



AGENDA

GEORGIA STATE ELECTION BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

Dawson County Government Center / Courthouse

25 Justice Way / 2nd Floor – Assembly Room 2302

Dawsonville, GA 30534

9:00 a.m.

<https://www.youtube.com/@GAStateElectionBoard/streams>

I. CALL TO ORDER INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

John Fervier, as Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. A quorum was present for all actions taken by the Board. Board Members present were Chairman, John Fervier, Vice Chairman, Dr. Janice Johnston, Member Janelle King, Member Salleigh Grubbs, and Member Sarah Tindall Ghazal.

The invocation was given by Vice Chair, Dr. Johnston.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Member Salleigh Grubbs.

II. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Amendment of the Agenda

Member Salleigh Grubbs moved to amend the agenda to: (1) move the presentation by Professor Andrew Appel earlier in the meeting due to the absence of Director Blake Evans, and (2) add consideration of her Rule Petition.

During discussion, **Chairman Fervier** stated that the requested additions had only recently been brought to his attention. **Member Janelle King** suggested that both matters be addressed under New Business.

Member Grubbs subsequently amended her motion to move all guest presentations and the Rule Petition presentations until after the Public Comment period and following the lunch recess. **Member King** seconded the amended motion.

Board members discussed the proposed agenda changes. **Vice Chair Dr. Johnston** recommended that the additional presenters be heard after the morning break. Executive Director James Mills advised the Board that additional requests to address the Board had also been received from Marilyn Marks, Bob Cotton, and Peter Ticktin.

Member Sarah Tindall Ghazal expressed concern that pending enforcement cases were being continued while additional presentations were being added to the agenda. **Vice Chair Dr. Johnston** noted that Mr. Cotton would address cybersecurity issues and Mr. Ticktin would discuss QR codes, observing that both presentations could provide information relevant to the Board's ongoing discussions regarding Senate Bill 189.

Member Grubbs stated that the Board had anticipated hearing from Director Blake Evans and believed it was

important to provide an opportunity for election officials and the public to receive information in his absence. **Member King** expressed disappointment that Director Evans was unable to attend, noting that the Board had prepared questions and that no representative from the Secretary of State's Office had been designated to appear.

Following these discussions, **Chairman Fervier** made the FINAL MOTION to revise the agenda to:

- Schedule Professor Andrew Appel's presentation following the morning break;
- Hear presentations by Bob Cotton and Peter Tickin during the Board's discussion regarding Senate Bill 189; and
- Place the Rule Petition presentations under New Business.

The agenda was amended accordingly.

B. EXECUTIVE SESSION REQUEST

Executive Director James Mills informed the Board that personnel changes had occurred within the agency and requested that the Board convene an Executive Session during the lunch recess to discuss personnel matters.

Chairman Fervier advised that the Board would entertain a motion to enter Executive Session during the lunch recess.

II. APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

State Election Board Meeting: February 18 -19, 2026

Motion: Member Grubbs moved to approve February 18-19, 2026, minutes.

Second: Vice Chair, Dr. Johnston

Vote: Passed unanimously (4-0)

In Favor: Vice Chair, Dr. Johnston, Member King, Member Grubbs, and Member Ghazal

III. DIRECTOR BLAKE EVANS, ELECTION DIRECTOR FOR SECRETARY OF STATE

Director Blake Evans, Elections Director for the Office of the Secretary of State, was scheduled to provide a presentation to the Board. The Board was advised that Director Evans had cancelled his appearance during the evening of April 14, 2026, the day prior to the scheduled hearing. As a result of the late cancellation, no representative from the Office of the Secretary of State appeared in his place.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman John Fervier opened the Public Comment portion of the meeting and announced the procedure governing public participation.

- Individuals wishing to address the Board are required to register prior to the call to order. The sign-up sheet will be closed at the commencement of the meeting.
- Each registered speaker will be allotted two (2) minutes to provide comments. Speakers are instructed to state their name for the record, and unused time could not be transferred to another individual. Chairman Fervier also announced implementation of a new timing system to assist in administering the allotted speaking time.

Prior to the commencement of public comments, **Chairman Fervier** noted that the Board should consider removing

cases from future agendas when it is known in advance that such matters will be continued, in an effort to provide greater clarity to the public regarding the cases scheduled to be heard.

During public comments, ***Vice Chair Dr. Johnston*** invited speaker Tom Braatz to consider meeting with County election officials to provide additional information regarding the matters presented. Mr. Braatz agreed to do so.

Following comments by Debbie Fisher concerning election-related issues, including allegations involving Congressional District 14 elections and absentee ballot processing, Executive Director James Mills directed Ms. Fisher to coordinate with Board staff regarding submission of a formal complaint for review through the Board's investigative process.

