

ACLU reaches settlement on status of voters

If residents move to home in same county, active status remains.

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Voters in Georgia will no longer be declared inactive when they fail to confirm their addresses after moving within the same county, according to a settlement announced Friday.

The settlement resolves a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia alleging that the state wasn't complying with laws requiring election officials to automatically update voters' addresses.

Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp agreed in the settlement to keep voters in active status after they move to a new residence in the same county, even if they don't return a letter asking them to verify their new addresses.

Declaring voters "inactive" didn't make them ineligible to vote. Instead, it started a process where they could be removed from voting rolls if they didn't vote any time in the next two federal election cycles or had no contact with election officials for four years.

The ACLU's complaint began after Stacey Hopkins, a Fulton County resident, received a letter informing her she needed to confirm her voting address after moving in May 2016. About 160,000 Georgians received the same notice as Hopkins in the previous four years, according to the ACLU. "Ms. Hopkins' tenacity and dedication to our shared American principles has protected nearly 160,000 Georgians' sacred constitutional right to vote," said Sean Young, the legal director for the ACLU of Georgia. "She proves that one person can make a difference."

Voters who move within a county will receive a letter from the Secretary of State's Office notifying them that their address has been updated based on the change-of-address form they submitted to the U.S. Postal Service.

Kemp said it's important to maintain accurate voter lists to prevent voter fraud. "Today, Georgia scored another victory for keeping the voter rolls up to date," Kemp said. "This agreement allows us to continue robust voter list maintenance in the future, and we will continue our work to keep the rolls accurate." The Secretary of State's Office in July began keeping all voters who move within the same county on active status.

Voters who move to a different county in Georgia must still respond to the state's letter in order to remain on active status.