

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

While the voices of racial and ethnic minorities in Georgia are essential, current Georgia representatives do not reflect the make up or interests of these communities.



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On March 26, Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp signed Georgia Senate Bill 202 into law. Along with other provisions, this law makes obtaining absentee ballots more difficult, limits certain voters to certain polling locations and

even prevents people from offering food and drink to voters waiting in line.

This is a law made by White lawmakers for the White population.

According to an article published by the Georgia Broadcasting Service on May 19, seven lawsuits have been filed against Kemp's law, and most of the cases argue that it discriminates against nonwhite voters.

What is wrong in the Georgia state government that laws threatening minority populations and interests can come to pass?

The root of the issue is governmental representation. According to the U.S. 2019 Census, Georgia's population stands at 52% White, 32% Black, 10% Hispanic and 4% Asian. The membership of the Georgia legislature, however, is 71% White, 27% Black, 1% Hispanic and 1% Asian, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

If Georgians have the privilege to, they must use their positions to ensure minority perspectives are heard and understood in their local government.

While Georgia has the second highest Black population of any U.S. state, according to the 2019 U.S. Census, Georgia has also historically disenfranchised Black voters.

Georgia was founded on the ideals of democracy. However, democracy is subverted when the opinions of significant populations are suppressed.

According to a Jan. 4 article in the Regulatory Review, Georgia has obstructed Black and other

minority voters by moving voting locations or even removing voters from registration.

Actions such as these limit opportunities for minority voters, which leads to less minority leaders.

Issues of underrepresentation become more important when considering the recent increase in ethnic and racial diversity within Georgia. In fact, according to the Georgia Budget & Policy Institute, it is estimated that in the next three decades, people of color could make up 85% of new Georgians.

We are clearly not a negligible part of our state.

As long as the ethnic and racial diversity of Georgia residents trends upward, representation in our state's government must also rise to reflect the changes.

making great change when politicians support and accurately represent them by leading efforts to swing the historically Republican Georgia electoral vote to Democrat.

Abrams' work was effective because she mobilized both underrepresented Georgians and residents of more privileged communities to register voters and collectively combat voter suppression.

Change such as this can occur if people work together, starting small. Georgians can support minority leaders during elections like the Athens Anti-Discrimination Movement did during the 2020 presidential elections, participate in clubs such as the Clarke Central High School Young Democrats and canvas in minority communities.



Above: REAL REPRESENTATION: An illustration of officials of various racial and ethnic backgrounds stand before the capitol building. Similarly broad representation should make up the Georgia government in order to reflect the identities and voices of the Georgian people. Illustration by Lillian Sams

If the state is unable to reflect the interests of its high minority population, then it cannot serve its people effectively.

On a variety of occasions, minority leaders within Georgia have proven their capacity to understand the needs of and provide for their respective communities. One recent example is seen with Stacey Abrams, a Black politician who worked to mobilize Georgia voters during the 2020 presidential election.

Abrams showed that minorities are capable of

The voices and power of minorities cannot be ignored in Georgia. Laws that benefit the few, like Georgia Senate Bill 202, go against the will of the people and ideals of democracy.

If Georgians have the privilege to, they must use their positions to ensure minority perspectives are heard and understood in their local government.

Representation in the government is an end goal, but change begins with the people of Georgia themselves. ◊