

First I want to thank you, Chairman Style and the esteemed members of the Committee on House Administration for the invitation to speak here today. It is through these efforts that we can strengthen our nation's democratic foundation and ensure that every voice is heard. I am Vernetta Keith Nuriddin a native of Atlanta, Georgia. I served on the Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections from March of 2017 until June of 2021 during the 2018 Midterm elections and the 2020 Presidential election as well as through the enactment of HB316 and SB202.

Before I talk about SB202, I want to step back to HB316 for moment. HB316 established the Dominion voting equipment as the uniform state voting equipment for Georgia. Like in 2002, when the state legislature approved the usage of the Deebold Voting Machines for the midterm elections, HB316 was widely criticized for its cost and for the corruptibility of the equipment. I bring up the voting machines past and present because both were a direct response of the public following the 2000 Presidential election. There was a public outcry to reduce the time it took to tabulate elections results. Although greatly scrutinized, HB316 too was a direct response to the public outcry for the need of a paper audit of Georgia's elections results. This was due largely in part to individuals and organizations advocating for paper ballots. I maintain that concerns of costs and corruptibility of the voting machines are valid and should be mitigated. Having said that, I am not sure if any voting system can be designed nor created that would not have major opposition.

Following the devastation caused by Covid-19, and the unforeseeable impact that it would have on the 2020 elections, the Georgia legislature enacted SB202 which among other things made sweeping changes to the absentee ballot process requiring the voter to provide an acceptable identification number, RCV for UOCOVA voters and prevents third parties from sending voters duplicate requests for absentee ballots. There was a public outcry for changes in the AB process resulting from the delays in voters receiving and returning their ab to county elections offices reported by eligible voters residing in and outside of the US as well as legitimate concerns about ballot harvesting.

The proponents of the bill believed that stricter laws were needed to protect the absentee ballot process while opponents argue that the law negatively impacts poor communities that may not have valid identification nor access to equipment needed to copy their voter ID cards. So, this bill like HB316 was a party-line vote. The challenges that I personally, and I imagine many other Americans, have is that laws passed by majority party line vote, whether Democrat or Republican, is perceived to only advance legislation that aligns with that party's priorities and policy agenda. Why is this bad for elections? Mainly because no matter who casts doubt in our electoral system, voter confidence on the electoral process decreases while voter apathy increases for everyone. When the American people are caught in the middle of the political sparring between the parties, we all lose.

In my experience in elections and as a faithful steward of the elections process, I have learned that whether a voter uses punch-cards, DRE machines, Ballot marking devices or paper ballots, voter confidence is directly tied to whether their candidate of choice wins. And, it is always the losing faction that wants to create doubt in our elections process. I am hopeful that the members of the Committee on House Administration, as well as all the leaders here in this room today want what I want...fair and transparent elections. Voter confidence will grow only with complete transparency and the enactment of election laws reached by consensus. I have faith that this can and will happen. Thank you for your time.