

April 26, 2021

William Pate, President and CEO (wpate@atlanta.net)

Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau

Joseph Marinelli, President (jmarinelli@visitsavannah.com)

Visit Savannah

Jay Markwalter, Executive Director (Jay@GACVB.com)

Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus

Dear Mr. Pate, Mr. Marinelli, and Mr. Markwalter:

The leaders of the undersigned learned societies and associations wish to register our alarm and disappointment about the passage of SB 202. Our organizations are planning to hold, have recently held, or will be considering holding conventions in Atlanta, Savannah, and other cities in Georgia. These conventions bring thousands of attendees to the state, along with millions of dollars in local revenue. However, the grave concerns we share about this legislation force us to reconsider whether we can in good conscience bring our meetings to your state.

The many scholars and teachers who participate in our professional conferences include experts who have made a life's work of the study of democracies, elections, and social justice. Moreover, all of us are personal stakeholders in the American democratic process, and thus are affected by this legislation. One thing all of us have learned from the ongoing movement for racial justice is how fragile the promise of equality is for many Americans—particularly Black people and other people of color—including equal access to the vote as well as equal protection under the law.

Our concern is echoed by many of our members and meeting participants, who are already asking us to reconsider whether to hold planned meetings in Georgia, or indeed *not* to consider locations in Georgia for future conferences. In fact, when reviewing the bids of cities that seek to host our meetings, we place an emphasis on cities and states that will welcome all of our attendees, regardless of their religion, race, gender, or sexual orientation. This is such an important issue that many of us include in our meeting contracts language such as the following, stipulating that any laws, ordinances,

or practices condoning “discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or the enactment by the City of Atlanta or the State of Georgia of any law restricting or limiting the rights of any citizen on any of the above-cited bases...may result in the cancellation of this Agreement.” It is our view that SB 202 exacerbates already existing inequalities in access to voting and thus introduces an additional element of discrimination.

SB 202 undermines decades of work towards equality, justice, and democratic participation that had been done in Georgia — work that is admired both nationally and internationally. We call on you to contact your legislators about the negative economic impact this law will certainly have on meeting and convention business in Georgia, and to urge them to reverse it. If you have already contacted your legislators and are willing to share your communications with them, we would appreciate knowing more about those conversations. As it stands, it will be difficult for us and our members to consider coming to Georgia in the future should the law remain in place.

Signed,

American Historical Association
American Philosophical Association
American Studies Association
American Society for Environmental History
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
German Studies Association
Linguistic Society of America
National Council on Public History
Organization of American Historians
World History Association