

Senate Judiciary Committee
Hearing Entitled, “Jim Crow 2021: The Latest Assault on the Right to Vote”

Senator Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member
Questions for the Record
The Honorable Stacey Abrams
May 30, 2021

1. On March 31, 2021, you originally authored an article in USA Today, wherein you wrote:

The impassioned response to the racist, classist bill that is now the law of Georgia is to boycott in order to achieve change. Events hosted by major league baseball, world class soccer, college sports and dozens of Hollywood films hang in the balance. At the same time, activists urge Georgians to swear off of hometown products to express our outrage. Until we hear clear, unequivocal statements that show Georgia-based companies get what’s at stake, *I can’t argue with an individual’s choice to opt for their competition.*

However, one lesson of boycotts is that the pain of deprivation must be shared to be sustainable. Otherwise, those least resilient bear the brunt of these actions; and in the aftermath, the struggle to access the victory. And boycotts are complicated affairs that require a long-term commitment to action. I have no doubt that voters of color, particularly Black voters, are willing to endure the hardships of boycotts. But I don’t think that’s necessary – yet.

Two days later, Major League Baseball announced that it was pulling the 2021 All-Star Game from Georgia and it appears that someone edited the article on April 6 (although editors of USA Today did not acknowledge the alteration until April 22, 2021) to read as follows:

The impassioned (and understandable) response to the racist, classist bill that is now the law of Georgia is to boycott in order to achieve change. *Events that can bring millions of dollars to struggling families hang in the balance. Major League Baseball pulled both its All-Star Game and its draft from Georgia, which could cost our state nearly \$100 million in lost revenue.*

Rather than accept responsibility for their craven actions, Republican leaders blame me and others who have championed voting rights (and actually read the bill). Their faux outrage is designed to hide the fact that they prioritized making it

harder for people of color to vote over the economic well-being of all Georgians. To add to the injury, the failed former president is now calling for cancellation of baseball as the national pastime.

*Boycotts invariably also cost jobs. To be sustainable, the pain of deprivation must be shared rather than borne by those who are least resilient . . .*¹

On April 27 a Gannett spokesman said, “We regret the oversight in updating the Stacey Abrams column. As soon as we recognized there was no editor’s note, we added it to the page to reflect her changes. We have reviewed our procedures to ensure this does not occur again.”²

- a. When were you first contacted to appear before the Senate Judiciary Committee for its Voting Rights Hearing?

I cannot pinpoint the precise moment of initial outreach. My team and I have strong relationships and ongoing conversations with numerous Democratic Senators as well as their staff.

- b. When did you propose these changes in the content of your original March 31, 2021 USA Today op-ed?

Mr. Ranking Member, this question as well as the information compiled above reflects a misunderstanding of events and a willful misrepresentation of my clearly stated position.

Neither I nor anyone on my team “proposed... changes in the content of [the] March 31, 2021 USA Today op-ed.” After the initial publication online, USA Today initiated contact and requested that I update the op-ed for the April 7 print edition. This has been confirmed by the outlet [directly](#):

“In advance of running the column in print editions, USA TODAY asked Stacey Abrams to update her piece...”

The emphasis on the following passage appears to consider this a signal to MLB, which is contrary to a plain reading of the piece:

At the same time, activists urge Georgians to **swear off of hometown products** to express our outrage. Until we hear clear, unequivocal statements that show

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<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2021/03/31/voter-suppression-will-corporations-redeem-themselves-column/4820354001/>

² <https://twitter.com/JosephWulfsohn/status/1387076266008981506>

Georgia-based companies get what's at stake, I can't argue with **an individual's choice** to opt for their competition.

My clear statements regarding “hometown products” and “Georgia-based companies” and “an individual choice” did not pertain to MLB, a professional sports league headquartered outside of Georgia. To suggest otherwise willfully misrepresents both the letter and spirit of what I wrote.

To wit, please consider this example: If, in response to the passage of SB 202 and its prohibition on providing water or food to an elderly person voting at a nearby precinct, an individual evaluated the public statements made by Atlanta X, (a fictive “Georgia-based compan[y]”) I would not have argued at the time if they decided to only purchase products from Alabama-based Birmingham Y (“their competition”) instead of Atlanta X (the “hometown product”).

