



Caroline County NAACP

## **Caroline County NAACP, Caucus of African American Leaders, ACLU Seek Reforms to Town of Federalsburg's Discriminatory Municipal Election System**

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FEDERALSBURG, MD – With the hope of working collaboratively with local elected leaders, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Maryland, the Caroline County Branch of the NAACP (NAACP), the Caucus of African American Leaders - Eastern Shore (CAAL), and members of the Federalsburg community [are asking](#) Federalsburg Mayor Kimberly Jahnigen Abner to join the groups in discussion of reforms needed to bring the Town's racially discriminatory election system into compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act. Promisingly, upon initial contact Mayor Abner responded promptly to say the Town looks forward to hearing the groups' specific concerns so officials can work with residents to address them.

"Black residents of Federalsburg need to have their serious concerns about a lack of fair representation in town elections addressed, which is why we decided to collaborate with the ACLU and the Caucus of African American Leaders to request a meeting with Mayor Abner," said Dr. Willie Woods, President of the Caroline County NAACP. "We invite the Mayor and Town leaders to take positive action, because in the history of Federalsburg there has never before been a Black resident elected to the Town Council, even though recent Census data shows Black residents make up nearly half of the Town's population."

As discussed in the letter:

The Town's longstanding at-large election system has diminished and diluted the influence of Black voters such that no Black candidate in all Federalsburg history has been elected to the Town Council, despite burgeoning growth of the Black population to nearly half of Federalsburg's population. The 2020 U.S. Census shows Federalsburg's Black population has increased to approximately 47 percent of the Town's total population, with People of Color making up approximately 53.2 percent of the population.

Federalsburg's rich community diversity stands in stark contrast to the racial composition of the Town Council and the Mayor's Office, which have been maintained as the exclusive preserve of white officials since the founding of

Federalsburg. This is because the Town's at-large election structure – in the setting of the Town's history and amid racial polarization in voting patterns – enables the white plurality to bloc vote against candidates of choice of Black voters, shutting out Black candidates and ensuring continuation of an all-white government.

“The Caucus of African American Leaders believes the importance of restructuring Federalsburg's political setting is a must, but united we will do it,” said Rev. James Jones with the Caucus of African American Leaders. “The political imbalance as well as law enforcement alignment must be addressed to move forward as well the reform of the electoral system.”

The groups' letter outlines two possible approaches to address the unfair districts that the Mayor and Town Council can consider, although other approaches may also be used to fix Federalsburg's discriminatory system.

Go to the ACLU of Maryland's website to read the letter: [https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/aclumd\\_naacp\\_cc\\_caal\\_letter.pdf](https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/aclumd_naacp_cc_caal_letter.pdf)

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