



GEORGIA STATE ELECTION BOARD
State of Georgia

OFFICIAL MINUTES

Proceedings and Action Record

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

MAY 14, 2026

Remote / Virtual Session — State of Georgia





Meeting at a Glance

Key figures from the May 14, 2026 Special Called Meeting of the Georgia State Election Board.

Item	Summary
Meeting Date	May 14, 2026
Meeting Type	Special Called Meeting
Duration	2:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.
Motions Considered	5
Motions Adopted	4
Motions Failed	1
Motions Withdrawn	0
Rule Petitions Presented (No Vote Taken)	4 (temporary election rule petitions submitted by Member Grubbs; carried forward for further Board consideration)
Cases Heard	0
Cases Dismissed	0
Cases Continued	0
Letters of Instruction	0
AG Referrals	0
Staff / Personnel Actions	Hope Coan appointed Deputy Executive Director; two part-time investigators and one data-entry specialist reported as hired
Board Leadership Change	None
Next Meeting	June 3-4, 2026 — Lanier Technical College, Forsyth Conference Center, Cumming, Georgia



Official Meeting Minutes Prepared by On the Record, LLC

MINUTES
STATE ELECTION BOARD MEETING
Special Called Meeting — May 14, 2026

Remote / Virtual Session — State of Georgia

2:00 p.m.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/uGWdZ-DmGDA>

CALL TO ORDER INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Vice Chairman Dr. Janice Johnston called the Special Called Meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. on May 14, 2026, the scheduled start time per the Board's posted meeting notice. Board Members present were Vice Chairman Dr. Janice Johnston, presiding, Member Salleigh Grubbs, Member Janelle King, and Member Sara Ghazal, who joined in progress, along with Executive Director James Mills. Chairman John Fervier was absent.

The invocation was given by Member King. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Member Grubbs.

Vice Chairman Johnston announced that the Board's next regular meeting would be held June 3-4, 2026, at Lanier Technical College, Forsyth Conference Center, in Cumming, Georgia.

Record Note: The court reporter's transcript does not timestamp the call to order or the adjournment. The times stated in these Minutes are drawn from the Board's posted meeting notice and the meeting's video recording rather than from the certified transcript.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

No prior meeting minutes were presented for approval at this meeting.

ATTORNEY GENERAL REPORT

No Attorney General Report was presented at this meeting.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were made at this meeting.

V. VIOLATION CASES

No violation cases were heard at this meeting.

VI. REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director James Mills presented the following items to the Board.

A. Deputy Executive Director Appointment

Executive Director Mills recommended that Hope Coan be appointed Deputy Executive Director of the Georgia State Election Board Agency, citing her sustained performance and the operational need for deputy coverage.

Motion: Member King moved to support Executive Director Mills's recommendation and appoint Hope Coan as Deputy Executive Director

Second: Member Grubbs

Vote: Passed unanimously

In Favor: Member Grubbs and Member King

Record Note: In restating the motion for the vote, the presiding officer referred to the appointee as "Mahogany Coan." The individual is identified as "Hope Coan" throughout the remainder of the record; this appears to be a reporting or transcription variance rather than a distinct person. The certified transcript renders the surname as "Cohen" throughout; the correct spelling is "Coan," which is used in these Minutes.

B. Virtual Licensed Private Investigator Program

Executive Director Mills requested Board endorsement of the concept of a statewide virtual licensed private investigator (PI) program, under which vetted, contracted private investigators in individual counties would be engaged as needed to assist with case investigations. Director Mills estimated a potential cost of approximately \$250,000 if fully implemented, to be encumbered from FY2026 surplus funds in light of an anticipated \$300,000 state budget reduction effective FY2027. Program design, policies, and administration would be determined by the Executive Director, with a monthly summary report to the Board.

Member Grubbs stated she could not support the concept without a written plan, a firm budget, and independent legal review, citing the Board's fiduciary responsibility. Member King and Vice Chairman Johnston expressed support given the year-end encumbrance deadline and confidence in the Executive Director's fiscal management, noting the program could be modified or halted by the Board at any time.

Motion: Vice Chairman Johnston moved to approve implementing the virtual license PI program, with the amount to be encumbered from FY2026 funds determined by the Executive Director, and with a monthly summary report to be provided as part of the Executive Director's report

Second: Member King

Vote: Passed (2-1)

In Favor: Member King and Vice Chairman Johnston

Opposed: Member Grubbs

C. Data / Expert Researcher Contract Program

Executive Director Mills further proposed a related program to contract with a data specialist or expert researcher, either directly or through a temporary staffing agency, to assist investigators with complex technical analysis such as voter roll data and system log files in pending cases, estimated at approximately \$50,000 for the initial period.

