



Prepared Remarks
Rahul Garabadu
Voting Rights Staff Attorney, ACLU of Georgia
Quitman County Board of Registrars Meeting
May 6, 2021
5:00 p.m.

Good evening. My name is Rahul Garabadu, and I am the Voting Rights Staff Attorney at the ACLU of Georgia. The ACLU of Georgia is a non-partisan organization dedicated to protecting the civil liberties of each and every Georgian. I am here today to speak against the proposal to close Morris precinct, one out of the two polling locations in all of Quitman County.

This proposal is wrong for three reasons.

First, shutting down the precinct would burden Morris residents who don't have access to a car. Morris is about 13 miles away from Georgetown, where the only remaining precinct in the county would be located. There are virtually no public transportation options that link the towns. Anyone who wants to vote in person but doesn't have a car would face an unacceptable choice: walk four hours to vote, or don't vote at all. The Constitution protects citizens from having to make these kinds of impossible choices. This is true regardless of whether those choices apply to 99% of voters or 1% of voters.

Second, accessibility concerns that the Board has raised regarding Morris precinct can easily be fixed without shutting down the precinct. Neighboring counties like Randolph have raised this concern before when weighing polling place closures in 2018. When that happened, the ACLU of Georgia offered to help fix any accessibility issues, and we pledge to do the same here in Quitman County. Then-Secretary of State Brian Kemp, through a spokesperson, stated at the time that "[t]he solution to a noncompliant polling place in terms of the ADA is not just to shut it down for everyone. It's to fix it." Randolph County ultimately kept the polling places open.

Third, the Board's concerns about its ability to pay three poll workers can also be addressed easily. The ACLU of Georgia stands ready to assist the County in finding three volunteers to serve as poll workers on Election Day, including from neighboring Randolph County, where we have built relationships. Recently passed legislation allows for the Board to recruit poll workers from adjoining counties if the Superintendent waives the county residency requirement.

With sweeping changes to elections set to go into effect this year, including new requirements for requesting and casting mail-in absentee ballots, now is not the time to add more confusion for voters by shutting down polling places.

We urge you to table this proposal and preserve the status quo. In the meantime, we stand ready to assist you in any way we can.

Thank you, and I am happy to take any questions.