



Via US Mail

October 27, 2015

Gwinnett County Board of Elections and Voter Registration
75 Langley Drive
Lawrenceville, GA 30046
Attn: Lynn Ledford, Division Director

RE: Bilingual Voting Materials for Gwinnett County’s Spanish Speaking Voters

Dear Ms. Ledford:

LatinoJustice PRLDEF is a nonprofit, nonpartisan civil legal defense and education fund established in 1972 advancing Latino civil and constitutional rights through litigation, legal advocacy and education. The Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials (GALEO) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization established in 2003 to increase civic engagement and leadership development for Latinos across Georgia.

We write on behalf of our organizations to request bilingual voting materials for Spanish speaking voters in Gwinnett County. Often times, ballots are complex and difficult to understand for native English speakers. Without Spanish language voting materials Latino voters are not encouraged to participate in the electoral process at risk of being disenfranchised. Moreover, the lack of translated materials deprives Latino voters of casting a meaningful vote especially with regard to public referenda. By providing Spanish language materials, voters with limited English proficiency can understand and fully exercise their voting right.

The Voting Rights Act prohibits conditioning the right to vote due to a person’s inability to speak, read or understand English for those persons educated in American flag schools whose primary language is not English.¹ This primarily protects Puerto Rican voters as they are native born American citizens and should not lose their right to vote simply because of language barriers when moving to the mainland United States. The lack of bilingual voting materials prevents Spanish speaking Puerto Ricans from fully participating in the Electoral process.

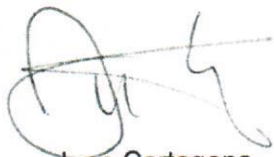
¹ 52 U.S.C. § 10303 formerly cited as 42 USC § 1973b. The U.S. Supreme Court’s Shelby County decision struck down a different provision of the Voting Rights Act.

Based on U.S. Census data, 20.5% of Gwinnett County's 877,922 residents is Hispanic² and 13,448 of the Hispanic population is Puerto Rican³. There are 148,737 Spanish speakers in Gwinnett County and 43.9% speak English less than "very well".⁴ Without Spanish language voting materials, Latino voters are at risk of being disenfranchised simply because of language barriers.

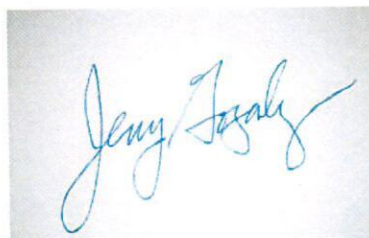
In order for Latinos to fully participate in the electoral process, we urge you to provide Spanish language materials including but not limited to: ballots, voter guides, bilingual poll workers and website information. These materials will remove voting barriers for Spanish speaking voters and will encourage active participation at the polls.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you or a member of your staff to discuss best implementation practices and ways that we can possibly assist as you provide the requested materials to Gwinnett County voters. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact us at the information below.

Sincerely,



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² U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-year American Community Survey

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates