



March 14, 2017

The Honorable Brian Kemp  
The Office of the Georgia Secretary of State  
Georgia State Capitol,  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I'm writing on behalf of Common Cause's 13,000 members and supporters in Georgia to express our serious concern about reports of a cyberattack on the Kennesaw State University Elections Center. In order to safeguard the integrity of the upcoming 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District special election, we urge your office to use paper ballots.

Little information is available about the breach, but the public is fully aware that the FBI is investigating. Computer security experts and candidates have asked a number of important questions about the intrusion and its possible impact on Georgia's election systems, but no detailed answers have been forthcoming. We write today to ask for immediate action to protect the integrity of the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District special election, which is potentially at risk.

We understand that the KSU Elections Center is responsible for both pre-election testing and programming of the voting machines and that this system has been attacked.

There is a lot we do not know. At this point, we don't know if the attacker inserted malware that infected pre-election testing and election management systems – and therefore will impact vote tallies. We understand that at this point even the investigative teams covering this crime may not have answers.

What we do know, with just over two weeks remaining before the beginning of early voting on March 27, is that it is imperative to ensure that every vote is counted as cast so that voters can have confidence in election outcomes.

Accordingly, **we strongly urge you to bypass the electronic systems Georgia normally uses and conduct the special election using paper poll books and paper ballots.**

- 1) We urge polling locations to have paper poll books on hand. E-poll books can fail to boot up or shut down on Election Day – especially if they have been infected by malware. Until we know for certain which elements of the Georgia State election systems were impacted by the breach, it's wise to have paper copies of registered voters.
- 2) Voters should be required to mark and cast paper ballots. Proper accommodation should be made for voters with disabilities so that they can vote privately and independently per federal

law. Georgia allows the use of emergency paper ballots and paper provisional ballots during the regular election season. These paper ballots should be deployed in this special election. Those ballots should be tallied by hand, or, if scanners are used to tally the ballots, they should be subject to a risk limiting audit to confirm that the reported outcome is accurate.

This is a sensible, practical course of action, even given the limited time available. This is only ONE race, in ONE Congressional district. That is a far cry from the complicated task of running a general election with many races and other issues on the ballot. It is worth noting that because of concerns about cyber intrusions on its voting systems, and the vulnerability of counting software to hacking, The Netherlands announced plans on February 1 to run its national election on paper ballots and to count those ballots by hand. That election will take place March 15. The voting population in The Netherlands population is over 12 million. million. The voting population in Georgia's 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional district is less than 700,000.

Paper poll books and ballots and a risk limiting audit must be utilized to assure that the person elected to represent the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District is the true choice of the voters. The health of our democracy depends on public confidence that our voting systems work smoothly and deliver accurate results. And Georgia can empower itself against any outside attacks.

Sincerely,

JON SINTON

Jon Sinton  
Chairman, Common Cause Georgia  
(404) 524-4598  
[Jsinton@commoncause.org](mailto:Jsinton@commoncause.org)

CC: The Honorable Nathan Deal, Governor  
The Honorable Casey Cagle, Lieutenant Governor  
The Honorable Chris Carr, Attorney General  
The Honorable David Ralston, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable David Shafer, Senate President Pro Tem