The following individuals addressed the Board during the Public Comment period:

Tom Braatz; Tom Talbot; Kristin Nabers; Field Searcy; Sam Carnline; Vernon Jones; Beth Hendrickson; Kendra Biegalski; Mandy Schulz; James Coles; Maria Gaudio; Janet Grant; Debbie Fisher; Sandra Burchardt; Victoria Cruz; Julie Adams; Steven Aleshire; Michael Beach; Marla Tapper; Max Clavijo; Garland Favorito; Tamara Favorito; Scot Turner; Janelle Clovefelter; Richard Schroeder Hall; Janet Hill; Tori McFarland; Cindy Battles; Rachael Glover; Kyle Gomez

BREAK – A motion was passed by the Board to take a break at 10:58 am. Meeting Reconvened at 11:12 am.

Public comments resumed:

Earl Ferguson, Joy Wasson, Liz Throop, Aileen Nakamura, Marilyn Marks, Ted Metz, Brad Togle (self-withdrawn), Janice Morrow, Rita Rorson, Lois Finley.

Mr. Brad Togle withdrew his request to speak prior to being recognized by the Board

Due to technical difficulties affecting the Zoom connection, the Board announced that Professor Andrew Appel's presentation would be moved until after the lunch recess.

LUNCH BREAK – A motion was passed by the Board at 11:45 a.m. to take a lunch and enter into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters

Motion: Member King moved that the Board recess for lunch and enter into Executive Session.

Second: Vice Chair, Dr. Johnston

Vote: Passed unanimously (4-0)

In Favor: Vice Chair, Dr. Johnston, Member King, Member Grubbs, and Member Ghazal

Meeting was reconvened at 12:54 p.m.

V. *PRESENTATION* – *Professor Andrew Appel, an expert in Cybersecurity*

Professor Andrew Appel, a computer scientist specializing in cybersecurity, software verification, and election technology, appeared before the Board to provide a presentation regarding voting system security, ballot-marking devices (BMDs), QR code technology, and proposed election tabulation methods. Professor Appel advised that he has more than twenty years of experience studying voting systems and currently serves on the State of Texas Voting System Examination Committee. He stated that his work is nonpartisan and focused on improving election security and public confidence in election administration.

Professor Appel explained that most jurisdictions throughout the United States conduct elections using hand-marked paper ballots that are tabulated by optical scanners. He noted that ballot-marking devices are primarily intended to provide accessible voting options for voters with disabilities. While acknowledging that current voting systems generally perform accurately, he testified that all computerized voting equipment is susceptible to cybersecurity threats and that

compromised ballot-marking devices could produce inaccurate paper ballots that would subsequently be counted during audits and recounts.

Professor Appel testified that research indicates many voters do not thoroughly review their printed ballots before casting them. As a result, he expressed concern that any unauthorized changes made by a compromised ballot-marking device could remain undetected. He further stated that QR codes cannot be independently verified by voters and expressed support for Georgia's Legislative efforts to eliminate the use of QR codes in future elections.

Professor Appel described the standard election process utilized in many states, explaining that voters cast paper ballots which are tabulated by optical scanners operating independently of the internet. He noted that vote totals are generated at the close of polls and retained on removable media for subsequent reporting and canvassing. He testified that this process limits opportunities for unauthorized access by reducing the number of systems involved in the tabulation process.

Professor Appel then discussed information he had reviewed regarding the Secretary of State's proposed Optical Character Recognition (OCR) process. Based upon publicly available reports, Legislative testimony, and budget documents, he described a process in which ballot images generated by voting equipment would be uploaded from county election systems to a cloud-based environment where OCR software would interpret the human-readable text on ballots for comparison or tabulation purposes.

Professor Appel expressed concerns that the proposed OCR process would increase the number of systems involved in election tabulation by incorporating county election databases, internet transmission, cloud-based processing, and additional software applications. He testified that these additional components could expand the potential cybersecurity attack surface and raised questions regarding the use of software that had not been certified by the Federal Election Assistance Commission for vote tabulation purposes. He further stated that reliance on ballot images, rather than the original paper ballots, represented a departure from the election tabulation practices commonly used throughout the United States.

Board Discussion and Questions for Professor Appel

Professor Appel addressed questions from Board members regarding the Secretary of State's proposed OCR process and election system security.

Professor Appel testified that he was unable to determine from publicly available information whether the proposed OCR process was intended to serve as an audit, a verification process, or an official vote tabulation. He noted that statements made by Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger had described the process differently on separate occasions. Professor Appel stated that budget documents and written materials referred to the process as a tabulation, while testimony before the General Assembly characterized it as a verification process. He testified that determining the legal distinction between those functions would ultimately be a matter for attorneys and public officials.

