia's Election Integrity Act from the start...Joe Biden, Stacey Abrams, and their allies tried to force an unconstitutional elections power grab through Congress – and failed... Now, they are weaponizing the U.S. Department of Justice to carry out their far-left agenda that undermines election integrity and empowers federal government overreach in our democracy."

**Meanwhile, candidate for governor [Vernon Jones said](#): "Joe Biden's DOJ is suing the state of Georgia because they think black people are too damn dumb to secure a Voter ID and properly vote," Jones wrote on Facebook, adding "This is racism at its worst."**

The Georgia Republican Party filed a motion to intervene as a co-defendant with the state in these lawsuits. The GOP is fighting back to protect voting rights for everyone, and you can get involved too!

**Edna King,**

**VC Legislation & Education**