Early Voting & Same-Day Registration in North Carolina
Issue Background Sheet | Last Updated May 5, 2023

Why North Carolina Needs Early Voting & Same-Day Registration

→ It gives voters the ability to register to vote (or update their registration) and cast a ballot all in one place.
→ It allows busy North Carolinians to vote when it’s convenient for them — especially on evenings and weekends.
→ It helps election officials by reducing long lines and the number of provisional ballots cast on Election Day.

Key Talking Points

North Carolinians of all political affiliations use Early Voting — and want to keep it as-is. 70% of North Carolina voters oppose limiting Early Voting options, including 61% of Republicans.¹ North Carolina Republicans used Same-Day Registration at higher rates than Democrats or Unaffiliated voters in the 2020 General Election.²

Early voting is the preferred way to vote in North Carolina. Early Voting is now the most popular way to cast a ballot in North Carolina. In 2020, 65% of voters cast a ballot during Early Voting — compared to just 16% who voted on Election Day.³

Early Voting and Same-Day Registration have been used successfully in NC for over a decade. There is no reason why we should change the system that North Carolinians have come to know and rely on. We must stop using this important voting method as a political football.

The Law

North Carolina law currently requires:
  ● 13 days of Early Voting: 12 weekdays and 1 Saturday
  ● Early Voting must begin on the third Thursday before Election Day and end on the Saturday before Election Day — a 17-day period
  ● Same-Day Registration must be available every day of Early Voting

How Same-Day Registration During Early Voting Works

- To register to vote (or update registration) at an Early Voting site, the voter must show a piece of ID to provide proof of where they live.
  - Accepted forms of ID: NC driver’s license or other photo ID issued by a government agency; a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, or government document; college/university photo ID paired with a college/university document showing proof of campus address.
  - Only voters who provide this ID can register to vote (or update their registration) and cast a ballot.
- Within 2 business days, county election officials verify that the identifying information provided by the voter when they registered is correct.
  - If the voter’s identifying information is flagged as incorrect, this information is presented to the County Board of Elections. The board may use this information to decide that the ballot should not be counted.
- County election officials mail the voter a registration card shortly after they register to vote (or update their information).
  - If this card is returned as undeliverable, this information is presented to the County Board of Elections. The board may use this information to determine that the ballot should not be counted.
- Every ballot cast at an Early Voting site is an absentee ballot that can be retrieved.
- Election results are not finalized until the day of the statewide county canvass, which takes place 10 days after Election Day.

History of Early Voting & Same Day Registration in NC

Creation
- The 17-day Early Voting period was created in 2001 via House Bill 831.
- Same-Day Registration was created in 2007 via House Bill 91.

Attacks
- Since the creation of Early Voting and Same-Day Registration, lawmakers have attempted to weaken or eliminate these measures numerous times:
  - In 2013, the NCGA attempted to eliminate same-day registration and cut the first week of Early Voting via House Bill 589.
  - In 2016, a federal court blocked House Bill 589 from taking effect, ruling the bill had been created to disenfranchise Black voters with “almost surgical precision.”
  - In 2018, the NCGA eliminated the last Saturday of Early Voting and required uniform weekday voting hours via Senate Bill 325.
  - In 2019, the NCGA restored the last Saturday of Early Voting and changed uniform weekday voting hours via Senate Bill 683.
How North Carolina Compares

- Nearly half of states offer same-day registration during Early Voting or on Election Day.\(^4\)
- North Carolina offers fewer days of Early Voting than the nationwide average of 23.\(^5\)
- Several southern states have longer Early Voting periods than North Carolina, including Georgia (beginning the fourth Monday before Election Day) and Virginia (beginning 45 days before Election Day).\(^6\)

Arguments Against + Rebuttals

“Early Voting is too expensive — cutting days will save money.”
Given the popularity of early voting and same-day registration by voters of all political affiliations, the public supports investing in voting access. Uniform voting hours (required under SB 325, passed by Republicans in 2018) have created a significant financial strain on counties. If lawmakers are serious about cutting expenses, they should instead revisit this matter.

“Early Voting sites aren’t used during the first week.”
In 2022, voters used each of the 17 days of early voting at nearly the same levels (see table below). Nearly a quarter million ballots were cast on the first day of Early Voting during the 2020 General Election, making it one of the busiest days of the voting period.

“Same-Day Registration isn’t secure.”
Same-Day Registration is even MORE secure than registering to vote before an election. This is because a person must physically present themselves at an Early Voting site and show a piece of identification. This information is then verified by election officials — and if it is found to be incorrect, the voter’s ballot is not counted.

Looking Ahead

Instead of reducing or eliminating Early Voting, we should expand Early Voting by:
- Requiring more weekend voting hours. Currently, NC only requires one weekend day of Early Voting (the Saturday before Election Day).
- Expanding Same-Day Registration to include Election Day.
- Requiring counties to offer Early Voting during municipal elections.
- Requiring a minimum number of Early Voting sites based on population.
- Requiring Early Voting sites on public college and university campuses.

\(^6\) Ibid.
Read more about our vision for democracy in NC:
2023 Blueprint for a Stronger Democracy

Talk to the Experts

These organizations are leading the fight to protect and expand Early Voting in North Carolina:

➔ Common Cause North Carolina
➔ Democracy North Carolina
➔ North Carolina Voters for Clean Elections
➔ Southern Coalition for Social Justice

Helpful Data

North Carolina voters of all political affiliations oppose limiting Early Voting options.

"Limiting opportunities for voters to vote early in person"

Early Voting is the most popular voting method in North Carolina.


Voters use the first week of Early Voting about as much as other days.

North Carolina Absentee Voting By Day: November 8, 2022 General Midterm Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Unaffiliated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, October 20, 2022</td>
<td>53,648</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>45,395</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, October 21, 2022</td>
<td>50,444</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>43,224</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, October 22, 2022</td>
<td>14,900</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>9,267</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, October 23, 2022</td>
<td>9,814</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>4,267</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, October 24, 2022</td>
<td>54,168</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>46,987</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 25, 2022</td>
<td>50,020</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>44,538</td>
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<td>Wednesday, October 26, 2022</td>
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<td>37.8%</td>
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<td>Thursday, October 27, 2022</td>
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<td>39,206</td>
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<td>Friday, October 28, 2022</td>
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<td>33.1%</td>
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<td>Saturday, October 29, 2022</td>
<td>24,505</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>17,210</td>
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<td>Sunday, October 30, 2022</td>
<td>14,700</td>
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<td>7,473</td>
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<td>42,435</td>
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<td>Tuesday, November 1, 2022</td>
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<td>Wednesday, November 2, 2022</td>
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<td>Thursday, November 3, 2022</td>
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<td>Friday, November 4, 2022</td>
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<td>38.5%</td>
<td>48,809</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further Reading

Early Voting in North Carolina | Coates' Canons NC Local Government Law
Early voting in North Carolina: How it started, who uses it and how to do it in 2022 | Carolina Public Press
Greater Costs, Fewer Options: The Impact of the Early Voting Uniform Hours Requirement in the 2018 Election | Democracy NC