Professor Appel stated that he was not aware of any state that relies upon ballot images as the official source for vote tabulation. He testified that election results are generally derived directly from certified optical scanners that tabulate the original paper ballots. While some jurisdictions conduct post-election audits, including risk-limiting audits, those audits are performed to verify machine-generated results rather than replace the official tabulation process. He further noted that only a limited number of small jurisdictions utilize hand-counted paper ballots as their official tabulation method.

In response to questions from **Member Salleigh Grubbs** regarding the Enhanced Voting System's involvement in both reporting and auditing election results, Professor Appel testified that election audits should be conducted transparently and under the supervision of a public entity. While emphasizing that he was not offering a legal opinion, he expressed concern that permitting the same vendor to generate tabulation data, aggregate election results, and subsequently audit those results could create the appearance of a conflict of interest. He stated that public confidence in elections is strengthened when election administration responsibilities are distributed among multiple independent participants rather than concentrated within a single entity.

Chairman John Fervier asked whether Professor Appel was aware of any evidence that Georgia's QR code voting system had been successfully compromised during an actual election. Professor Appel responded that he was not aware of evidence demonstrating that Georgia's QR codes had been hacked during any election, including the 2020 General Election. He stated, however, that independent security research has demonstrated vulnerabilities within computerized voting systems and testified that election security should be evaluated based upon the ability to prevent future attacks rather than solely on the absence of known prior incidents.

Professor Appel further testified that paper ballots remain the most reliable record of voter intent because they are not dependent upon electronic transmission or digital storage. He stated that statistical post-election audits provide an effective means of confirming the accuracy of machine tabulation while preserving confidence in election outcomes. He also explained that software integrity is typically evaluated through Logic and Accuracy (I&A) testing conducted prior to each election.

Professor Appel confirmed that election-night results tapes produced by Dominion voting equipment are generated from the QR codes contained on ballot-marking device ballots and stated that such tabulation is performed in accordance with the current certified voting system.

Member Janelle King observed that the proposed OCR process appeared to add an additional layer of complexity to an already complex election system. Professor Appel agreed and reiterated that Georgia already possesses equipment capable of tabulating hand-marked paper ballots using existing optical scanners. He testified that jurisdictions in numerous states successfully utilize preprinted paper ballots or ballot-on-demand systems and stated that experienced election administrators could provide guidance regarding implementation should Georgia pursue such an approach.

Vice Chair Dr. Johnston asked Professor Appel to discuss the operational costs and efficiency of transitioning to hand-marked paper ballots. Professor Appel testified that hand-marked paper ballot systems generally require fewer electronic voting devices, allowing voters to mark ballots at inexpensive privacy stations before scanning them using existing optical scanners. He stated that the primary operational consideration is balancing the use of electronic ballot-marking devices against less costly paper-based voting stations.

Professor Appel also addressed questions regarding Dominion voting system software and testified that publicly available Legislative testimony indicated Georgia was operating a previous software version at the time of the January 21 Legislative hearing. He stated that installing updated certified firmware designed to address known cybersecurity vulnerabilities would generally improve the overall security posture of the voting system.

VI. Insufficient Investigative Reports Received by Board

Chairman Fervier stated that the Board would continue the majority of the cases scheduled for consideration today because the investigative reports presented were not sufficient for the Board to make an informed decision.

The Chairman then requested a motion to continue the following cases until the June meeting:

SEB2022-005	Multiple Counties	Dual Registration / Double Voting
SEB2021-105	Multiple Counties	Excess Voting
SEB2022-006	Chatham County	Residency Issue
SEB2025-091	Chatham County	Absentee Ballot Mailing Issue
SEB2026-029	Chatham County	Subcase from SEB2024-221
SEB2025-088	Bulloch County	Restriction on Campaign Actives
SEB2025-076	Brooks County	Photograph of Ballot

SEB2025-048	Atkinson County	Candidate Qualifying Issue
SEB2024-096	Daughtery County	Poll Worker Conduct Issue for Voter Intimidation
SEB2025-053	Crisp County	City of Arabi Candidate Qualifying Issue
SEB2025-044	Clayton County	Polling Place Change Issue
SEB2025-037	Fulton County	Double Voter in GA & FL Nov. 2024
SEB2025-038	Fulton County	Disability Issue at Polling Place
SEB2024-028	Cherokee County	Union Hill Community Center Issues
SEB2025-036	Cherokee County	Failure to Post Polling Location Change July '25

Motion: Member Grubbs

Second: Vice Chairman, Dr. Johnston

Vote: Passed unanimously (4-0)

In Favor: Vice Chairman, Dr. Johnston, Member King, Member Grubbs, and Member Ghazal

Additional Board Comments and Discussions on the cases being continued

Member Ghazal inquired how the listed cases had been selected for postponement to the June meeting.

