



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

¹ Secure Democracy USA, "[NEW POLL: Bipartisan Support for Expanded Voter Access, Enhanced Accountability in North Carolina Elections](#)," April 28, 2021.

² NC Board of Elections, "[Absentee and Provisional Data](#)," accessed April 21, 2023.

³ NC Board of Elections, "[2020 General Election Turnout](#)," accessed April 21, 2023.

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.

⁴ [“Same Day Voter Registration,”](#) Rock the Vote, accessed April 21, 2023.

⁵ [“Early In-Person Voting,”](#) National Council of State Legislatures, August 30, 2022.

⁶ Ibid.

Read more about our vision for democracy in NC:
[2023 Blueprint for a Stronger Democracy](#)

Talk to the Experts

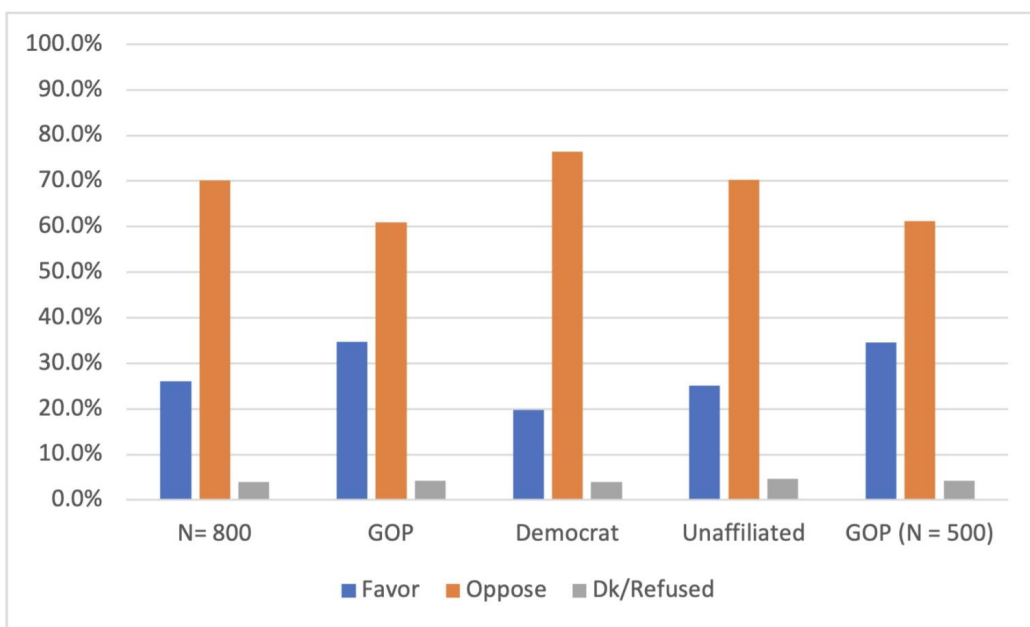
These organizations are leading the fight to protect and expand Early Voting in North Carolina:

- [Common Cause North Carolina](#)
- [Democracy North Carolina](#)
- [North Carolina Voters for Clean Elections](#)
- [Southern Coalition for Social Justice](#)

Helpful Data

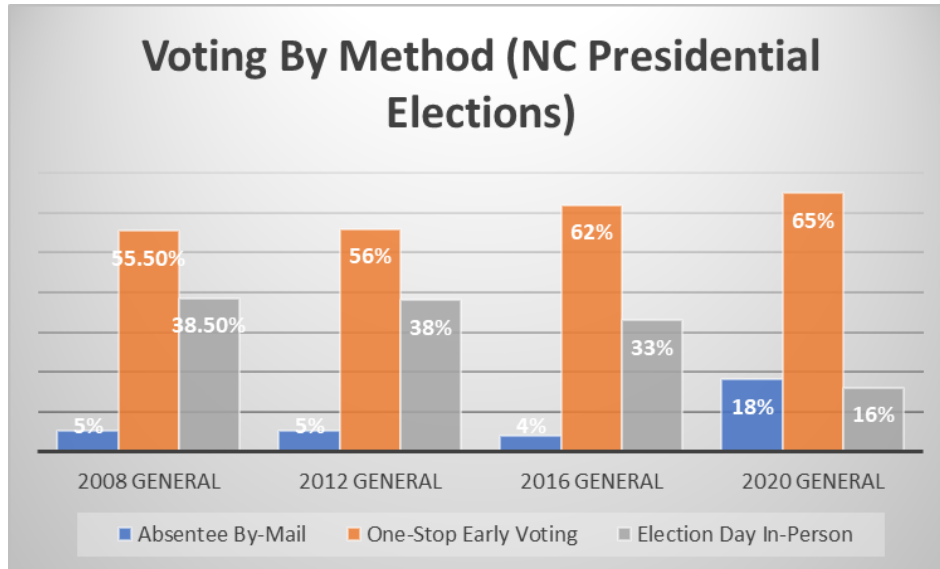
North Carolina voters of all political affiliations oppose limiting Early Voting options.

"Limiting opportunities for voters to vote early in person"



Source: "[NEW POLL: Bipartisan Support for Expanded Voter Access, Enhanced Accountability in North Carolina Elections](#)," Secure Democracy USA, April 2021.

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



Source: “Early Voting and Same Day Registration in NC,” Common Cause North Carolina, April 2023.

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

Date	Democrat		Republican		Unaffiliated		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Thursday, October 20, 2022	53,648	39.0%	45,395	33.0%	38,093	27.7%	137,387
Friday, October 21, 2022	50,444	38.1%	43,224	32.6%	38,607	29.1%	132,506
Saturday, October 22, 2022	14,900	42.5%	9,267	26.5%	10,767	30.7%	35,027
Sunday, October 23, 2022	9,814	48.4%	4,267	21.0%	6,156	30.4%	20,272
Monday, October 24, 2022	54,168	38.3%	46,987	33.2%	40,060	28.3%	141,489
Tuesday, October 25, 2022	50,020	37.6%	44,538	33.5%	38,292	28.8%	133,127
Wednesday, October 26, 2022	47,103	37.8%	41,496	33.3%	35,735	28.7%	124,614
Thursday, October 27, 2022	46,115	38.3%	39,206	32.5%	34,913	29.0%	120,505
Friday, October 28, 2022	49,162	36.8%	44,223	33.1%	39,929	29.9%	133,689
Saturday, October 29, 2022	24,505	40.4%	17,210	28.4%	18,696	30.8%	60,607
Sunday, October 30, 2022	14,700	44.9%	7,473	22.8%	10,496	32.0%	32,765
Monday, October 31, 2022	46,210	36.7%	42,435	33.7%	37,021	29.4%	125,987
Tuesday, November 1, 2022	48,470	35.8%	46,198	34.2%	40,156	29.7%	135,209
Wednesday, November 2, 2022	50,200	36.2%	46,173	33.3%	42,065	30.3%	138,863
Thursday, November 3, 2022	56,757	36.1%	51,851	33.0%	48,001	30.5%	157,145
Friday, November 4, 2022	76,050	35.8%	68,546	32.2%	67,322	31.7%	212,679
Saturday, November 5, 2022	65,001	38.5%	48,809	28.9%	54,510	32.3%	169,019

Source: “North Carolina GOP Voters Rely On Early Voting Access,” Secure Democracy USA, April 2023.

Further Reading

[North Carolina's Early Voting Sites: What's Required By Law?](#) | Democracy NC

[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