You have pointed out that this passage about “Georgia-based companies” was not included in the April 7 print edition of my op-ed. During the period between initial publication and the April 7 print version, Coca-Cola, Delta and other “Georgia-based companies” had already issued the very “clear, unequivocal statements” that I had urged on March 31. It would have been inaccurate and unfair to assert in the April 7 print edition that these “Georgia-based companies” had not made clear statements of their posture. In recognition thereof, I acknowledged these companies’ statements.

As a matter of course, I endeavor to provide clarity and context to my statements. With regards to boycotts in Georgia, both before and after MLB’s announcement, my strong caution against doing so is well documented and - as a point of fact - served as the subject of the March 31 op-ed. This is consistent with public statements made on the record to news outlets, conversations held with individuals holding contradictory and supporting positions and my previous public statements offered in 2019. Any alternative theory intentionally ignores the following March 31 passage, which directly addressed MLB and other outside-of-Georgia business entities:

“Leaving us behind with boycotts won’t save us. **I ask you to bring your business to Georgia** and if you’re already here, stay and fight.”

This passage figures as so central to my argument that it was also the subheadline of the March 31 piece. The mischaracterization of my posture and my public statements wrongfully assigns a meaning to my writing that patently does not exist. This mischaracterization appears to be attributable to only a select few, whereas the majority of others have found no difficulty in the intent and obvious language of my position.

Forbes wrote within hours of my March 31 op-ed:

“...Abrams says companies should not boycott her home state...”

Even the right-wing *New York Post* got it right, the day after my March 31 op-ed published:

“Abrams... made her case against a boycott in an op-ed published Wednesday [March 31] by USA Today.”

In addition to publishing my March 31 op-ed, prior to MLB’s announcement, I also took the following actions to amplify my message:

- Released a video urging the nation, “Please, do not boycott us”
- Conveyed to the Biden Administration my opposition to MLB’s then-potential move
- Conducted media interviews reiterating my opposition to a boycott
- Held private and public conversations with Georgia’s film industry urging them to stay
- Went to Hollywood and met with executives, urging them to continue filming in my state
- Opposed a 2018 #BoycottGeorgia effort responding to voter suppression

Also, as reported by multiple credible media outlets and confirmed by official MLB sources, I strongly urged leadership within the League directly that it should not move its All-Star Game. Numerous outlets confirmed the conversation with MLB sources. As I expressed to the MLB, I believed that to do so would hurt Georgians economically and served as a premature response. MLB understood my position clearly prior to its April 2 announcement.

Mr. Ranking Member, I have participated in voting rights advocacy work for nearly thirty years. As a college student, as a young attorney selected for an international fellowship on youth civic engagement, as a legislator and as a leader. For most of that time, Georgia has served as the foundation for my efforts, and I have been proud to call the state my home. My passion for voting rights is directly tied to my dedication to improve the economic and social health and well-being of my fellow Georgians. Thus, I have been the most outspoken opponent to chasing away jobs and opportunities here. Too often, that has meant opposing legislation that has been proven to cause financial harm; and during my tenure as Minority Leader in the Georgia House of Representatives, I had to oppose Republican legislation to preserve those jobs and opportunities on multiple occasions.

I will not denounce the prerogative of Americans to organize as best they can to influence those unwilling to respond to their pleas for audience. However, I will continue to do everything in my power to mitigate the harm that Republican-led voter suppression has caused both to Georgians’ freedom to vote and to Georgians’ jobs. No one in America should be compelled to forsake one to secure the other.

I am disappointed by the apparent fixation on one wilfully misinterpreted line from an op-ed updated at the publication's request for a print edition -- and not the scourge of voter suppression across the country, including in the home states of several members of this Committee. We should be focused on the substance of these bills and their deleterious effects on the ability of voters to cast ballots, the safety and effectiveness of election workers and the ability of disgruntled lawmakers to subvert elections in part or in whole. However, there is no authentic reason to manufacture outrage when plain reading clearly indicates my intent and delivery.

- c. With whom, if anyone, at USA Today did you communicate in making changes to your original March 31, 2021 op-ed?