Vice Chair Dr. Johnston stated that the Secretary of State's Office had been requested approximately six weeks earlier to update the Summary of Investigation (SOI) reports. She advised that, as of the previous morning, the requested revisions had not been completed.

Member King stated that it was not unusual for the Board to request complete investigation reports from the Secretary of State's Office, noting that investigators are not always present at Board meetings. She emphasized the importance of the reports clearly indicating whether alleged violations had been substantiated by investigators.

Chairman Fervier reported that he had been in communication with the Secretary of State's Office regarding the addition of potential violations to the SOI reports. He stated that the Secretary of State's Office had agreed to update the reports prior to the Board's next meeting, scheduled for June 3. **Chairman Fervier** further explained that the Board does not conduct investigations and therefore must receive complete and thorough investigation reports in order to make informed decisions on each case.

Vice Chair Dr. Johnston stated that approximately six weeks earlier, the Secretary of State's Office had changed the format of the investigation reports by removing the sections identifying violations and investigative findings without providing prior notice to the Board. She indicated that she was prepared to read the email correspondence documenting that change if the Board wished to review it.

Executive Director Mills reminded **Chairman Fervier** of their previous discussions regarding the changes made by the Secretary of State's Office to the investigation reports. He stated that the requested report revisions had been delayed for approximately six weeks by the Secretary of State's Office.

Note: The counties affected were all notified yesterday that their cases were continued to the June 3rd Board meeting.

VII. VIOLATION CASES

SEB2022-068 Fulton County (Continued) – Double Voters

Kathryn Glynn – Fulton County Election Chief

Karen Pachuta – Attorney for Fulton County

The Board reviewed allegations presented by the Complainant that ten (10) voters appeared to have voted twice in the same Primary Election. It was noted that internal election records reflected only one vote for each individual. The Complainant further asserted that these individuals had, at one time, been associated with duplicate voter Registration. **Chairman Fervier** reminded the Board that the potential violations under consideration were **O.C.G.A. § 21-2-562** (Neglect or Refusal to Deliver Documents) and **O.C.G.A. § 21-2-73** (Preservation of Primary and Election Records). **Vice Chair Dr. Johnston** expressed concern that the matter appeared to involve broader issues beyond the specific complaint and suggested that representatives from the Secretary of State's Office should be questioned regarding the circumstances.

Member Grubbs stated that she favored continuing the case to allow the Secretary of State's Office an opportunity to answer questions. She also inquired whether the matter was limited to Fulton County or whether similar circumstances existed in other counties, indicating that she would like to hear from additional County Election Directors. **Chairman Fervier** reiterated that the Board's immediate consideration was whether Fulton County possessed the requested documents. Attorney Ms. Pachuta advised the Board that Fulton County did not have any documents to provide in response to the request.

Motion: Vice Chairman Dr. Johnston made a motion for a Letter of Reprimand

Second: Member Grubbs

Vote: Passed unanimously (4-0)

In Favor: Vice Chair, Vice Chairman, Dr. Johnston, Member King, Member Grubbs, and Member Ghazal.

SEB2023-021 Multi /DeKalb Only County - Cross State Double Voter Fraud Nov '22 GE

Sara Keesley, Attorney for Jennifer Bartlett Rockhill

Jennifer Bartlett Rockhill, Respondent

eNet revealed this voter, Jennifer Bartlett Rockhill voted absentee ballot for the Georgia November 2022 General Election on October 28, 2022. DeKalb County provided a copy of Rockhill's absentee ballot application and oath envelope. The Florida Department of State confirmed there was a match and that Rockhill also submitted an absentee ballot, in which her ballot was received on October 31, 2022, in Pasco County, Florida for the November 2022 General Election. Investigator Stephen, from SOS, spoke with Ms. Rockhill by telephone, in which she stated that she hasn't lived in Florida since 2008 and didn't vote in Florida in 2022. Ms. Rockhill then became defensive, accused the caller of being spam and disconnected the line. A statement form was mailed to Rockhill, but no response was received at the time of the report. As of March 19, 2024, Ms. Rockhill's Georgia voter registration status is active. She also confirmed that she had been able to vote in Georgia by using her Florida license and showing proof of her residency in Georgia.

She owned a home in both states. Ms. Rockhill stated that she moved to Georgia in 2007, alleging that this is a fraud by someone else in Florida. Ms. Keesley confirmed that Ms. Rockhill's driver's license was issued in 2008 (Florida) and again in 2017 (Georgia). She sold her Florida home in 2018, which was being used as rental property. She stated she hadn't been back to Florida since then.

