



# 2022 ELECTION LANDSCAPE





Common Cause Georgia is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to strengthen public participation in our democracy and ensure that public officials and public institutions are accountable and responsive to citizens. We believe that voting should be free, fair and accessible for every eligible citizen, which is why we persevere in these efforts to protect and strengthen voting rights for all Georgians. We look for ways not only to defend and protect the right to vote, but to go on offense making sure people have the access and information they need. We seek to **EDUCATE** the public about voting challenges and what they can do, **MITIGATE** harmful consequences, and preserve information to **LITIGATE** when necessary.

## 2022 Elections

This is the first election cycle with newly drawn maps following Georgia's 2021 Redistricting. Races include midterm Congressional elections, a hotly contested gubernatorial race, and many state and local contests. The primary election in May saw high turnout amongst widespread confusion amongst voters about changes to their districts or polling places and new voting laws. We expect to see both of these elements amplified during the general election in November.

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# Redistricting

Article V, Section II, Paragraph VII of the Georgia Constitution grants the governor the power to convene a special session of the General Assembly. Such a special session was convened for the purpose of redrawing the district boundaries for state Senate, state House, and for Georgia's representatives in Congress in November 2021, following the arrival of the 2020 Census data.

The General Assembly pushed through new maps that will dictate Georgia's districts for the next **ten years**. While these maps might be beneficial to the politicians in power, they do not serve the voters of Georgia and fail to accurately reflect the changing population of our state. Maps should balance political ideology cohesiveness and community interest cohesiveness to produce districts that are both compact and competitive.

Georgia also failed to develop any clear standard for the process of drawing maps and did not update the benchmarks and guidelines from those used in 2010. This discounts many new ways for the public to participate in the process.

## EDUCATE

We will work to educate voters about the changes and ease the confusion in this first election cycle with the new maps. We will also encourage voters to always check their precinct information before voting and to report any inaccurate information that is on the Secretary of State's MyVoterPage as we noticed numerous problems with the site during the primary elections in May.

## MITIGATE

Redistricting will continue beyond the most recently drawn maps. We will work to improve the process for local redistricting and future state redistricting, including advocating for an independent redistricting commission.

## LITIGATE

Voting rights groups and Georgia voters filed a lawsuit in federal court in January 2022 charging that the 6th, 13th, and 14th Congressional Districts of Georgia in particular violate the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by intentionally denying Black communities in Georgia representation and equal protection of the law. The case, ***Common Cause, et al. v. Brad Raffensperger, et al.***, was brought on behalf of Common Cause, the League of Women Voters of Georgia, and individual Georgians. They are being represented by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and Dechert LLP.

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# Additional Challenges

## Disinformation:

Widespread disinformation is a growing problem across the country and Georgia has become a particular target after the national attention on our state following the 2020 Election. The false, stolen election narrative persists even now, with the evidence of the lies being borne out in the Special Committee hearings on the incidents of January 6th.

## Lack of Access to Broadband:

A particular challenge faced in many parts of Georgia is the lack of access to broadband and other technology, inhibiting voters' ability to engage in the democratic process, check for the voting information, or successfully apply for an absentee ballot.

## Emerging Threats:

Election Security issues are constantly evolving; we monitor developments with changes to our state's voting machines and advocate for secure tabulation machines and servers that are not vulnerable to cybersecurity threats. We also monitor and seek to provide resources around political violence and de-escalation of such threats.

## New Laws:

There has been an onslaught of anti-voter legislation passed in our state and throughout the country. Common Cause Georgia is committed to advocating against harmful legislation and suggesting changes to lessen the impact that it can have.

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# S.B. 202

Georgians are still adapting to Senate Bill 202, passed in 2021, which added the following changes to Georgia law:

- Mandatory early voting hours on Saturday, optional early voting on Sunday
- Allowing poll workers from neighboring counties
- Drastically limited number, hours, and locations of absentee ballot drop boxes
- Changes to provisional ballot requirements
  - Out-of-precinct provisional ballots no longer count unless cast after 5 p.m. and the voter signs a statement saying they could not make it to their home precinct in time
- Changes to ID requirements, including a requirement for “wet signatures,” meaning voters have to sign and scan in absentee ballot applications
- Allows a legislatively-controlled state board to takeover county elections offices and potentially interfere with election certification

## EDUCATE

We hold trainings for our own poll monitors and provide information for all Georgia voters about the changes to the law from S.B. 202. There remains confusion over the changes and meaning of certain provisions, such as what is meant by, “neighboring counties.” We strive to be a resource for voters in navigating the changes in the law.