Mr. Ranking Member, our communications with USA Today or any publication should not be the target of discussion. Sadly, in our present age, journalists are often subjected to online and in-person harassment and threats, as became common during former President Donald Trump's tenure with his ad hominem attacks on members of the media and public incitement of violence against its membership. This troubling behavior from the nation's highest office has been reinforced and exacerbated by irresponsible members of Congress who denigrate journalists and dismiss the role of the free press in our democratic society. Similar harassment of elections officials and poll workers has occurred over the past year stemming from the Big Lie pushed by former President Trump, and, tragically, multiple minority members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. I will not expose any private citizen to harassment from the likes of those who violently seized control of the Capitol on January 6.

Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member, for the opportunity to clarify these points. Should I be able to provide any further responses or offer insights, I look forward to doing so. I encourage you to support the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Senate Judiciary Committee
Hearing Entitled, "*Jim Crow 2021: The Latest Assault on the Right to Vote*"

Senator Ted Cruz
Questions for the Record
The Honorable Stacey Abrams
May 30, 2021

You are the Founder and leader of Fair Fight and Fair Fight Action, organizations which both actively participate in election organization efforts and lobby in favor of loosening voter integrity

laws at the state and federal level. At the hearing, I asked you whether your organizations engage in the practice of collecting ballots from voters, and whether it is paid work. You assured the committee that Fair Fight groups do not harvest ballots, and then explained the ways in which the organizations are helpful to voters in providing registration information. Meanwhile, throughout the hearing, you voiced your strong support for the bill S. 1, and your organizations continue to lobby in favor it. The bill S. 1 affirmatively authorizes ballot harvesting.

1. Please confirm the following or explain Fair Fight or Fair Fight Action's role in the following activities:
 - a. No employee, affiliate, agent, volunteer of Fair Fight or Fair Fight Action, as a part of their duties to the organizations or when acting under their guidance, engages in the practice of collecting ballots from voters.

Correct.

- b. No such individual is compensated to do so by Fair Fight or Fair Fight Action.

Correct.

- c. Neither Fair Fight nor Fair Fight Action directly funds the collection of ballots from voters, and neither indirectly funds such a practice, including by issuing grants to, partnering with, or providing fundraising support to, other organizations that engage in the practice of collecting ballots from voters.

Fair Fight and Fair Fight Action have supported multiple organizations, some that, as part of larger organizing efforts, may collect sealed ballots from voters in circumstances and states in which it is legal to do so. As I explained during the hearing, so-called "ballot harvesting" is not a legal term.

The pejorative term was popularized by former President Donald Trump as part of his sustained lies about voting by mail and served as one of several precursors to the Capitol insurrection on January 6. The willful misinterpretation of a range of laws, collectively denounced using rank syllogism, undermines behaviors that have become imperative to respond to disease, distance, failed infrastructure, disability and a host of challenges facing eligible voters. This conflation of lawful actions have been used to justify making it harder to vote by mail and to limit drop boxes. In Georgia, for instance, voters will have 109 fewer days to request a mail ballot relative to last year, and in Fulton County, drop boxes are being reduced from 38 to 8, with the direct and known effect of increasing the difficulty for people of color to vote.

2. Does Fair Fight or Fair Fight Action plan to participate in any of the activities listed in question 1 during future elections? If so, please explain which activities and the extent of any anticipated involvement.

Fair Fight and Fair Fight Action will continue to support numerous organizations, including those that, as part of larger organizing efforts, may collect sealed ballots from voters in circumstances and states in which it is legal to do so.

Thank you for your questions, Senator. I would be remiss if I did not also mention that, as I write this response, anti-voter legislation is proceeding through the Texas legislature. To mitigate the harm of voter suppression to your constituents, particularly those of color who are most likely to be harmed by the proposed limits on voting hours and access and creating the ability overturn an election without evidence of actual fraud, I encourage you to support the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Senate Judiciary Committee
Hearing Entitled, “*Jim Crow 2021: The Latest Assault on the Right to Vote*”

Senator Tom Cotton
Questions for the Record
The Honorable Stacey Abrams
May 30, 2021

1. On March 31, you published an op-ed in USA Today about Georgia's election law, in which you wrote: “Until we hear clear, unequivocal statements that show Georgia-based companies get what’s at stake, I can’t argue with an individual’s choice to opt for their competition.”

On April 2, Major League Baseball announced that it would move the All-Star Game from Georgia in response to Georgia’s election law, at an estimated cost of \$100 million in jobs and economic benefit to the state.

On April 6, after Major League Baseball's decision, your op-ed in USA Today was updated to remove the line that threatened boycotts against companies that didn't condemn Georgia, and edited to include new language that condemned boycotts.