Ms. Rockhill verified her signature on the Georgia Absentee Application via's Member Ghazal's laptop.

Motion: Member King motion to dismiss

Second: Vice Chair Dr. Johnston

Discussion: the Absentee ballots both showed her signature

Voted: (2-2)

In Favor: Vice Chair Dr. Johnston, Member King,

Not in Favor: Member Grubbs, Member Ghazal.

Chairman Fervier exercised his right to vote for a quorum – his vote was in favor to dismiss.

Final Vote: (3-2)

BREAK - a motion was passed by the Board to take a break at 3:31pm

Motion: Chairman Fervier

Second: Vice Chair Dr. Johnston

Voted: Passed unanimously (4-0)

In Favor: Vice Chair Dr. Johnston, Member King, Member Grubbs, and Member Ghazal

Reconvened 3:36 p.m.

SEB2025-047 Cherokee County (Continued) Voter Conduct Issue – August 2025

The Board reviewed and discussed the investigative findings. There was sufficient evidence to suggest that Respondent, Richard Jordan, violated **official Code of Georgia, annotated 21-2-569, interfering with poll officers during the voting** period for the August 26th, 2025, special election for Senate District 21 and Board of Commissioners race. A motion was passed by the Board to send the Respondent a Letter of Reprimand.

Motion: Member King motioned a Letter of Reprimand without a Cease and Desist

Second: Member Ghazal

Vote: Passed (3-0)

In Favor: Chairman Fervier, Member King, Member Ghazal

(Member Grubbs and Vice Chair Dr. Johnston recused themselves from the vote)

VIII. FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Mills announced an update following the earlier Executive Session, clarifying that no new decision had been made. Instead, the Board was acting on a previous decision by the Board to explore hiring a private investigator.

The Executive Director introduced Larry Duckworth, highlighting his extensive experience in law enforcement, security, investigations, and executive leadership. He informed the Board and audience that Mr. Duckworth would be assisting with investigations.

Member King recommended formally voting and approving the hiring of Mr. Duckworth to document the Board's support, due to the nature of his work, also noting that the Executive Director has the full right to hire.

After clarification that the arrangement was a contracted service rather than an employment contract, a motion was made and seconded to approve the hiring of Mr. Duckworth.

Motion: Member King approved to hire Investigator, Larry Duckworth.

Second: Vice Chair, Dr. Johnston

Vote: Passed unanimously (4-0)

In Favor: Vice Chair Dr. Johnston, Member King, Member Grubbs, and Member Ghazal

IX. OLD BUSINESS

- A. ~~Former SEB Employee Alexandra Hardin—Archived State Election Board Text Messages Involving State Business from Government Issued and Personal Phones During Their Employment with the State Election Board~~ (Moving to June Meeting)
- B. ~~State Election Board Emails (@sos.ga.gov) and Text Messages Involving State Business from Government Issued and Personal Phones During Their Employment with the State Election Board—Former Intern Addison Brooks and Former Temp Agency Employee Sheila Printup~~ (Moving to June Meeting)
- C. ~~Secretary of State Investigation Report Format: Summary of Investigation (SOI) and Report of Investigation (ROI)~~ (Moving to June Meeting)
- D. ~~Discussion of Drop Box Surveillance Requirement Rule 183-1-14-.02(19)~~ (Moving to June Meeting)

E. SB 189

July 1, 2026, effective date to eliminate QR codes from the ballots.

Vice Chair Dr. Johnston led this discussion and incorporated a slide show with a step-by-step plan to be prepared:

Vice Chair Dr. Johnston addressed the Board regarding the statutory change scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2026, eliminating the use of QR codes on ballots, absent further Legislative action. She encouraged counties to begin contingency planning for the potential implementation of hand-marked paper ballots and presented information regarding projected voter turnout, early voting site distribution, ballot-on-demand printers, ballot inventory controls, chain of custody procedures, accessibility requirements, ballot accountability, video monitoring, and post-election audit planning. **Vice Chair Dr. Johnston** emphasized that counties should be prepared regardless of whether the General Assembly convenes in a special session.

Board members discussed the operational challenges associated with implementing hand-marked paper ballots, including ballot style management, poll worker training, procurement of ballot-on-demand printers, implementation timelines, and administrative impacts on county election officials. Members acknowledged that any change to election procedures ultimately rests with the General Assembly.

Chairman Fervier expressed support for counties developing contingency plans while awaiting Legislative action, noting that preparation would benefit election officials regardless of whether a special Legislative session is convened. **Member King** agreed, that providing guidance to county election officials would assist them in preparing for a potential transition should legislative action not occur before the statutory deadline.

