

**FULTON COUNTY
BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS
PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY**

1. **Purpose.** The Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections (the "Board") is committed to conducting its meetings in a manner that protects the First Amendment rights of citizens and ensures the orderly and efficient transaction of public business within the Board's jurisdictional purview. This policy establishes reasonable, viewpoint neutral time, place, and manner restrictions related to the receipt of public comment on matters pertaining to elections, to include registrations for such elections.
2. **Designated Comment Period.** The Board will provide an opportunity for public comment on election-related topics and issues during each of its regularly scheduled monthly meetings. Public comment will be available during the portion(s) of the meeting designated by the agenda or as otherwise designated by the Chair. All comments during the public comment period should be related to the topic of voter registration and elections. The Board, by majority vote, may add a public comment item to the agenda at special called or emergency meeting.
3. **Recognition and Procedure.** To facilitate efficiency and order during public comment, the following procedures shall be observed:
 - A sign-up sheet will be placed at a designated location for members of the public. Persons wishing to speak shall affix their names on the sign-up sheet at least fifteen (15) minutes prior to the start of the scheduled meeting. The sign-up list will be given to the Chair, or her or his designee, who will call each speaker in the order of sign-up with the exception that priority will be given to Fulton County residents. Non-Fulton County residents will follow, if time remains.
 - Speakers must be recognized by the Chair before speaking.
 - For Georgia residents, each speaker shall state their name for the record, and the County in which they reside, but shall not be required to provide a home address. Non-Georgia residents shall state their name for the record, and the state in which they reside.
 - Speakers should state whether he/she is speaking for himself/herself or on behalf of another person or organization.
 - Speakers should disclose whether he/she or any member of his/her immediate family has a personal interest in a pending matter within the Board's jurisdiction.
 - There shall be no discussion between board members and a speaker during the public comment period. It is the intent of the Board that the public comment period be only for comments and not a forum for back-and-forth exchanges between the board and any speakers.
 - If a speaker has a question, the Chair may refer the question to election staff to provide a written or verbal response following the meeting.
4. **Time Limits.** Speakers are limited to two (2) minutes. The total time period for public comment at the regularly scheduled monthly meetings shall be sixty (60) minutes, unless extended by majority vote of the Board. If public comment is added to the agenda for a special called or emergency meeting, the total time period shall be thirty (30) minutes, unless extended by majority vote of the Board. Time may not be yielded or transferred to

another speaker.

5. **Viewpoint Neutrality.** The Board will not restrict speech based on viewpoint. Criticism of the Board or Board policy is permitted. This policy shall be applied uniformly to all speakers.
6. **Prohibited Conduct.** A speaker may be ruled out of order by the Chair for obscenity or for providing public comment in a manner that is violative of these regulations. For the purpose of this policy, obscenity is defined as material that: (1) the average person, applying contemporary community standards would find the material appeals to the prurient interest; (2) depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct; and (3) the material, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

Examples of conduct that may disrupt the meeting include, but are not limited to:

- Speaking without recognition;
- Exceeding the allotted time per speaker;
- Interrupting other speakers;
- Other conduct or actions that disrupt, delay or impede the conduct of the meeting. For example, singing, theatrics, parading in costumes, or other behavior which makes it difficult for the Board to conduct the meeting in an orderly fashion;
- Shouting or causing excessive noise that reasonably impedes the meeting from proceeding;
- Threats, intimidation, or incitement to imminent unlawful action; or
- Physically unsafe or unlawful behavior.

No audio/visual presentations (i.e., PowerPoint) may be used during public comment. Public comment is an opportunity for verbal speech to the Board. An exception to this limitation shall occur only if required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

7. **Warning and Enforcement.** Except where immediate action is required to protect safety or restore order, the Chair shall provide a verbal warning and an opportunity to comply. If the conduct continues following a single verbal warning, the Chair may:
 - Rule the speaker out of order and terminate the speaker's remaining time. If the speaker does not relinquish the podium after their time being terminated, the Chair may impose a recess or, alternatively, the Chair may request that authorized personnel remove the individual from the speaker lectern.
 - The Chair may request assistance from law enforcement if reasonably necessary to maintain order.
 - Persons who fail to follow the Chair's direction, after being warned and then directed, more than twice in one (1) year may be barred a from addressing the Board during public comment for up to sixty (60) days.
 - A person barred by the Board for this period may request a hearing, by written request, stating the reason(s) for a reversal of the decision. The hearing shall be placed on an agenda and heard by the Board and a majority vote of the Board shall be required to overturn the Chair's decision.

Any removal shall be based solely on failing to follow the Chair's direction and not on the speaker's viewpoint.

8. **Preservation of Order.** The Chair shall have the authority to enforce this policy.
9. **Severability.** If any provision of this policy is found invalid, such determination shall not affect the remaining provisions.
10. **Compliance with Law.** This policy shall be interpreted consistent with the United States Constitution, the Georgia Constitution, and applicable open meetings laws.

Statement that may be read by the public affairs officer or designee at the commencement of public comment:

"The Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections has adopted a Public Comment Policy that encourages public participation and provides an opportunity for comment on elections and election-related issues during designated portions of its regular monthly meeting.

1. *The Chair will call the names of persons wishing to speak who shall have affixed their names to the sign-up sheet at least fifteen (15) minutes prior to the scheduled start of the meeting. The Chair shall allow Fulton County residents to speak before non-residents.*
2. *Each speaker will be limited to two (2) minutes, unless otherwise authorized by a majority vote of the Board. You cannot transfer any of your time to another speaker.*
3. *While not required, speakers are encouraged to remain courteous and direct comments to the Board as a whole. Obscenity, disruptive behavior, threats, intimidation, or conduct that interferes with the meeting will not be permitted.*
4. *These rules are intended to apply in a viewpoint-neutral manner and are designed to maintain order and efficiency for the Board to conduct business.*
5. *The Chair may rule a speaker out of order, terminate remarks, or direct removal of any individual who persists in disruptive conduct after a warning."*

Approved by the Board: _____