Member King questioned whether this should be a standalone program rather than integrated support for the PI program described above. Member Grubbs reiterated that she could not vote to approve a program without a specific written plan and budget. Vice Chairman Johnston and Member King voiced support for the concept.

Motion: Member King moved to approve the Executive Director's proposal to establish a data/expert researcher contract or temporary-staffing program to assist Board investigations, with policies, procedures, and a monthly summary report to be provided by the Executive Director as part of the Executive Director's report

Second: Vice Chairman Johnston

Vote: Failed (2-2)

In Favor: Member King and Vice Chairman Johnston

Opposed: Member Grubbs and Member Ghazal

Record Note: Member Ghazal joined the meeting in progress during this item and cast her vote as the tally was being taken; the presiding officer confirmed her vote on the record before announcing the outcome.

D. Board Discussion — Confidentiality of Personnel and Hiring Matters

Vice Chairman Johnston raised concerns regarding an apparent disclosure to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution of information related to the Board's confidential hiring process for two part-time investigator positions, stating the disclosure appeared to originate from the Secretary of State's Office human resources function. Member King shared similar concerns regarding the timing and handling of applicant information. Member Ghazal noted that media reporting is protected under the First Amendment and questioned the practical value of pursuing a formal ethics complaint against a media outlet. No motion was made; the matter was discussion only.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

No items were before the Board under Old Business at this meeting.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Fulton County Additional Absentee Ballot Return Sites (“Drop Bags”)

Vice Chairman Johnston opened discussion of Fulton County's plan to designate all early voting sites as additional registrar's offices for receiving absentee-by-mail ballot returns, initially referred to as “drop bags” and later re-termed “delivery of absentee ballots,” encompassing 22 additional return sites and approximately 418 associated election actions to be tracked and documented over the early voting period.

Board members discussed chain-of-custody concerns, the absence of a specific statute or rule governing such sites, and the need for public observation of the process. Member Ghazal reported secondhand information that Fulton County had paused the program amid concerns that election workers were being intimidated, including license plates being recorded. No motion was made. Vice Chairman Johnston directed the Board's newly hired investigators to review and observe county practices in this area.

B. Election Night Reporting — Independent Legal Opinion

Member Grubbs raised concerns regarding the Board's access to, and oversight of, election night reporting operations, citing statutory public-performance-of-duties provisions and noting a perceived conflict of interest given the Secretary of State's candidacy for Governor. Vice Chairman Johnston reported that she had contacted the Attorney General's office and the Democratic Party, neither of which would take a position on Board attendance at election night reporting, and that the Republican Party had issued a statement supporting Board observation of the process.

Motion: Member Grubbs moved that the Executive Director engage legal counsel to obtain independent legal advice on this matter as soon as possible

Second: Member King

Vote: Passed (3-0)

In Favor: Member Grubbs and Vice Chairman Johnston

C. Rule Petitions (Member Grubbs) — Temporary Election Rules

Member Grubbs presented four rule petitions for the Board's consideration, submitted as temporary rules in light of the upcoming Congressional District 13 special election: an amendment to Rule 183-1-15-.02 concerning the definition of a vote on optical-scan ballots (Exhibit 1); a temporary rule under 183-1-12-.01 addressing ballot-marking device (BMD) procedures, the backup balloting measure, and ballot-on-demand printers for the special election (Exhibit 2); amendments to Rule 183-1-12-11 concerning conduct of elections, BMD voting procedures, and the emergency paper ballot allocation percentage (Exhibit 3); and amendments concerning ballot secrecy protections for accessible voting devices (Exhibit 4).

Member Grubbs stated that, given the compressed timeline before early voting begins for the special election, she believed the matter could not wait for the June 3 meeting, but declined to call for a vote in the absence of the full Board, Chairman Fervier being absent and Member Ghazal being in and out of the session. She

requested that the petitions be taken up again prior to the June 3 meeting. No motion was made; the matter was carried forward for further Board consideration.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Member Grubbs moved to adjourn

Second: Member King

Vote: Passed by voice vote

In Favor: Member Grubbs and Member King

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:15 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that these Minutes were prepared from the official verbatim stenographic record produced during the Special Called Meeting of the Georgia State Election Board conducted on May 14, 2026. This publication accurately reflects the actions taken by the Board and summarizes the proceedings in accordance with the official transcript maintained by On the Record, LLC.

John Sheffield, CDR, CER

Certified Court Reporter — On the Record, LLC