

March 9, 2022

Karen Brinson Bell
Executive Director
North Carolina State Board of Elections
430 North Salisbury Street
Raleigh, NC 27603

Re: Letter Calling for Emergency Action Against Increasing Trend of Voter Intimidation

The undersigned voting rights organizations write to you today regarding a disturbing set of incidents which have taken place recently relating to voting in North Carolina.

On approximately February 16, 2022, we received reports of unidentified individuals going door-to-door in Brunswick County seeking to verify that elderly voters who cast a ballot in 2020 were alive. We were informed the unidentified individuals were white, whereas the voters who were targeted were Black. Importantly, this group did not identify themselves nor affirmatively state that they were unaffiliated with the state or county board of elections – leaving it unclear to those who answered the door whether this was an official investigation.

Two of the targeted voters, John and Eliza Sloan, told their story to WECT.¹ Mr. Sloan is a Black 100-year-old World War II veteran. His wife was very surprised to see two women show up at her door, demanding to come inside their home to confirm he was alive. Much of this incident was captured on the Sloans' Ring doorbell footage. Ms. Sloan stated, "It made me feel very uncomfortable, and after they left it made me feel even more uncomfortable." The Sloans reported this incident to the North Carolina NAACP.

Furthermore, a recent report issued by Democracy NC and the Southern Coalition for Social Justice on the 2020 election documented an alarming trend of behavior causing voters to feel intimidated while trying to exercise their fundamental right to vote.²

¹<https://www.wect.com/2022/02/15/brunswick-family-left-with-questions-following-unexpected-visit-volunteers-asking-about-voting-records/>

²The 2020 Election Protection Report is an analysis of over 13,000 phone calls North Carolina voters made to a voter assistance hotline (888-OUR-VOTE) as well as from thousands of volunteers, who observed polling places and helped voters during the 2020 election. This report documents 546 calls about voter intimidation incidents or questions about what constitutes voter intimidation, such as guns at voting sites, police presence, and electioneering within the 50-foot buffer zone. Read the full report at <http://demnc.co/epreport>.

We are seriously concerned about these incidents and the possibility they will grow in frequency and intensity absent additional action by state and county election officials.

We write to you today to request you swiftly take the following measures to protect North Carolina voters from intimidation in 2022:

1. Create new resources to help North Carolinians identify and report incidents of voter intimidation.

There is little information available for North Carolinians who are the victims of voter harassment and intimidation. The State Board of Elections [voter intimidation webpage](#) offers no information to help voters identify harassment and intimidation. There is also no information available to help voters who are the victims of intimidation outside of a voting site. We ask you to immediately update the voter intimidation webpage to include this information.

We also request that you create a statewide, unified system for reporting voter intimidation incidents so that North Carolinians and county boards of elections can easily report these incidents. This resource should be easily accessible from the main NCSBE webpage, and translated into multiple languages so no individual is prevented from reporting an incident because of a language barrier.

2. Launch a public education campaign to help voters understand voter intimidation – and how to report instances of voter intimidation.

As we gear up for the 2022 election season, we ask you to design and launch a campaign to educate North Carolinians about voter intimidation. This campaign should include an explainer on how to use the voter intimidation reporting tool and updated website outlined above.

We ask that this public education campaign include multiple media formats (social media, television, radio) and be available in multiple languages. This information should live on a webpage easily accessible from the NCSBE.gov homepage, and could be modeled after the NCSBE's disinformation webpage.³

3. Launch a public education campaign to help voters understand how voter registration rolls are maintained by election officials.

³<https://www.ncsbe.gov/about-elections/election-security/combating-misinformation>

The State Board of Elections has issued a statement that these “volunteers” were not election officials, and that voters do not need to verify their identity or voting status to third-party groups.⁴ However, public statements issued primarily to the press are not enough to reach voters.

We ask you to launch a campaign to educate voters that election officials will not come to their homes to verify voter registration – and that voters are never obligated to provide third party groups with their voting information.

We also ask that this educational campaign include information on how the state and counties maintain voter rolls. Voters must know that this work is held by governmental agencies – not outside entities. They must also have a solid understanding of what this process looks like in practice.

We ask that this public education campaign include multiple media formats (social media, television, radio) and be available in multiple languages. This information should live on a webpage easily accessible from the NCSBE.gov homepage, and could be modeled after the NCSBE’s disinformation page.⁵

4. Designate a rapid response team within the NCSBE dedicated to working with voters who are victims of voter harassment and intimidation – and serve as liaisons with organizations statewide supporting voter protection.

We urge your agency to create a dedicated team to investigate and respond to incidents of voter intimidation that take place across the state.

By proactively addressing early incidents of voter intimidation with clear public information, guidance, training, and necessary redress for voters who have experienced intimidation, you can prevent harmful systemic issues that are more likely to arise when early incidents go unaddressed or appear to be condoned.

5. Create a voter intimidation and harassment advisory group.

As many of the undersigned groups have previously shared with the State Board of Elections, we believe meaningfully addressing voter intimidation in 2022 will require a

⁴<https://www.ncsbe.gov/news/press-releases/2022/02/18/statement-regarding-door-door-canvassers-requesting-voter-information>

⁵<https://www.ncsbe.gov/about-elections/election-security/combating-misinformation>

highly coordinated, integrated, and proactive response – and careful, sustained attention in a major election cycle where election officials will have competing priorities. To ensure we successfully unite to focus on addressing this critical concern, we urge your office to swiftly convene a Voter Intimidation Advisory Group.

In addition to aiding in strengthening and clarifying statewide guidance, training procedures, and other ongoing support needs, we anticipate that this group would: (1) assist in identifying community concerns, (2) assist in the creation and clarification of rapid response protocols, (3) allow for much-needed communications sharing between government and non-government parties when incidents of voter intimidation occur, and (4) enhance centralization and publication of communication regarding resources for voters and the public who are concerned about voter intimidation and protecting the fundamental right to vote.

We believe investment now in an NCSBE advisory group is one important step towards establishing long-lasting solutions to voter intimidation – a deeply pernicious problem that has plagued our state long before this election cycle, and a challenge we can sadly expect to continue well beyond 2022.

With swift action, the NC Board of Elections can help ensure that unaddressed voter intimidation will not be a challenge faced by North Carolinians in 2022. If we can provide any additional information or assistance, we stand ready.

Respectfully Submitted,

Democracy North Carolina
ACLU of North Carolina
Action NC
Advance Carolina
Black Voters Matter Fund
Common Cause North Carolina
Down Home NC
El Pueblo
Emancipate NC
Forward Justice
League of Women Voters of North Carolina
NALEO Educational Fund
NC A. Philip Randolph Institute, Inc.

NC A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund, Inc.
NC Counts Coalition
NC League of Conservation Voters
North Carolina Asian Americans Together
North Carolina Council of Churches
North Carolina Justice Center
North Carolina NAACP
North Carolina Voters for Clean Elections
Planned Parenthood Votes! South Atlantic
Pro-Choice North Carolina
RREPS (Recidivism Reduction Educational Program Services)
Southern Coalition for Social Justice