



Karen C. Handel
Georgia Secretary of State
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VIA FAX: 404-656-0513

Nancy Boren
Executive Director
Columbus-Muscogee County Elections & Registration Office
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Columbus, Georgia 31901
VIA FAX: (706) 653-4394

April 14, 2008

Dear Secretary Handel and Director Boren,

We are writing to express serious concern regarding the erroneous disfranchisement of up to 700 Georgians who were recently informed by your office that they were ineligible to vote because of felony convictions. As representatives of the American Civil Liberties Union, an organization that has committed to protecting democracy by ensuring that all eligible Americans are able to exercise their fundamental right to vote, we are deeply concerned about this error.

Voting is the bedrock of American democracy. As Secretary of State, you are entrusted with protecting the integrity of the electoral process by helping Georgia citizens register and vote with ease and confidence, and guiding the actions of your constituent offices to this end. As such, instead of encouraging citizens who receive the letter in error to call your office, it is your office that should bear the burden of contacting these individuals to correct your serious mistake. Accordingly, we urge you to take the following affirmative steps to correct this error and ensure that it is not repeated: 1) conduct a thorough and speedy review of the individuals disqualified to determine how many individuals were incorrectly purged from the voter rolls and exactly who they are; 2) contact all incorrectly disqualified individuals immediately by phone and mail to notify them of their reinstatement; 3) develop a new protocol for properly notifying ineligible voters of their ineligibility that does not disfranchise qualified voters; 4) widely disseminate this new protocol to restore public confidence in your offices' abilities to safeguard the integrity of Georgia's elections; and 5) conduct a comprehensive review of disfranchisement protocols in all Georgia counties to determine whether similar errors have occurred in other jurisdictions and/or whether other counties' disfranchisement protocols put them at risk of repeating this mistake.

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We would also like to know how your office determined who should be disqualified in the first place. Given that Georgia law disfranchises people convicted of felonies involving "moral turpitude," but that no such list of crimes that meet this term exists in the state Constitution or statutes, we remain concerned that Georgia's flawed felony disfranchisement law leaves your office vulnerable to errors regarding voter eligibility.

We request the favor of a response within two weeks. Should you require any advice or guidance from the ACLU as you move forward, please do not hesitate to be in touch with the undersigned.

Sincerely,



Laleh Ispahani
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