

January 16, 2019

VIA EMAIL

Ms. Christine Varnado
Chairperson
Charleston County Board of Registration and Elections
P.O. Box 71419
North Charleston, SC 29415

Dear Ms. Varnado:

I am writing to address concerns over the length of polling place lines experienced by voters during the 2018 General Election. Since 2012, the State Election Commission (SEC) has been working with county election boards to address long lines through training and technology such as electronic voter registration lists. Nevertheless, numerous issues with polling place lines were reported this past November in Charleston County by individual voters, voter advocacy groups, and various media outlets. These are recurring issues as similar complaints have been received about these polling locations in previous years.¹ After looking into matter, the SEC found the widespread consolidation of precincts not permitted by law.

State law permits the establishment of "multiple polling places *within a precinct*" by a county board with the approval of the county's legislative delegation. S.C. Code § 7-7-10 (emphasis added). The Charleston County Board is expressly authorized to "designate *the* polling place *in each precinct*." § 7-7-140 (emphasis added). The use of a single voting location for one or more precincts is expressly permitted only in *municipal* elections subject to certain conditions. § 7-7-1000. No provision in state law allows the pooling of precincts by a county board in an election.

Despite the above mandates and restrictions imposed by state law, data from the 2018 General Election indicates only 94 polling places were made available for Charleston County's 182 precincts. A total of 52 consolidated or pooled precincts were utilized. The number of precincts pooled together with a single voting location ranged from two to eight. The range of registered voters assigned to a single voting location ranged from 1,746 to 9,737.

¹ For example, St. Johns High School and Grace on the Ashley Baptist Church.

COMMISSIONERS

JOHN WELLS.
Chairperson

CLIFFORD J. EDLER

AMANDA LOVEDAY

SCOTT MOSELEY

VACANT

MARCI ANDINO
Executive Director

1122 Lady Street
Suite 500
Columbia, SC 29201

P.O. Box 5987
Columbia, SC 29250

803.734.9060
Fax: 803.734.9366
www.scvotes.org

Christine Varnado
Page 2

We understand the difficulties counties sometimes experience in finding adequate and accessible polling places within each precinct. With the reports of ongoing issues at a number of polling places, the SEC is asking the Charleston County Board to review polling places for all consolidated precincts and to take immediate steps in order to resolve these issues well in advance of the 2020 Presidential Preference Primaries.

Please let me know if we can assist you in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marci Andino". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marci Andino
Executive Director

/mba

Cc: Joseph Debney, Executive Director, Charleston County Board