- a. After your op-ed was published on March 31, did you speak with anyone at USA Today about editing your op-ed?

In a conversation with my team, USA Today requested that I update the op-ed for the purposes of a print edition.

- b. If you spoke with anyone at USA Today about editing your op-ed after it was published on March 31, on what dates were those conversations?

The communications occurred between initial publication and the April 7 print edition.

- c. Did you or USA Today first mention making edits to the op-ed after publication?

USA Today initiated contact and requested that I update the op-ed for the April 7 print edition. This has been confirmed by the outlet [directly](#):

*“In advance of running the column in print editions, **USA TODAY** asked **Stacey Abrams** to update her piece...”*

- d. After Major League Baseball announced that it would move the All-Star Game from Georgia, did you suggest to or request that USA Today remove the line from your op-ed about an individual opting for the competition?

I did not suggest or request that USA Today make this *or any other changes* to the op-ed; rather, I agreed to a request from USA Today to update my op-ed for print purposes. The line regarding individual options had no bearing on MLB. To place the reference in context:

At the same time, activists urge Georgians to **swear off of hometown products** to express our outrage. Until we hear clear, unequivocal statements that show **Georgia-based companies** get what’s at stake, I can’t argue with **an individual’s choice** to opt for their competition.

My full statement refers to “hometown products” and “Georgia-based companies” and “an individual choice.” Therefore, it cannot pertain to MLB, a professional sports league headquartered outside of Georgia. To suggest otherwise willfully misrepresents both the letter and spirit of what I wrote.

To wit, please consider this example: If, in response to the passage of SB 202 and its prohibition on providing water or food to an elderly person voting at a nearby precinct, an individual evaluated the public statements made by Atlanta X, (a fictive “Georgia-based compan[y]”) I would not have argued at the time if they decided to only purchase products from Alabama-based Birmingham Y (“their competition”) instead of Atlanta X (the “hometown product”).

During the period between initial publication and the April 7 print version, Coca-Cola, Delta and other “Georgia-based companies” had already issued the very “clear, unequivocal statements” that I had urged on March 31. It would have been inaccurate and unfair to assert in the April 7 print edition that these “Georgia-based companies” had not made clear statements of their posture. In recognition thereof, I acknowledged these companies’ statements.

2. Do you believe that Major League Baseball's decision to remove the All Star Game from Georgia was a "clear, unequivocal statement[] that show[s] [that Major League Baseball] get[s] what's at stake" in regards to Georgia’s election law?

As I explain in the previous statement, my reference focused on Georgia-based companies.

3. If, as your newly updated op-ed now claims, you do not support Major League Baseball moving the All-Star Game from Georgia, what response to your original op-ed do you believe that Major League Baseball should have taken instead?

Both before and after MLB’s announcement, my strong caution against any boycott of Georgia is well documented and - as a point of fact - served as the subject of the March 31 op-ed. Any alternative theory intentionally ignores the following March 31 passage, which directly addressed MLB and other outside-of-Georgia business entities:

“Leaving us behind with boycotts won’t save us. **I ask you to bring your business to Georgia** and if you’re already here, stay and fight.”

This passage figures as so central to my argument that it was also the subheadline of the March 31 piece. The mischaracterization of my posture and my public statements wrongfully assigns a meaning to my writing that patently does not exist. This mischaracterization appears to be attributable to only a select few, whereas the majority of others have found no difficulty in the intent and obvious language of my position.

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Also, as reported by multiple credible media outlets and confirmed by official MLB sources, I strongly urged leadership within the League directly that it should not move its All-Star Game. Numerous outlets confirmed the conversation with MLB sources. As I expressed to the MLB, I believed that to do so would hurt Georgians economically and served as a premature response. MLB understood my position clearly prior to its April 2 announcement.

In accordance with my March 31 op-ed, I sought to have MLB hold the game in metro Atlanta ("bring your business to Georgia"); in accord with my public statements, to eschew removal of the game ("please do not boycott us") and my direct communication to the League itself was to keep the All-Star Game in Georgia. I supported wholeheartedly a public denunciation of the restrictive anti-voting laws; however, I took great pains in multiple venues to describe a preferred course of conduct - stay and fight.

Thank you, Senator Cotton, and please feel free to reach out to me at any time should you have questions about voting rights. I encourage you to support the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.