



STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

506 North Harrington Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27603

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 27255
RALEIGH, NC 27611-7255
(919) 733-7173
FAX (919) 715-0135

GARY O. BARTLETT
Executive Director

June 2, 2009

Dear Rep. Cotham:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB-1260 "Voter Preregistration and Education." Our agency has a responsibility to make the voting process accessible, fair and secure. In my view, the legislation provides procedures along with current safeguards that meet this standard.

If the legislation is adopted, we will add an option for preregistration to the registration form and will modify our software to accommodate a "holding status" for the applications until 60 days before the applicant is eligible to vote. At that time, the address and identification number furnished on the application will be verified through the normal verification procedures. The process is very similar to what we do now for 17 year olds who will be 18 on Election Day.

Most registration applications in North Carolina come through the Division of Motor Vehicles in conjunction with driver's license applications. The information on these registration applications is transmitted electronically and avoids a number of the problems with applications completed by hand by the applicant. Allowing preregistration for 16 and 17 year olds who visit the DMV will take advantage of the electronic transmittal process to add names to our statewide database.

This legislation also encourages a pro-active approach by requiring county boards of election to coordinate with the local school board to conduct at least one voter registration and preregistration drive a year in each high school. Under current law, election officials are only responsible for delivering voter registration applications to the high school.

Florida is implementing its new law to allow 16 year olds to preregister. I have reviewed the materials officials use in that state and believe they can be readily adapted for North Carolina. We have also implemented guidelines for using the National Change of Address (NCOA) system of the US Postal Service to verify address changes. Finally, we continue to monitor how other states are using on-line voter registration, which would facilitate a preregistration process as well.

Following the procedures described in the legislation, I believe we can maintain the security and integrity of our elections and provide additional access for young people to the voting process. Obviously, the decision to implement this policy is a matter for you and your colleagues to consider and the State Board officially neither endorses nor opposes it as a policy. I look forward to continuing to work with you to serve the voters of North Carolina.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary O. Bartlett".

Gary O. Bartlett