

# ELECTION PROTECTION YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

For Immediate Release  
Contact: Clare Schexnyder  
Georgia Election Protection  
(404) 310.1028  
**October 31, 2007**

## **Clear Case of Voter Intimidation in Statesboro, Georgia**

*Student voters face police questioning at polls, challenges to residency, provisional ballots and a misinformation campaign to discourage voting*

Statesboro, GA – Georgia Southern University students report intimidation by police officers when they tried to vote at Statesboro City Hall. Advance voting began Monday for City Council elections in Statesboro, Georgia.

On Monday, uniformed police officers stationed at City Hall were questioning students and attempting to prevent them from exercising their right to vote.

According to Charles Lester who is representing several Georgia Southern students on behalf of Georgia Election Protection and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, "The mere presence of police officers at the polling place can often have an intimidating effect. The Statesboro police have gone beyond that and have actively interfered with the election process."

Lester notes accounts from students attempting to vote on Monday:

- One police officer told a student if he did not update his ID to reflect his residency in Bulloch County, the police officer would give him a ticket the next time he pulled him over.
- Another police officer demanded that a student show him where she lived on a map of the district and attempted to prevent her from voting.
- Another student asked a police officer to have a candidate stand over 150 feet from the polling place, as the candidate was legally required to do, but the police officer refused to act upon this reasonable request.

Another form of intimidation comes from residency challenges to 909 Georgia Southern University students. 39 students who voted Monday were on the list of challenged voters. These students had to vote on paper ballots. It is unclear how the Bulloch County registrar will determine which votes should be counted. ***One poll worker told a group of students their ballots would most likely be discarded!***

In addition, before the election, one of the incumbent council members said that students' financial aid would be taken away and their parents' tax returns would be questioned if the students voted in the Statesboro municipal election. This is not true, but a misinformation campaign of rumors to the contrary made its way through the campus of Georgia Southern University.

**Georgia Election Protection** has issued a letter to the Statesboro City Attorney asking for the intimidation to stop and reminding the city and county that voter intimidation is a felony and violates both Georgia and federal law.

**Georgia Election Protection** has also requested that the election supervisor be advised that it is illegal to have police officers at the polls without justification. If there is some legitimate reason for their presence, the police officers must refrain from speaking with people who are attempting to vote.

**Georgia Election Protection** also advised the Bulloch County Registrar as to the correct procedures to consider voter challenges under O.C.G.A. § 21-2-230(b): (b) Upon the filing of such challenge, the board of registrars shall immediately consider such challenge and determine whether probable cause exists to sustain such challenge. If the registrars do not find probable cause, the challenge shall be denied. If the registrars find probable cause, the registrars shall notify the poll officers of the challenged elector's precinct or, if the challenged elector voted by absentee ballot, notify the poll officers at the absentee ballot precinct and, if practical, notify the challenged elector and afford such elector an opportunity to answer.

**Georgia EP** also advised the registrar it harbors serious doubts the group challenging the 900+ student residencies has provided or will provide the necessary specific, individualized proof to establish the students are not residents of Statesboro or Bulloch County. It's been well-established for several decades that it is unconstitutional to treat students differently than other members of the community in determining residency for voting.

Election Protection is the nation's largest non-partisan voter protection coalition. The national legal program for Election Protection is led by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the legal program for Georgia Election Protection is led by a group of lawyers from law firms, public interest organizations, and minority bar associations. Election Protection guides voters through the voting process, helping to ensure that all eligible voters have the opportunity to cast a meaningful ballot and have their vote counted.

Election Protection is a resource for all Americans. The program centers on traditionally disenfranchised communities including: African Americans, Latinos, and other racial, ethnic, and language minorities; seniors; young people; low-income voters; and individuals with disabilities. Georgia Election Protection brings these programs to the state.

*To gain contact information for Charles Lester or to learn more about the students the Georgia Election Protection is representing, please contact Clare Schexnyder at 404.310.1028 or e-mail: [clarenic1@yahoo.com](mailto:clarenic1@yahoo.com)*