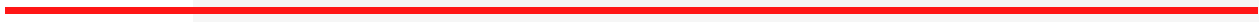
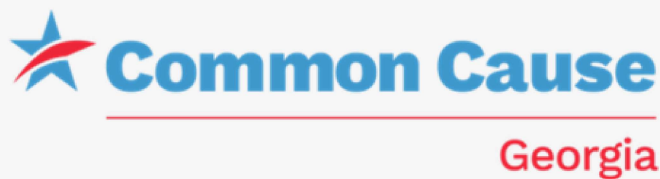


2021- 2022

# LEGISLATIVE SESSION DEBRIEF





Common Cause Georgia is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to strengthen public participation in our democracy and ensure that public officials and public institutions are accountable and responsive to citizens. Through a powerful combination of coalition building, lobbying and litigation, grassroots organizing, policy development, research, and public education, we spotlight local, state and national issues that affect every Georgian.

## Legislative Advocacy

Common Cause Georgia ("CCGA") monitors the activity of the Georgia General Assembly during the regular legislative session from January - April and any special legislative sessions convened throughout the year. When appropriate, CCGA submits written testimony on proposed bills, gives public comment at committee hearings, provides questions and talking points to state senators and representatives, and keeps the public informed of relevant legislation.

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# 2021 Special Legislative Session

Article V, Section II, Paragraph VII of the Georgia Constitution grants the governor the power to convene a special session of the General Assembly. Such a special session was convened for the purpose of redrawing the district boundaries for state Senate, state House, and for Georgia's representatives in Congress in November 2021, following the arrival of the 2020 Census data.

Georgia legislators met to present and vote upon new district maps that will be in place for the next **10 years**. The legislature's process lacked transparency, provided minimal opportunity for public input, and rushed the process of adopting new maps.

Common Cause Georgia, along with many other organizations and Georgia citizens, testified against the proposed maps before their passage. In her testimony, Executive Director Aunna Dennis highlighted CCGA's concerns, stating "the patterns of the past are repeating themselves in 2021. The maps that have been presented solidify racial voter polarization while impacting precinct allocations. This is very harmful when we look toward the 2024 election. Mapping lines should not be used to manipulate local delegations to secure future federal wins."

## OUTCOMES

The General Assembly adopted newly drawn maps that will dictate Georgia's districts for the next ten years. While these maps might be beneficial to the politicians in power, they are a disgrace to the voters of Georgia and fail to accurately reflect the changing population of our state.

Voting rights groups and Georgia voters filed a lawsuit in federal court in January 2022 charging that the 6th, 13th, and 14th Congressional Districts of Georgia in particular violate the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by intentionally denying Black communities in Georgia representation and equal protection of the law. The case, *Common Cause, et al. v. Brad Raffensperger, et al.*, was brought on behalf of Common Cause, the League of Women Voters of Georgia, and individual Georgians. They are being represented by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and Dechert LLP.

The first primary election using the new maps will take place on May 24, 2022.

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# 2022 Legislative Session

Common Cause Georgia monitored a number of bills during the most recent legislative session, lending its voice in support or opposition where needed.

BILL	POSITION	STATUS
<b>S.B. 580</b> PROHIBITING DONATIONS TO PACS DURING LEGISLATIVE SESSION.	SUPPORT	NOT PASSED
<b>H.B. 1385</b> REQUIRING DIGITAL SHAPEFILES TO BE FILED WITH LEGISLATIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL REAPPORTIONMENT OFFICE	EXPRESSED CONCERN	PASSED
<b>H.B. 159</b> ESTABLISHING OF A CYBER-SECURITY BOARD	SUPPORT	NOT PASSED
<b>H.R. 842</b> SALARY INCREASE FOR STATE SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES OT HALF OF THE MEDIAN INCOME IN GEORGIA	EXPRESSED CONCERN	WILL BE ON BALLOT IN NOVEMBER
<b>H.R. 623</b> STAGGERED FOUR YEAR TERMS FOR STATE SENATORS	OPPOSE	NOT PASSED
<b>H.B. 923</b> CAP OF PER DIEM ALLOWANCES AVAILABLE TO DIRECTORS OF DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES	SUPPORT	PASSED
<b>S.B. 171</b> DUBBED BY ITS SUPPORTERS AS THE "SAFE COMMUNITIES ACT," BUT CONTAINED A NUMBER OF FIRST AMENDMENT CONCERNS, EXPOSURE FOR CITIES AND COUNTIES, AND CRIMINALIZATION OF LEGAL PROTESTS.	OPPOSE	NOT PASSED

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# Elections Bills

In the aftermath of the 2020 Elections and S.B. 202, we continued to pay particular attention to efforts in the state legislature to further restrict access to the ballot and the underhanded tactics employed to pass such legislation in the face of widespread opposition.