Board Member Grubbs expressed support for transitioning to hand-marked paper ballots and encouraged the Board to proactively assist counties by developing guidance, reviewing

emergency procedures, considering proposed rules, and encouraging training and preparedness. She referenced testimony presented earlier in the meeting by Professor Appel regarding OCR auditing and stated her concerns regarding the costs of existing audit tools, vendor relationships, transparency, and reliance on contracted election vendors. **Member Grubbs** stated that she believes counties should begin preparing for hand-marked paper ballots and offered to work with election officials on developing practical rules to support implementation. She further advised the Board that she had distributed a letter dated April 14 from Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones to Board members and expressed her appreciation for the Georgia Senate's efforts regarding election-related legislation.

No action was taken by the Board following the discussion.

F. Presentation: Ben Cotton (Cyber Security):

moved to Old Business, as this presentation is relevant to SB 189:

Member Grubbs questioned Mr. Cotton about concerns he raised regarding the election management system, noting that this was not the issue currently before the Board. She stated that, to her knowledge, there are no plans to change the election management system, as doing so would require a significant procurement process and related administrative steps. **Member Grubbs** also noted that Mr. Cotton has criticized Election Management Systems used in other states that rely on hand-marked paper ballots, including Arizona. She further stated that he worked with Cyber Ninjas and was granted immunity by a court to testify in Michigan, a state that uses hand-marked paper ballots. Given those positions, she said she was unclear about what changes he was proposing, since there is currently no discussion of replacing Georgia's election management system.

Mr. Cotton responded by stating that findings from Georgia are consistent with other jurisdictions using the Dominion Democracy Suite voting system. He explained that votes are tabulated through OCR scanning on ICP devices, with results stored on SD cards at the tabulator level or transmitted via cellular networks to Election Management Systems (EMS), which he described as having potential vulnerabilities. He further referenced an October 2024 hearing video, asserting that votes were allegedly altered through access to the EMS, and emphasized that he views the issue as a broader, system-wide concern rather than one limited to QR codes.

Member Grubbs then inquired about how he had access to the election management system from Coffee County in Georgia that he reviewed.

Mr. Cotton stated that he was retained as an expert witness by an attorney representing an election official in Coffee County, identified as Mr. Hampton, who was reportedly facing potential criminal charges following the 2020 election. As part of that engagement, he said he was given lawful access to examine images and data from Dominion voting systems. He went on to explain that these materials were obtained through proper legal channels and were later reviewed as part of their expert analysis.

Mr. Cotton added that he has examined Dominion voting systems in five jurisdictions in Georgia, including Coffee County. He also noted that the images and devices he reviewed were part of a broader federal investigation, emphasizing that all materials they accessed were lawfully obtained and reviewed within the scope of their expert work.

He named the law firm of Sullivan Strickler out of Atlanta who obtained the lawful acquisition of the images

A. Presentation: Peter Ticktin, Attorney and Legal Expert.

Peter Ticktin believes that concerns about election fraud extend beyond traditional allegations of candidates manipulating votes to win elections. Instead, he characterized the issue as foreign interference, describing it as a form of warfare aimed at influencing or controlling a nation's political system. He stated that many Americans believe the 2020 election was rigged and contended that such an outcome would require coordination beyond any single individual. According to the speaker, concerns about electronic voting systems date back to Venezuela in 2004 under Hugo Chávez and later spread through voting technology companies used in the United States. He alleged that foreign actors, including China, Iran, Serbia, and Venezuela, played roles in election interference efforts. Mr. Ticktin further argued that election integrity is tied to broader concerns about democratic freedoms, citing what he described as restrictions on free speech in several Western countries. He warned that similar developments could occur in the United States if election systems are not reformed.

As a solution, he advocated replacing voting machines with transparent hand-counted ballots, arguing that hand-counting can be conducted efficiently with proper procedures and expert guidance. He also suggested separating federal and state ballots to simplify the counting process.

To support his concerns, Mr. Ticktin referenced events surrounding the 2020 election, including pauses in vote counting in several swing states and allegations regarding ballot handling in Fulton County, Georgia. He maintained that these events raised serious questions about the integrity of the election and reinforced his view that voting machines cannot be trusted. He also referenced concerns about voter registration systems, noting that voter rolls generally consist of active and inactive records. He indicated that his team had investigated issues involving what they refer to as "modified duplicates" within voter roll data and suggested that these records warrant closer examination.

