

‘NUTS AND BOLTS OF VOTING’

Answers provided by the NC State Board of Elections to the League of Women Voters of North Carolina (2004)

IMPORTANT CHANGE IN VOTER REGISTRATION (November 2007):

Same day registration during early voting will be available for the November 2007 general election. Please contact your local Board of Elections office for information on the new law allowing voters to register and vote on the same day during the early voting period. We will post this information as soon as it is available to us.

1. Who can vote and how do I register?

The qualifications to register to vote in NC are:

- 18 years of age
- US Citizen
- Resident of the State and county for at least 30 days
- Not currently convicted of a felony and have had citizenship rights restored

A citizen may register to vote in one of several ways:

- By mail – forms may be obtained from local boards of elections or by downloading a form from the state website www.sboe.state.nc.us
- Public agencies – Individuals who seek public assistance at any public agency such as Social Services or the Employment Security Commission are provided the opportunity to register under the National Voter Registration Act of 1993
- Driver’s License Offices – Like public agencies, driver’s license offices must offer voter registration services
- In person – Individuals can go to their county board of elections and complete the voter registration application in the office.
- Voter Registration Drives – Many public and private groups sponsor voter registration drives throughout the year. Forms are readily available.
- **Contact your local board of elections for information on same day registration during the early voting period.**

2. I haven’t voted in awhile and I’ve moved since then. How can I make sure that I’m still registered and my information is correct?

NC does not require voters to re-register to vote; however, if it has been a significant amount of time (8 years or more) since you have made contact with the county board of elections, it is possible that your name may have been removed from the voter lists through list maintenance. If you aren’t sure whether or not you are still registered, you should call your county board of elections to verify your registration. You can also search our statewide database for your name as well. You can find this database on our state website www.sboe.state.nc.us

If information such as your name and/or address has changed since the last time you voted, it is always a good idea to update that information as soon as possible. Changes to your voter registration should be made on the voter registration application.

3. How do I know my vote will count and how do I know that the election results are accurate?

NC takes pride in its' strong reputation as a state with an excellent track record in good elections. This reputation has been earned by establishing good administrative procedures, following stringent testing procedures and by protecting the integrity of the election while providing voters with every opportunity possible to cast a ballot through failsafe voting procedures such as provisional ballots. In the event that a recount is conducted, NC has clear recount procedures in place for the various types of voting equipment.

When you cast your ballot by either absentee or at the polls, your ballot choices remain private; however, after each election, the total number of voters is compared to the number of ballots issued. During canvass, which is held the week following the election, election officials review and audit all of the paperwork from the election. Every ballot, voted and not voted is accounted for. Determinations about provisional votes are also made at this time. Voting equipment is maintained on a regular basis and pre-election testing is conducted in each county under legal mandate.

4. What will I have to do when I go to the polls to vote? Do I need to bring anything with me?

When you arrive at the polls, the entrance to the voting place should be clearly identified. You should proceed to the check in table and when asked, state your name and residence address. If it is a primary election, you will need to give your party affiliation as well. NC requires that all voters sign the poll list before voting. If you are unable to sign your name, a precinct official is authorized to sign for you.

In most case, you should not have to bring anything special with you to the polls. NC is able to validate driver's license numbers and, by late 2004, the last four digits of your Social Security number, eliminating the need to provide identification at the polls. However, if you registered by mail or at a voter registration drive after January 1, 2003, and the county board of elections was not able to validate your driver's license number or last four digits of your Social Security number, you may be asked to show ID before you vote.

Accepted forms of ID include:

- **Valid photo identification**
- **A copy of one of the following documents that shows the name and address of the voter:**
 - ❖ **Current utility bill**
 - ❖ **Bank statement**
 - ❖ **Government check**
 - ❖ **Paycheck**
 - ❖ **Other government document**

5. What happens if I get to the polls and there is a problem with my information or they can't find my name at all?

While every county board of elections tries very hard to ensure that every citizen who completes a registration form is fully registered, it does happen from time to time when a voter arrives at the polls and their information is incorrect or the voter cannot be found at all.

