

**From:** Matt Miehl

**To:** GA Appleseed

**Date:** January 5, 2021

**Re:** Propriety of using a church as one's mailing address.

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### **An Elector May Lawfully Use a Church's Address for Voter Registration Purposes**

There is nothing unlawful about using the church's address for voter registration purposes. The state application for voter registration, Secretary of State Election Division, and Fulton County's registration chief all support this view.

Georgia's [application for voter registration](#) lends itself to the idea that one's residence can be different than their mailing address since line item 2 asks for the applicant's residence address while line item 3 asks for the applicant's mailing address.

Georgia's Secretary of State Election Division discussed the distinction between resident and mailing address in [Implementing NVRA](#) (2011). The relevant part – the fifth answer on page 6 – states that a homeless “applicant should use the physical address which he or she considers his or her home (for example, I-20 West under bridge at exit 142). The Mailing address should be wherever the applicant could pick up mail (for example, a homeless shelter or friend's home).”

More recently, Ralph Jones, Fulton County's registration chief, answered a [reporter at Atlanta's NPR station](#) who asked whether people who don't have permanent addresses can register to vote by stating that “You just have to tell me where you lay your head...[and] a mailing address where we can get in contact with you.” The article goes on to say that a registrant/voter may be purged from the voter registration list if mail sent to the mailing address is returned to the state as undelivered. However, “there are a few places that will receive mail for free on [a homeless person's] behalf” like a church or a [USPS PO Box](#).

In sum, Georgia's voter registration application distinguishes a registrant's residence from their mailing address. The state's Secretary of State Election Division discusses this difference further by noting that a homeless person's residence address is where “he or she considers his or her home,” which can even be under a bridge, while his or her mailing address is “wherever the applicant could pick up mail...” Fulton County's registration chief echoed the same when they said one's residence is “where you lay your head” and their mailing address is “where we can get in contact with you.” Therefore, one may lawfully be a registered voter even if they used a church's address on their voter registration application so long as they satisfy the other requirements identified in [O.C.G.A. § 21-2-216\(a\)](#).

### **How One's Elector Status May Be Challenged**

A voter (or, elector) can challenge the rights of other voters in a county or municipality where the voter raising the challenge is registered. Any such challenge must be in writing and submitted prior to the challenged elector voting. [O.C.G.A. § 21-2-230\(a\)](#). If the Board of Registrars finds probable cause of a violation, then a hearing will happen prior to the polls closing, or if such a hearing is not practical, then the challenged elector may submit a provisional ballot. [O.C.G.A. § 21-2-230\(h\)-\(i\)](#).