

Don't let changes in state laws prevent you from voting this fall



Many important races will be decided this November. North Carolina voters will choose one of their two U.S. senators and all 13 of their representatives in Congress. Several seats on the state's two highest courts will be filled, as will every seat in the General Assembly – 50 in the Senate and 120 in the House. Counties will

choose commissioners who make decisions about taxes, school spending and other local priorities.

Several changes in voting laws made last year will have an impact on how easy or difficult voting is for many citizens. Most significantly:

- ✓ The **early voting period** has been cut from 17 to 10 days, including only one Sunday.
- ✓ Voters must register to vote or update their voting address at least 25 days before an election. **It is no longer possible to register and vote on the same day during early voting.**
- ✓ Voters who go to the wrong precinct on election day will **no longer be able to cast a provisional ballot**. They will have to go to the correct precinct if their vote is to count.
- ✓ Voters can **no longer vote a straight ticket**. You must mark every candidate you wish to vote for.
- ✓ Beginning in 2016, no one will be allowed to vote without presenting an acceptable form of photo identification such as a drivers license, U.S. passport or military ID card. College student IDs will not count. Poll workers will ask voters this fall whether they have a photo ID entitling them to vote in 2016. However, no ID must be shown this year. While voters should prepare to comply with the ID rule, **the rule does not prevent anyone from casting a ballot this year**. That's a possible source of confusion or intimidation.

Learn more at www.ncchurches.org.

Here's what you need to know in order to vote:

Election Day is Nov. 4. Polls will be open across the state from 6:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. Go to www.ncvoter.org to see where you vote.

The deadline to register is Oct. 10. You can meet this deadline by registering with your county board of elections by then or by mailing in a registration form postmarked by the 10th. If you don't register by Oct. 10, you will not be able to vote this fall.

Early voting (called "One-Stop") is from Oct. 23 to Nov. 1. To find polling places and times for your county, check with your county board of elections or go to www.ncsbe.gov, under "Voter Tools."

To vote by mail-in absentee ballot, you must request the absentee ballot by Oct. 28. Go to www.ncsbe.gov, under "Resources," to download a ballot request form.

To preview your ballot, go to www.ncvoter.org.

If you encounter any difficulty in registering or voting, call the State Board of Elections at 866-522-4723, Democracy NC's Election Hotline at 888-OUR-VOTE or the national Election Protection hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE. All of these numbers are toll-free.

The North Carolina Council of Churches, representing 17 Christian denominations, recently reaffirmed its decades-long commitment to the right of all citizens to vote under rules that are fair, reasonable and wholly in the spirit of American democracy.

The right to vote of every citizen is fundamental to democracy, rooted in the principle of consent of the governed, a core concern of Christian ethics as it is of American political history. It is a primary means in a republic to allow the dispossessed, the poor, and racial and ethnic minority groups a voice in the public square. Indeed it is what guarantees that there is a public square for all citizens.

— Excerpt from NCCC Statement on Guaranteeing Suffrage, the Right to Vote, December 10, 2013

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