NC law provides that if a voter has moved within the voting precinct and needs to change their information, they may do so at the polls and still cast their vote. If the voter has moved to a different precinct within the county, the county board of elections can do either a precinct transfer, to a central location or the new precinct, or allow the voter to vote a provisional ballot. If there appears to be no record of the voter having registered, the voter will be asked to vote a provisional ballot. In either case, the voter has the opportunity to update their voting information. Provisional ballots are returned to the county board for review and eligible ballots are counted in the county board of elections prior to the Canvass Day meeting.

If you do vote a provisional ballot, you will be provided with information about how to find out whether or not your ballot was counted and the reason why.

6. What about all the people who can't go to the polls on election day – people travel, they're working, some people are disabled and some are in Iraq. What do they do?

NC has a couple of options available to individuals who aren't able to make it to the polls on election day. Whether, they are physically unable, deployed with the military, living overseas, in school, or just simply out of town on that day, voters can still cast a ballot either by mail-in absentee or by participating in the One-stop absentee voting program.

To have a ballot mailed to you, a request must be made by you or by a near relative and mailed or delivered to the county board of elections. The request should give your name, residence address, date of birth, and the address where you would like the ballot mailed. A request for a primary absentee ballot should also include the party affiliation of the voter. If the voter is unaffiliated, they should declare which party's primary they want to participate in. If a near relative is completing the request, they should also provide their name, relationship to the voter, and their contact information. All requests must be received by 5 pm the Tuesday before Election Day. Once you receive your ballots, simply follow the enclosed instructions for voting the ballots, place them in the envelope provided and return to the appropriate board of elections.

One-stop absentee voting begins the third Thursday before the election and continues until the Saturday before the election. Time and locations vary from county to county so it is important to pay close attention to your local media or contact the board of elections in your county for more information. If you choose to vote One-stop absentee, simply go to one of the specified locations. You will be asked to complete a very short application and be given a ballot just like you would on Election Day.

All absentee ballots whether voted by mail or at One-stop sites will be counted the night of the election and results posted after the polls have closed.

7. If I need help at the polls, can someone assist me?

You must ask the voting officials present. If you qualify for assistance, you are entitled to help with entering and leaving the voting booth and in casting your ballot, as long as certain conditions are met. Any voter is entitled to assistance for any reason from the following family members:

- **Voter's spouse**
- **Brother**
- **Sister**
- **Parent**
- **Grandparent**
- **Child**
- **Grandchild**
- **Mother-in-law**
- **Father-in-law**
- **Daughter-in-law**
- **Son-in-law**
- **Stepparent**
- **Stepchild**

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7. Continued from previous page

Other than the family members listed above, a voter may request assistance from any individual, other than their employer or agent of that employer or an officer or agent of the voter's union, if they meet any of the following qualifications:

- **On account of physical disability, the voter is unable to enter the voting booth without assistance.**
- **On account of physical disability, the voter is unable to mark a ballot without assistance.**
- **On account of illiteracy, the voter is unable to mark a ballot without assistance.**
- **On account of blindness, the voter is unable to enter the voting booth or mark a ballot without assistance.**

You can also vote from your car without coming into the voting place. Curbside voting is available to voters that are physically unable to enter the voting place. In these instances, a precinct official will bring a ballot to your car and ask you to sign a statement indicating that you are eligible to vote at the curbside. Your ballot will be counted as all other regularly voted ballots.

8. Why is my party affiliation important?

NC has semi-closed primaries. What this means, it that if you are registered as one of the three recognized parties in NC (Democratic, Republican, or Libertarian), you must vote in that party's primary or opt to vote only in non-partisan races. If you are registered as "unaffiliated" you will have to declare a party when you vote in the primary. If you don't declare a party at the time you vote, you will be given the opportunity to vote only in nonpartisan races. In the event of a second primary, you must vote with the same party as you voted in the first primary.

9. Can convicted felons vote?

If a person has been convicted of a final judgment felony and is currently serving jail time or is on probation or parole, they are not eligible to vote in NC. Once the felon has completed the sentence established by the courts, he or she will have their citizenship rights restored. The person is then free to re-register to vote.

10. Where do I get more information about voting and elections?

NC State Board of Elections

www.sboe.state.nc.us

Federal Elections Commission

www.fec.gov

Federal Voting Assistance Program (for Uniformed and Overseas Citizens)

www.fvap.gov

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