

The Facts About Voter ID

Evidence that voter fraud is not as widespread as the bill's sponsors claim:

- ▶ Investigations by the State Board of Elections found only 5 votes per million cast in North Carolina from 2004 to 2010 involved fraud that a Voter ID would have stopped. The rate of fraud uncovered by the Department of Justice's efforts is less than one incident per every two states each year.
- ▶ For five years, the Bush administration focused on alleged "voter fraud" but, by April 2007, found only 120 persons in the entire nation to charge. Even fewer were convicted of actual voter fraud as most of the cases involved voter misinformation and misunderstanding of eligibility requirements.
- ▶ When a new voter registers to vote or goes to vote for the first time, existing law already requires that they show a current and valid photo identification or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows the name and address of the voter. It is clear from the low rates of voter fraud that these safeguards work.
- ▶ Penalties for voter fraud include hefty fines, lengthy prison sentences, and, in the case of fraudulent voting by non-citizens, the revocation of legal status and deportation. It is clear from the low rates of voter fraud that these deterrents work.
- ▶ Proponents of the bill are circulating false claims about voter fraud. For example, "dead people voted in Washington County in 2010." What really happened? Relatives of four deceased voters noticed their names on the voter books and alerted poll workers, who set aside the voter stickers of the deceased so that they could be researched. On election night, the removed stickers made officials think ballots had been cast, but that mistake was eventually discovered. No one voted or tried to vote using the names of the deceased. Similar claims have been investigated and disproved by the State Board of Elections.

Evidence that House Bill 351/SB 352 is a poorly conceived bill and would lead to ineffectual laws:

- ▶ For people concerned about voter fraud, HB 351/SB 352 does nothing to address the most frequent ways fraud happens. It imposes no new safeguards on absentee voting and even makes it easier to get an absentee ballot, even though the rate of ID impersonation is ten times higher for people voting with absentee ballots than in person.
- ▶ It also does not prevent a person who has moved out of a county or the state from coming back and voting in their old precinct, because using an old NC driver's license is acceptable in this bill.
- ▶ The bill is severely underfunded. It allocates \$600,000 for providing voter IDs and voter education, an absurdly low amount of money. It also mandates that federal money from the Help America Vote Act be used to buy equipment – a use the Feds will likely challenge. The true cost of the bill will force the state to cut other programs and saddle counties with significant expenses.
- ▶ The pay-to-play provisions of the bill are ineffectual. The bill only stops contractors from giving money to elected officials after a contract is awarded; it still allows company executives to give money to elected officials before the contract award – or reward them after the contract ends.
- ▶ Candidates are only personally liable for their campaign's violations if they receive "actual notice of the violation... at the time the violation occurred." Because it takes time for campaign violations to be communicated or uncovered, this language makes the provision virtually useless.

Evidence that honest citizens will be disenfranchised as a result of this bill:

- ▶ The State Board of Elections matched its database of 6.1 million registered voters with records at the Division of Motor Vehicles and learned that 1 million voters did not have a current NC driver's license or identification card with a matching name and address.
- ▶ After accounting for variations in name (e.g., women who changed their last name) and others with some indication of an ID, 554,000 registered voters were left with no indication of an ID – 460,500 of whom are active registered voters who would be directly affected by this bill. The data shows that these voters at risk of disenfranchisement are disproportionately low-income, people of color, seniors and women. Download a summary of this research at: <http://www.democracy-nc.org/downloads/VoterIDDataByRaceSexAgePartySumm.doc>.
- ▶ In 2010, the DMV issued 138,130 photo ID cards, mostly to children. Overall, 1.4 million North Carolina residents have DMV ID cards. The cards are valid for five to eight years, cost \$10 and must be obtained in person. ID card applicants face additional expenses as they must present a Social Security card and, if they don't have one, may need to obtain a copy of their birth certificate. The time off work needed to obtain an ID adds to the cost for hourly workers.

Evidence that other states have recognized the drawbacks of similar bills:

- ▶ 23 out of 50 U.S. states don't require the voter to show a document each time they vote; 27 states do. Twelve of those 27 states allow voters to present a wide range of documents without a photo as their ID, while ten others allow voters who don't have their ID to sign an affidavit or sworn statement, under penalty of a felony, that they are who they say they are, and then vote a regular ballot.
- ▶ Only two states (Georgia and Indiana) require a government-issued photo ID without accepting any alternatives. And in one of them, Georgia, lawmakers came under fire for failing to properly set aside funds for their program, sticking counties with millions in expenses.

Evidence that implementing this bill could cost North Carolina millions of dollars a year (data courtesy of the Institute for Southern Studies):

- ▶ North Carolina faces a budget gap of more than \$2 billion and will likely need to make cuts in virtually every area, from education to care for the elderly to youth services and more. Yet, the Institute for Southern Studies estimates an effective, full-scale voter ID program could cost state taxpayers \$20 million or more. This is far more than what has been set aside to pay for implementation in HB 351/SB 352.
- ▶ Voter ID laws require major publicity and education efforts to avoid voter confusion and make sure legitimate voters aren't turned away at the polls. In 2010, Missouri estimated it would cost \$16.9 million for TV, radio and newspaper announcements and other outreach to the state's 4 million voters. North Carolina has even more voters: over 6 million and growing.
- ▶ Courts have ruled that forcing voters to buy cards amounts to a modern-day poll tax, leaving states without free ID card provisions vulnerable to lawsuits. To solve the problem, states recognize that they must issue free ID cards, but it's expensive: In 2009, Wisconsin (3.5 million voters) projected a total \$2.4 million cost for free IDs while Missouri estimated \$3.4 million.
- ▶ Voter ID laws generate dozens of other costs for state and local officials: accommodating longer lines at DMV offices, updating forms and websites plus hiring and training staff to handle provisional ballots for those who don't have ID when they vote. In 2009, Maryland estimated it would cost one county over \$95,000 a year just to hire and train precinct judges to examine IDs of voters.
- ▶ State government and local governments are already cutting programs and staff to the bone. Having to appropriate millions of dollars each year to cover the expenses required by a voter ID bill would mean cutbacks in service and layoffs for whichever government entity ends up having to pay for implementing the new law.