



Office of the Chancellor

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September 13, 2016

Mr. William P. Aceto
Chairman
Watauga County Board of Elections
842 W. King Street
Boone, NC 28607

Dear Mr. Aceto:

Thank you for your letter dated September 9, 2016, and the accompanying documentation provided with it. I am grateful to you and your fellow Board members for the tireless work that has been committed in order to maintain a voting site on Appalachian's campus. As stated in previous correspondence dating back at least to 2013, civic engagement is at the core of the university's values, and the Board's use of a facility on campus for a polling place is consistent with the university's educational and public service missions.

As indicated in your letter, early voting opportunities for the Appalachian State community are indeed important to me and I remain steadfastly committed to working with the Watauga County Board of Elections in order to accomplish this goal. In keeping with this spirit, during previous correspondence and through working with your staff I have welcomed the opportunity to address any issues that would hinder the Board's ability to carry out its mission—especially those regarding the preservation of voting integrity. After thorough review of the documentation referenced above, my staff found no information regarding buffer zone violations or other issues that would outweigh the university's decision to recommend use of the Plemmons Student Union building over Legends on the basis of relative health and safety concerns. As noted in previous correspondence, Legends is situated in a low-lying area susceptible to flooding, and we believe air quality in the Plemmons Student Union is markedly better than that in Legends.

I appreciate your noting in your letter that I have rejected any partisan temptations to this date. As Chancellor, I am charged with making decisions that seek to safeguard the well-being of students, faculty and staff, and the greater community as a whole. Much like my commitment to non-partisanship, my obligation to the university has not wavered. While the choice of polling places may be partisan from the perspective of the local parties, there is no place for partisanship when it comes to the safety of our valued community, and my decisions have been – and will be – based on non-partisan considerations.

It is with these responsibilities in mind that, in consultation with my staff and counsel, I cannot in good conscience grant the Board access to a university owned facility that, for reasons

previously shared with your staff, does not best ensure the safety and well-being of those who enter its doors. The university continues to have the utmost respect for the work of the County Board and regrets the circumstances that have brought us to this point. My staff stands ready to work collaboratively with Watauga County Board of Elections staff to provide the best possible voting experience for the citizens of Boone and Watauga County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sh N E', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sheri N. Everts
Chancellor

SNE/md