



Board of Elections & Registrations



Irwin County Georgia

Waymond Harris, Chairman

Ethan Compton, Election Supervisor

Patricia Thurman, Democratic Party Representative / Vice-Chair

Wyatt Thompson, Republican Party Representative

Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 19th, 2025 @ 4pm

Call to Order: *Chairman Harris not present, invocation and pledge led by Vice-Chair Thurman at 4:09pm*

Approval of Minutes: *Motion to approve minutes as presented by Rep. Thompson, seconded by Vice-Chair Thurman, minutes approved 2-0.*

Old Business: *N/A*

New Business:

1. Updates from GA House Blue Ribbon Elections Study Committee meetings as well as GAVREO Training Convention
 - a. On Friday August 8th, a meeting of the GA House Blue Ribbon Elections Study Committee was held in Rockmart, GA City Hall.
 - i. The focus of this 1 of 6 meetings of the committee was on local elections administration and the recommendations that county officials had to improve how elections are run in Georgia.
 1. Topics covered by other counties were:
 - a. The need to remove outdated code sections from Georgia Title 21 code in order to streamline it for easier research by voters and officials alike,
 - b. Addressing the difficulties overseas and deployed military voters face in

order for their votes to be counted, in some cases military voters paying upwards of \$125 in expedited postage for their ballots to be returned from Asia or the Middle East only for it to arrive the day after the deadline currently in place,

- c. Assisting counties in funding local elections offices in order to prevent local budget crunches and tax increases,
 - d. The immediate provision of state funding to comply with SB 189's July 1st, 2026 deadline to remove QR codes from ballots, and/or the pushback of the deadline by as little as is required to ensure full compliance, as equipment updates and/or replacements are needed in order to comply. A rushed rollout is projected to lead to errors and exponentially higher costs incurred by Georgia's taxpayers, as a project of this scale would have needed to be funded in early 2024 when SB 189 was passed in order to legally bid on, pilot test and arrange the logistics for. Georgia's counties do not want to experience the rushed elections equipment rollout we saw in 2019/2020 all over again.
 - e. And allowing more local jurisdictional control over the length of the Early Voting period for municipal and special elections- being more effective stewards of taxpayer funds by shortening those timeframes by a week to pre-SB202 levels in jurisdictions which will not see lines due to the reduced early voting availability while enabling jurisdictions to utilize the full early voting period if they judge it as needed to manage crowds. We advocated that safeguards be in place to enforce a reversion to longer early voting periods for areas who cut too harshly and create wait times of longer than 1 hour, similar to the protections preventing too much precinct consolidation in a jurisdiction, to ensure that voters' needs are best served by any local decision.
2. All members of the committee were invested and seemingly support most suggestions- with the only divisive topic seemingly being the proposal to fund or delay compliance with SB189's QR code removal provision.
- a. Some members of the committee have hinted in their questions to local elections officials that they intend to do nothing and instead force counties' elections costs to triple by utilizing only emergency ballots for the remainder of the Dominion Contract which expires in 2028.
 - b. All members seem in support of Georgia's next voting system being transitioned to a Hand-Marked Ballot on Demand system with Precinct-Based Optical Scan Tabulation as outlined in SB214 from last year, with Ballot Marking Device generated ballots only for voters with accessibility needs, but only wish to begin pilot programs for some counties and hold full funding for a statewide rollout until 2028 at the earliest.
 - i. GAVREO and Supervisor Compton agree in support of such a proposed system, but have plead to delay the July 2026 QR code removal deadline to July 2027 or January 2028, so that

one or two counties may pilot such a new system next May in the 2026 Primaries in a limited test while more equipment is procured (as vendors are having difficulties even obtaining them for themselves to demonstrate at this time), a dozen or so counties can test it November 2026 in a more full bodied beta, while allowing the time to fully deploy and adequately train all 159 counties on its use throughout 2027 so that the entire state is experienced with it for the 2028 presidential cycle to ensure that year goes as smoothly as possible.

1. While a new system should have been in place in counties before the 2026 midterms, the general assembly's failure to act on the matter despite budget recommendations by Governor Kemp to do so has reduced our current options.
 - ii. In addition, Supervisor Compton specifically pled for a review of the wording of SB 189's QR code removal phrasing, as the text as-is creates some confusion regarding how hand-marked ballots are counted, and whether using timing marks on the sides to get the X and Y grid coordinates of each filled in oval as hand-marked ballots work would count as machine coding, which would likely spark a lawsuit that, while most likely would fail, due to the current unclear wording would hold elections in a legal limbo for years and waste millions of GA taxpayer dollars in a frivolous legal challenge.
3. While Supervisor Compton was not invited for a spotlighted presentation with unlimited time and the use of presentation aids and instead for a 2 minute comment, his comments managed to impress enough that Study/House Ethics Committee Chairman Fleming, Committee Minority Leader Draper and both state party voter protection/integrity task force leads requested his presence for a full presentation at a future meeting, most likely being the final demonstration at the final meeting this October in Americus. The logistics are still being discussed at this time to see if that can be arranged.
4. Supervisor Compton then left Rockmart Saturday morning, having stayed at arranged lodging with associates to prevent any cost to Irwin County for hotels for that trip, to head to the annual GAVREO Conference in Savannah, arriving that night.
 - a. He assisted, as a member of the association's executive committee, with preparation of the conference Sunday morning then he and Chairman Harris stayed in attendance from Sunday Afternoon through to Wednesday Evening to maintain the required continuing education for the county, as well as Asst. Supervisor Romans attending all classes virtually to maintain her own certification from the state.
 - b. While there, the association narrowly passed bylaw changes granting counties 2 votes each regarding all matters except the election of

officers, which will still be made by a vote of all members present, allowing for the voices of smaller counties to be better heard, as well as a dues structure tiered off county population, seeing only a \$240 increase in dues for Irwin County over the next two years instead of the alternative \$2,300 increase in dues paid over the next two years projected if the structure were not changed to a county-based model instead of by individual, with larger counties shouldering most of the financial strain, given their greater resources on hand and keeping close to the same per-voter costs per counties, and mirroring structures maintained by other professional associations within GA such as ACCG and GMA.

5. Supervisor Compton remains as Chairman of GAVREO's Voting Systems Committee and as thus, a member of its Executive Committee, with the next conference to be held in Athens, GA in March 2026.

2. *A last second update has occurred where the Secretary of State's Office has requested Irwin County pilot a new ballot redesign focused on optimizing ballot space in preparation for the 2026 election cycle. The new ballot design will be in effect for the November 2025 elections, only affecting paper emergency, absentee by mail and provisional ballots. Irwin County is the third county to test this new design, with the others being Fulton and Cherokee Counties who tested them during their August special election and the ensuing September runoffs.*

Public Comment: N/A

Board Comment:

Rep. Thompson asked how to put local party straw poll questions on the ballot for the 2026 election cycle, and Supervisor Compton said he did not know how, but that he could reach out to the Secretary of State's Office to inquire about the process, but that he was fairly certain that even if a non-binding local question were to be put on the ballot, it would require legal review of the wording as well as payment to the state for putting the question on the ballot.

Executive Session: Entered executive session @ _____ due to request by _____ to discuss:

~~Exited executive session @~~

Meeting Adjourned:

1. Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 9th @ 4pm *Rep. Thompson motions to adjourn, Vice-Chair Thurman seconds, meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.*