In concluding his presentation, Mr. Ticktin said the one most important thing that needs to be done is to clean up, not just the voter rolls, but to clean up the archives of those voter rolls, because these machines are able to get into the archives, reestablish that person, vote that person, and put them back into the archives. So just by just taking somebody who has died - you know they're dead - you've put them in the archives, nobody has ever deleted them in the voter rolls. And that's where we have the problem. His last plea was to make sure when the voter rolls are cleaned up, you don't just put all these people into the archives, but you get rid of them out of the archives, put them anyplace else, but don't have them in that system.

When asked by **Member Ghazal** if he was still advocating for President Trump to pass an executive order to take over Georgia elections, Mr. Ticktin stated that he does not support federal control of elections. Instead, he advocated declaring a national emergency based on alleged foreign interference and election vulnerabilities. He argued that such a declaration could allow the President to establish election-related rules while leaving election administration under state control.

Member Ghazal argued that machine tabulation is more secure and practical than hand counting. Drawing on decades of election observation experience, she stated that machine-counted elections provide multiple layers of verification, including tabulator records, digital ballot images, and paper ballots—while hand counts rely primarily on ballots and the accuracy of human counters. She contended that audits can verify machine results and concluded that large-scale hand tabulation is not a feasible option.

B. ~~KNOW-NK electronic poll book~~ – (moving to June Meeting)

C. ~~Tabulator Tapes—Review of Tabulator Tapes Before Certification~~ (Moving to June Meeting)

~~D. Preservation of Records—County Officials for Case Investigations~~ (Moving to June Meeting)

E. Dr. Rick Richards yielded his allotted 30-minute presentation regarding ELLY and the electors list. At the Board's request, his presentation was rescheduled to the June meeting. However, Dr. Richards requested the opportunity to address and comment on two statements made by speakers during the earlier Public Comment period.

- He defended the ELLY voter data system, arguing that it relies on state voter rolls and third-party sources such as U.S. Postal Service and property tax records rather than generating its own flags (it doesn't have its own data). He contended that ELLY uses the same types of data sources recommended by election officials, updates Georgia data more frequently than ERIC, and includes voter data from 47 states compared to ERIC's 24. He also maintained that ELLY's data collection process has a certified chain of custody and is more direct than critics have claimed.

F. Bunker Room Discussion

Member Grubbs requested access for State Election Board members to observe election-night vote tabulation at the central counting facility, commonly referred to as "The Bunker" or the "War Room," during the upcoming primary election. She noted that the Board would not meet again until after the election and expressed a desire to discuss the matter with Executive Director Blake Evans.

Chairman Fervier responded that he had no authority over access to the facility.

Executive Director Mills asked **Chairman Fervier** whether he had previously attended election-night operations at "The Bunker." Chairman Fervier confirmed that he had and explained that it was a room located at the Georgia Emergency Management Center where election returns are received on election night. When asked how he had gained access, **Chairman Fervier** stated that he had been invited by someone from the Secretary of State's Office and was not familiar with the applicable access protocols.

Director Mills questioned why all State Election Board members were not permitted to observe election-night tabulation, stating that broader oversight would promote transparency and strengthen public confidence in the election process. He also inquired whether members of the media were present during the tabulation process; **Chairman Fervier** stated that he did not know.

Director Mills further stated that election administration should be conducted transparently and that the State Election Board should be permitted to observe election-night tabulation as part of its oversight responsibilities. He questioned the restrictions on Board member access while emphasizing that his comments were intended to promote transparency rather than assign blame.

Member Grubbs concurred with Director Mills and urged that State Election Board members be granted access to observe election-night vote aggregation. She stated that representatives from both major political parties should be permitted to observe the process and encouraged the Secretary of State's Office to allow Board members access during the upcoming primary election.

G. Petition for Rule Making

Vice Chair, Dr. Johnston: Numbered list of voters:

The petition proposes adding a rule to Georgia election regulations to formally define and require a "numbered list of voters" as a handwritten, sequential paper record of all voters who receive a ballot during early voting or Election Day. **Vice Chair Dr. Johnston** argues this requirement is grounded in existing Georgia law and is intended to clarify and standardize election procedures. She maintains that current electronic systems have reduced reliance on paper records and that a handwritten list would

restore an auditable, redundant paper trail. She cites multiple sections of Georgia law referencing numbered voter lists and contends that election officials are already required to maintain such records in various forms.

This proposed rule would require poll workers to record each voter's name in order of voting, maintain multiple copies for auditing and retention, and integrate the process into existing check-in procedures without significant added cost or staffing. She emphasizes that the system would provide a low-cost, paper-based safeguard against technological failures or security risks.

Finally, ***Vice Chair Dr. Johnston*** stated that the rule is consistent with statutory authority granted to the State Election Board, does not alter existing election law, and instead clarifies and enforces existing legal requirements.

