Working the polls in Georgia

A crucial contribution to a functioning democracy

Emory University, July 2020
Voting in US elections

• In 2016: 136,669,276 votes were counted nationwide
  • Georgia: 4,114,732

• Nationwide (according SPAE 2016):
  • 54% vote in person on Election day
  • 24% voted by mail
  • 22% voted in person early
Despite increasing early votes and mail ballots, 3 out of 4 votes are in person (over 100 million people).
Overall, in-person voting is pretty smooth, with wait times averaging less than 15 minutes.
But Georgia has had some issues…
Voting in US elections

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2008: 2\textsuperscript{nd} longest wait
2012: 8\textsuperscript{th} longest
2016: 2\textsuperscript{nd} longest
Voting in US elections

June 9, 2020: Primary Election day

Hours-long lines around metro Atlanta
What happened?

• *Blame to go around*: Sec. of State’s office, County boards of elections, Covid.

• **Major issue**: Lack of poll workers (*w/ limited training on new machines*).

Fulton County normally has 1,600 poll workers.

In June 2020: fewer than 500, fueled by (understandable!) covid risk concerns.
Poll Workers

2018 midterm election: More than 600,000 poll workers in >200,000 polling places nationwide.

• 56% of poll workers were over the age of 60 (in 2016)
• Only 18% were under 40!

• 65% of jurisdictions say it is “difficult” to recruit poll workers
Poll Workers

In Georgia, new electronic voter machines make tech-savviness especially important.

In 2020 we need more poll workers, especially those under 40:
  • Lower risk of covid complications
  • Facility with technology
How to get involved

1. Register to vote if you have not already
   • https://registertovote.sos.ga.gov/GAOLVR/welcome.do

2. Read through the requirements:
   • You must be a U.S. citizen; a resident of the county where you will be working; 16 years of age or over; able to read, write and speak the English language; and have no felony convictions.
   • A poll worker cannot be a candidate for public office or hold a public office, other than a political party office, while serving as a poll worker.
   • A parent, spouse, child, brother, sister, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law of a candidate cannot serve as a poll worker in any precinct where that candidate is listed on the ballot.

Check Out TurboVote: emory.turbovote.org
How to get involved

3. Apply in your county (entry-level job is “Clerk”)

- **Cobb**: [https://www.cobbcounty.org/elections/employment/election-day-poll-worker-jobs](https://www.cobbcounty.org/elections/employment/election-day-poll-worker-jobs)
- **Newton**: [https://www.co.newton.ga.us/175/Poll-Official-Information](https://www.co.newton.ga.us/175/Poll-Official-Information)

Or register via GA Secretary of State: [https://securevotega.com/pollworker-signup/](https://securevotega.com/pollworker-signup/)
How to get involved

Job description:

• Pay Rate: $110 per election; $15 per training session
• Minimum Hours on election day: 6:00 a.m. – Closeout (~14 hours)
How to get involved

4. Review training materials online

- [https://georgiapollworkers.sos.ga.gov/Pages/default.aspx](https://georgiapollworkers.sos.ga.gov/Pages/default.aspx)

- There are training videos and documents at the above link

How to get involved

5. Do official training

This may be in person, or more likely, online.

6. Show up to your appointed site!
Other ways to get involved:

• Effort to help recruit youth poll workers
  • “Push for 5k”: https://forms.gle/zz6NwRsdRGBwFsYS9
  • @ga_youth_pollworkers

• Emory Votes Initiative
  • http://campuslife.emory.edu/about/initiatives/evi.html

• Partisan poll watching
  • https://gagop.org/election-day-operations-volunteer-sign-up/
  • https://www.georgiademocrat.org/voter-protection/voter-protection-volunteer-opportunities/