

This Council

As the map shows, there is a high number of polling place closures in neighborhoods that are at least 30% Black, according to the Census Bureau data. Moreover, according to data supplied publicly by the Secretary of State, half of these polling places closures are comprised of a higher percentage of Black registered voters than the overall percentage of registered Black voters in Iberia Parish (32.6 %)²:

	459	50%	46%
	763	46%	49%
	1043	39%	58%
	463	35%	62%
	644	30%	64%
	617	30%	65%
	986	13%	83%
	618	2%	94%

In sum, we find it concerning that these closures will affect the Black community in Iberia in a disproportionate manner. The polling locations that have been closed would have served a total of 5,913 voters, all of whom must now be assigned to a different location. This could impact Iberia voters, who will be inconvenienced by potentially overcrowded polling locations, particularly in the current context of the fourth COVID surge in Louisiana, which may persist well into the fall.

The news of the closed polling locations comes with little clarity or information from the Council. In particular, it is unclear whether voters were notified of the potential change before the Council voted to close the eight polling locations. It is important that voters in Iberia Parish understand the following:

Why was it necessary for the polling places to be closed

If Iberia Parish plans to make any of these closures permanent, will this Council open new locations to ensure equal access for all voters?

We respectfully request answers to these questions. We also request to know whether these closures be reversed before the November 2021 election and beyond, and if so, whether the Council will commit to reversing them.

In the event that the closures cannot be reversed, we respectfully request that the Council make a concerted effort to notify voters of their new polling place assignments well ahead of the upcoming November 13, 2021 election. We understand that the Registrar of Voters either has or will soon send notices to affected registered voters.³ However, we are concerned that a single mailing will not be effective to reach as many voters as possible who were affected by these abrupt closures. We urge the Council to take the following steps to ensure effective notice to voters of the closures and new polling place assignments:

Provide at least three notices to voters about their changed polling place and the changed election date to November 13, 2021;

Engage media outlets to inform voters, including KATC, , and other local outlets to report on these polling location changes;

Use geofenced social media ads to encourage voters to confirm their voting location via the app;

Ensure that the websites of the Parish Council, Clerk of Court, and Registrar of Voters each prominently display a list of the closed or consolidated polling places with clear instructions of where voters can confirm their correct voting location (e.g., GeauxVote.com), make available maps displaying the new locations, and provide confirmation that these changes in polling locations will be temporary;

Ensure that there is clear signage at each polling location indicating where the precinct has been relocated or consolidated;

Partner with community leaders to ensure that information regarding temporary polling place changes is broadly and effectively communicated;

Engage community members in full consultation before the Council makes further polling place changes or selections for the 2022 and future elections;

Explore opportunities to add an additional early voting site for the upcoming and future elections.

Time is of the essence. Whatever this Council decides, it must do so urgently to reduce the it must do so