Member Ghazal said that although the definition is drawn from statute, some language should be updated because it references outdated voting equipment, specifically "number slips governing admissions to the voting machines," which relate to older lever systems and could cause confusion. She suggested ending the definition after "ballots."

She also sought clarification on implementation, asking whether the proposal envisions a single poll worker recording all entries or whether check-in staff at the poll pads would each maintain a list. She noted the latter seems intended based on the workflow, where voters check in, receive credentials, and then have their names recorded. She added that introducing an additional step could create bottlenecks in the process, especially for early voting locations.

In Addition, **Member Ghazal** asked whether voters on restricted lists, such as individuals with protective orders, have their names suppressed in electronic poll books, noting that their addresses are already protected by law. She expressed concern that the proposed process could affect domestic violence victims and requested clarification on how such cases would be handled. ***Vice Chairman, Dr. Johnston*** agreed they must check with legal counsel about that.

Lastly, **Member Ghazal** raised concerns about low-turnout elections using a sequential voter list, noting that electronic systems typically randomize records. She stated that sequential cast vote records and digital ballot images could potentially allow voter order to be inferred, especially in small early voting settings, raising privacy concerns about linking individuals to the order in which they voted. She added that she is not categorically opposed to this petition. She thinks it's absolutely within the scope of their rulemaking, but these are the concerns that arose since she read this yesterday.

Vice Chairman Dr. Johnston acknowledged privacy concerns related to ballot sequencing but argued that they could be addressed through procedural safeguards, such as delaying ballot scanning to break any direct voting order link. She maintained that a handwritten numbered voter list remains an important auditable backup to electronic poll books and expressed concern that existing voter lists are difficult to obtain, limiting transparency about who voted.

Member Ghazal added there would also need to be an analog for absentee ballots if we want the full auditable handwritten list. She thinks that would be when you would have to do it because you can't if you do a numbered list of voters for people who receive absentee ballots. The rate of voters who don't return them - it would really skew those numbers.

Motion: Member King motioned to continue this at the June meeting.

Second: Chairman Fervier

Vote: Passed unanimously (4-0)

In Favor: Chairman Fervier, Vice Chairman, Member King, Member Ghazal.

(Note: Vice Chair Dr. Johnston agreed)

H. Petition from several individuals: Presenter Marilyn Marks, Executive Director, Coalition for Good Governance - Define the vote.

Marilyn Marks emphasized that the petition/proposal does not create new laws, authorize a new voting system, mandate hand counting, or alter local election officials' authority. Instead, it asks the Board to fulfill its existing responsibility to clarify and enforce election law, including defining what constitutes a legally valid vote. She contended that clearer definitions and procedures may ultimately require changes to current election systems.

She also said that the State Election Board has a duty to clearly define what constitutes a valid vote and asserted that current rules are ambiguous. She maintained that legal and operational issues with the current voting system require the adoption of an existing statutory backup process. She urged the Board and county election officials to promptly evaluate whether current systems comply with state law and to begin rulemaking without delay.

Ms. Marks pointed out that existing state and federal laws already require human-readable, manually recountable ballots and election systems that can be properly tested for accuracy. She contended that these requirements have not been fully met since the current voting system was implemented and urged immediate action rather than delaying compliance. She also raised concerns about ballot secrecy, claiming that flaws in record randomization could allow voting patterns to be traced, and argued that proposed system changes would better protect voter privacy.

She urged the Board to give the proposal thorough consideration and decide promptly, stating that election officials need clear guidance before upcoming deadlines. She cautioned against delaying action until June, or rushing deliberations, and suggested holding an additional meeting if necessary to fully review the issues.

Chairman Fervier stated that although they were short on time right now, the Board could hold a special meeting dedicated to the issue, allowing ample time for discussion. He noted that such a meeting could be called by two Board members and suggested deferring further debate until that time. Ms. Marks urged the Board to schedule a meeting before adjourning, arguing that delays would make coordination more difficult. She also recommended a work session involving election officials, vendors, cybersecurity experts, legal experts, and the Secretary of State's office to address unresolved questions and clarify factual and technical issues before upcoming election deadlines. **Chairman Fervier** noted that **Vice Chairman, Dr. Johnston and Member Grubbs** have already put this proposal forward, and explained that Board members are free to hold work sessions or form a committee if they choose to do so.

F. Next State Election Board Meeting

Date: June 3, 2026

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Lanier Technical College/Forsyth Conference Center
3410 Ronald Reagan Boulevard
Cumming, Georgia 30041

XI. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:34 p.m., the Board passed the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Member Ghazal

Second: Member King

Voted: Passed unanimously (4-0)

In Favor: Vice Chair, Dr. Johnston, Member King, Member Grubbs, and Member Ghazal