BILL	POSITION	STATUS
<b>H.B. 1085</b> RANKED CHOICE VOTING	SUPPORT	NOT PASSED
<b>H.B. 933</b> REMOVAL OF UNDER SEAL PROVISIONS FOR BALLOTS/INCREASED PUBLIC INSPECTION OF BALLOTS	OPPOSE	NOT PASSED
<b>H.B. 1464</b> OMNIBUS ELECTIONS BILL, INCLUDING PROVISIONS CONTAINING: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AMBIGUOUS LANGUAGE OF THE PUBLIC INSPECTIONS PROVISIONS ADAPTED FROM H.B. 933</li><li>• LIMITS ON DONATIONS TO ELECTIONS OFFICES</li><li>• INCREASED ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS FOR ELECTIONS WORKERS</li><li>• REDUCTION OF THE NUMBER OF VOTING MACHINES</li><li>• SWEEPING NEW AUTHORITY TO THE GBI TO INVESTIGATE ELECTIONS</li></ul>	OPPOSE	STRIPPED IN THE SENATE ETHICS COMMITTEE AND ULTIMATLEY NOT PASSED
 <b>S.B. 89</b> FRUSTRATED THAT THE SENATE STRIPPED THE BILL OF MOST OF THE HARMFUL PROVISIONS, THE HOUSE ADDED MANY OF THEM TO A DORMANT SENATE BILL 72 HOURS BEFORE THE END OF THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION	OPPOSE	NOT PASSED
 <b>S.B. 441</b> ALERTED TO THE FAILURE OF S.B.89, MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE TACKLED THE GBI PROVISIONS ONTO A BILL WITH BI-PARTISAN SUPPORT AS A LAST DITCH EFFORT TO PUSH THEM THROUGH.	OPPOSE	PASSED

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# What will S.B. 441 do?

## THE GBI PROVISIONS OF PREVIOUS ELECTIONS WERE ADDED TO THIS LEGISLATION

Senate Bill 441 will reestablish the Criminal Case Data Exchange Board as an advisory Board to the Council of Superior Court Clerks and accompanying provisions, an effort with bi-partisan support. However, provisions allowing the Georgia Bureau of Investigations to investigate Georgia's elections were added on the last day of session.

The law will give the GBI **original jurisdiction** to identify and investigate any so-called election violations and allow the GBI to:

- Issue subpoenas to compel document production,
- Conduct audits of documents,
- Compel individuals to obey subpoenas via the grant of an Order from the Superior Court.

# What can WE do about S.B. 441?

## MITIGATE

Common Cause Georgia plans to propose an addition to the Rules and Regulations for the State of Georgia governing the GBI to mitigate the effects of S.B. 441. A new rule can ensure that there is no interference with the elections process or certification by elections officials.

## EDUCATE

It is also essential that Georgia citizens be made aware of both risks and limitations of the GBI's authority. One of the most significant concerns of this new litigation is that it will intimidate Georgia voters; we can best combat this by making sure the public has accurate information about the law.

## LITIGATE

As always, Common Cause Georgia will keep the potential for future lawsuits in mind and train volunteers to carefully document issues should the need arise to challenge the law in court.

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# Looking Ahead

## 2022 ELECTIONS



2022 will see midterm Congressional elections, a gubernatorial race, and many state and local contests. Primary elections will be this May, with the general election in November.

Common Cause Georgia will continue educating voters about changes to the laws, supporting election workers and polling places, recruiting volunteers, conducting poll monitor trainings, and escalating issues with access to the polls for appropriate legal action.

Voting should be free, fair and accessible for every eligible citizen, which is why we persevere in these efforts to protect and strengthen voting rights for all Georgians and ensure that every vote is counted as cast.

**NEW LAWS HAVE  
CHANGED THE RULES  
FOR GEORGIA  
ELECTIONS AND  
ELECTION OFFICIALS  
AND VOTERS ALIKE  
NEED HELP NAVIGATING  
THESE CHANGES.**

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# Staff & Team Members



**Aunna Dennis**  
Executive Director

**Anne Gray Herring**  
Research & Policy  
Analyst

**Agnes Gray**  
Senior Engagement  
Organizer

**Cierra Franklin**  
Engagement  
Organizer

We are a growing team, working to expand our efforts in Georgia. In addition to our in-state staff members and volunteers on the ground, we also have the resources of Common Cause's national organization, including a communications team, voting and elections staff, and a network of offices across the country so we can compare the laws and trends of Georgia to that of other states.