

# Opinion: Safeguard access, security of democracy's sacred rite

**Opinion Updated Nov 16, 2018**

**By John Barrow**

Not too long ago, the Supreme Court wrote, “No right is more precious in a free country than that of having a choice in the election of those who make the laws under which, as good citizens, they must live. Other rights, even the most basic, are illusory if the right to vote is undermined.” And there are many ways to undermine the right to vote.

Anything we do that makes it harder than necessary for honest citizens to register, stay registered, or vote undermines their right to vote. I believe that it should be as easy for every Georgia citizen to vote as it is for any Georgia citizen to vote.

Throughout my time in public office, I've worked to ensure that everyone who is eligible can exercise their right to vote. For example, I voted to renew the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This important law protected the right to vote from small and subtle policies that would make it harder than necessary for some citizens to vote.

I've worked to make our elections safe, accessible, and fair — to increase the ease of access and reduce the chance of fraud. In Congress, I voted for new and improved ID laws recommended by the 9/11 Commission, and I also voted to require those IDs to be used for voting, so long as they made commonsense exceptions for honest citizens who cannot get or produce their IDs. (Think of seniors for whom there literally are no birth certificates, or our soldiers on the battlefields of Afghanistan.)

Many of the issues these past weeks have centered on former Secretary Kemp's purging of the voter rolls. Of course we need to update and maintain accurate voter rolls. That's good practice, and federal law requires it. But I believe we should update our voter rolls with information that is accurate, like death certificates and change-of-address notices filed by voters themselves, so that honest citizens are not purged by mistake. Both of these are more reliable and fair than sending out a notice that is easily mistaken for junk mail.

It is true that we've had Democratic and Republican secretaries of state who have resigned to run for higher office, and it is also true that we've had Democratic and Republican secretaries of state who haven't. My father, the late Judge James Barrow, taught me when I was a little boy that no man can be judge of his own case, and I guess it's even more obvious that no politician can be judge of his own election.

And finally, we're long overdue for a new and improved way of casting our votes. You can't say that our votes are counted exactly as we cast them if they are recorded on an electronic medium that cannot be read by the voter or by those charged with counting the votes, much less recounting the votes. I was the first, and now I'm the only, candidate for Secretary of State to call the decertification of our current machines in favor of hand-marked paper ballots and optical scanners in our elections. That's the gold standard of reliability and security, that's what other states are doing, and that's what we should be doing. And I pledge to ensure that every vote is counted. Citizens take time to cast their votes for the government that will represent them, and they deserve to have their votes counted.

For many years, most folks haven't put much thought into the office of Secretary of State. But on November 6th, all of us received a civics lesson on the importance of this office, and how that office affects all of us at the most sacred time in our democracy — on Election Day. The good news is that another Election Day is fast approaching on December 4th. And on December 4th, we get to make a decision.

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# Opinion: Ga. needs fair, open, accurate, secure elections

**Opinion Nov 17, 2018**  
**By Brad Raffensperger**

On July 4, 1944, Primus King, a duly registered voter, walked into the Muscogee County Courthouse to cast a ballot in the primary election. He was thrown out into the street.

It took almost two years for the Supreme Court to uphold Primus King's right to vote. What happened to Primus King was a horrible injustice. Regretfully, Georgia's past is stained with similar injustices.

As I think about the role of the Secretary of State as Georgia's Chief Election Officer, I step back from the passions and overheated partisan rhetoric of a hotly contested election. As an engineer, I think about the "machinery" of elections. I think about the process. What can we do to make the process more transparent? What can we do to make the process more accessible? What can we do to make the process more accurate? What can we do to make the process objectively fair?

At the same time, I think about whether the results yielded by the process are ones that Georgians subjectively see as trustworthy.

For Georgians to trust an election, they must be able to see for themselves that the process was fair. The way to do this is for Georgians to see that the process was open.

Georgians all agree that we should strive for voter rolls that are clean, up-to-date and accurate. Georgians all agree that registration should be streamlined but maintain accuracy.

Accuracy is not suppression when it is applied with Wisdom, Justice and Moderation. Voter protection is not discrimination when it is applied with Wisdom, Justice and Moderation. Up-to-date and accurate voter rolls are not the enemy of participation when applied with Wisdom, Justice and Moderation.

Unlike my opponent, I haven't pre-determined that there is one magic bullet in only one particular voting system that solves every problem. In fact, I note that the current fiasco in Florida is being conducted on my opponent's so-called gold standard. Among the states, there are at least seven different voting systems in use at present.

As we change over to a new voting system, Georgia has an historic, one-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a process that is objectively fair which yields an outcome that Georgians, individually and as a whole, subjectively trust. We don't need another lifetime politician to tell us that there's only one "right" way to do something, the way that he's already decided that it's going to be. Rather than saying that I alone have the one and only right answer, I propose to involve nonpartisan expert organizations like the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia.

While we are all equal before the law, most Georgians will live their entire lives without having to go to court. Thus, it is through voting where we actually live the proposition that we are all equal. Every registered voter gets one vote. Bill Gates gets one vote. The 19-year-old college student gets one vote. And thus, we reaffirm as regular and as often as every election season, the idea that makes us one. We are *all* equal before the law. We *all* count. We *all* have a voice.

We can go with yet another pre-determined, pre-decided so-called "gold standard" that my opponent proposes, that even as you read this is being made a mockery of in Florida. In contrast, my view is that this election is

about using this unique and historic opportunity to create a voting system that is modern, efficient, accurate, secure, safe, verifiable, fair, accessible, and trustworthy.

As your Secretary of State, I promise to you that I will devote myself to creating a system that would be worthy of patriots like Primus King.

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