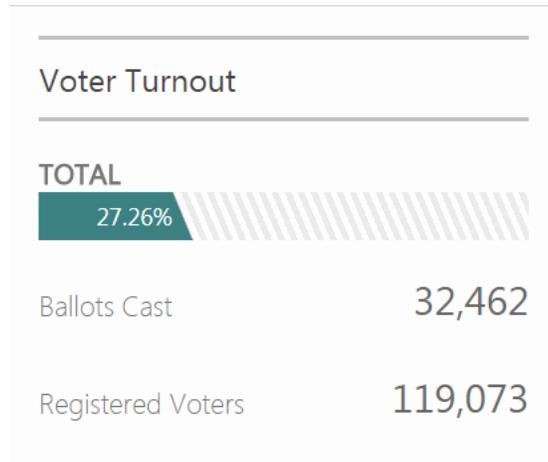


khalid's Commentary #OurVotesMatter



Last March, the City of South Fulton held its first elections for Mayor & City Council. Even with over 70 candidates holding events and knocking doors, and 16 days of early voting, turnout for this election was only 15 percent. Turnout improved for the runoff. However, [Secretary of State data show that nearly 3 out of 4 South Fulton residents never showed up for either election.](#)

As startling as these statistics are, they are slightly higher than the national average for local elections. A 2014 US Census Survey cited being “too busy” as the number one reason people gave for not voting (28%), and a Pew Research Study found nonvoters were typically younger, more people of color, less educated and more financially strapped. Residents of Old National & South Fulton match these demographics, and have some of the longest commutes in Atlanta to and from job sites.

Others reportedly stayed home because they felt insufficiently educated about the candidates and the issues. Many Old National residents whose doors my volunteers & I knocked on were not even aware we were becoming a city! Most of my own campaign was spent canvassing neighborhoods with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheets about cityhood, and laminated maps our city's boundaries never before seen by most.



We must do a better job educating our citizens about our local government and how it works — something I try to do with this newsletter. And we must do more to encourage a "culture" of voting, especially among our young people.

To that end, I have introduced a Resolution to make Election Day a holiday for city employees. Government calendars influence the calendars of everyone who does business with the government — which is virtually everyone! The goal of this resolution is to join a growing movement of those concerned about voting rights in calling for Election Day to become a federal holiday.

Election Day is already a holiday in Puerto Rico, and voter turnout there is 50 percent higher than the United States. Imagine a city where Election Day is observed as a Day of Political Education, just as Martin Luther King Day is observed as a Day of Service. Imagine a city with Election Day community events where educators debate confusing ballot referendums. Imagine kitchen tables where parents and children — both off for the day — go through voting ballots together.

This is the Election Day Holiday my proposal envisions. Please read the entire Resolution for yourself, below:
[Election Holiday Resolution](#)



President Reagan Signs Law Creating MLK National Holiday in 1983 as King's widow Coretta Scott King looks on.

It's hard to believe that just over 30 years ago, MLK Day was not a national holiday. It took 15 years of lobbying by activists (and a hit record by Stevie Wonder) before Congress finally passed a law recognizing the day in 1983, and America first observed it as a federal holiday in 1986.

This is how every national holiday has come to be. Forward-thinking city councils, school boards, local business owners and individual states begin recognizing a day, building momentum towards federal legislation. They are often prompted to do so by a few "activist" individuals like my own mother.



I still remember that January morning in the 1980s when my mother realized my school, Old National Christian Academy, did not recognize MLK day, or teach us anything about the Civil Rights movement. "You're not going to school today." she said, before sitting me down at our kitchen table with scrapbooks of black & white photographs from her own childhood in the segregated south, and stories of a time when African Americans were not allowed to vote at all.

I am proud to lead the charge for South Fulton to join progressive cities around the country in recognizing the importance of Election Day. I pray one day my own children will find it impossible to believe that anyone ever had to work on a day so essential for our democracy.

Please come to our next **City Council Meeting, Tuesday, August 8 at 7PM** to witness and support our city make history.