## MITIGATE

S.B. 202 contains a number of potentially harmful measures. We are engaged in work to help alleviate the strain on election workers and help the voter experience.

## LITIGATE

Common Cause is actively engaged along with the NAACP, the Georgia Coalition for the People’s Agenda, Inc., the GALEO Latino Community Development Fund, Inc., League of Women Voters of Georgia, and the Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe. challenging provisions of S.B. 202 as violations of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. § 10301).



A person wearing a dark uniform with "GBI POLICE" printed on the back, standing in front of a wall with a framed picture.

## S.B. 441

- Georgia's legislature attempted to pass another omnibus voting bill in the 2022 Legislative Session. The bill was ultimately defeated, but one of its key provisions was tacked onto another bill on the last day of the session.
- The law gives the GBI **original jurisdiction** to identify and investigate any so-called election violations and allow the GBI to:
  - Issue subpoenas to compel document production,
  - Conduct audits of documents,
  - Compel individuals to obey subpoenas via the grant of an Order from the Superior Court.

### EDUCATE

It is also essential that Georgia citizens be made aware of both risks and limitations of the GBI's authority. One of the most significant concerns of this new litigation is that it will intimidate Georgia voters; we can best combat this by making sure the public has accurate information about the law.

### MITIGATE

Common Cause Georgia plans to propose an addition to the Rules and Regulations for the State of Georgia governing the GBI to mitigate the effects of S.B. 441. A new rule can ensure that there is no interference with the elections process or certification by elections officials. We will also engage in election protection groundwork and monitor elections investigations through our own records requests to counties.

### LITIGATE

As always, Common Cause Georgia will keep the potential for future lawsuits in mind and train volunteers to carefully document issues should the need arise to challenge the law in court. We will watch for any instances of voter intimidation related to this law and effectively document any issues and preserve relevant information.

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# TARGETED ELECTION EFFORTS

## **Recruitment and Mobilization:**

We intend to continue to build a voter protection volunteer network across the state to mobilize communities through phases of activation from early voting through the ballot certification period. We are also working to recruit more legal field volunteers to better respond to issues at the polls as they occur.

## **Fighting Disinformation:**

Provide coalition partners and local communities across the state with media literacy trainings, disinformation reports, disinformation trends, and access to 1:1 strategy sessions with disinformation experts in a think-tank setting to inoculate deleterious mis/disinformation narratives.

## **Self-Help Stations:**

Common Cause Georgia launched self help-stations during the primary election and plan to expand the effort for the general election. The stations are community co-sponsored spaces to provide much needed broadband accessibility and free printing and scanning services to voters in the targeted areas.

## **Open Records Requests:**

Common Cause Georgia diligently gathers records to ensure the retention of relevant election records. We send Open Records Requests to problematic counties after each election to capture information about provisional ballots, rejected absentee ballots, incidents at the polls, and voter machine malfunctions.

## **Certification Period:**

We are committed to working diligently, not just through Election Day, but afterwards. Given the challenges of recent elections, we anticipate issues with certification and possible recounts or election audits following the election in November.

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# Staff & Team Members



**Aunna Dennis**  
Executive Director

**Anne Gray Herring**  
Research & Policy  
Analyst

**Agnes Gray**  
Senior Engagement  
Organizer

**Cierra Franklin**  
Engagement  
Organizer

We are a growing team, working to expand our efforts in Georgia. In addition to our in-state staff members, dedicated interns and fellows, contractors, and volunteers on the ground, we also have the resources of Common Cause's national organization, including a communications team, voting and elections staff, and a network of offices across the country so we can compare the laws and trends of Georgia to that of other states.