



CIVITAS

2018 Legislative Agenda

# ELECTIONS & VOTING



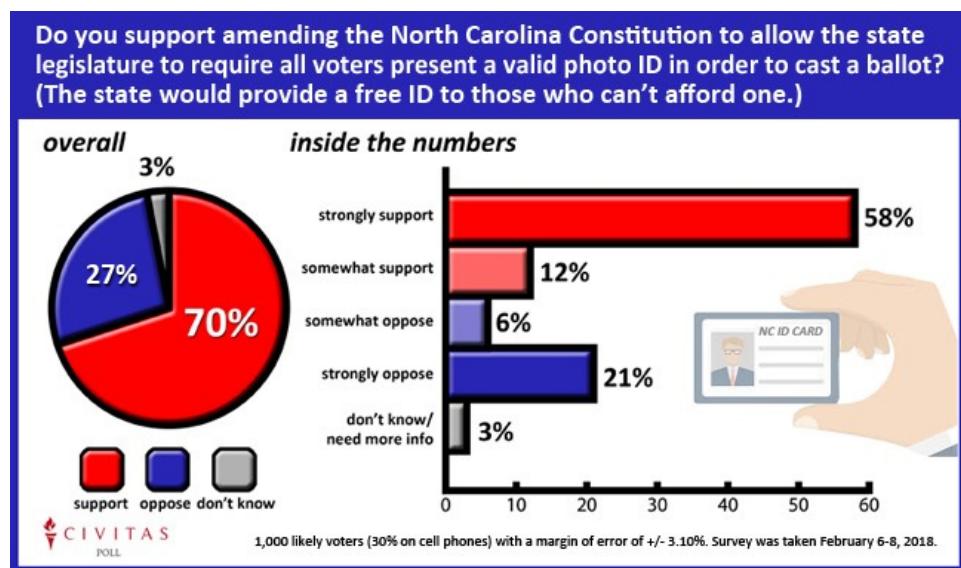
## Voting and Elections

Protecting the votes of all citizens in North Carolina is a never-ending task. In this year's short legislative session, the General Assembly can take common sense steps to restore integrity to our elections and ensure all voters are treated equally. North Carolina voters support election reforms that will introduce security measures in the election process. Lawmakers should move quickly to enact much-needed reforms.

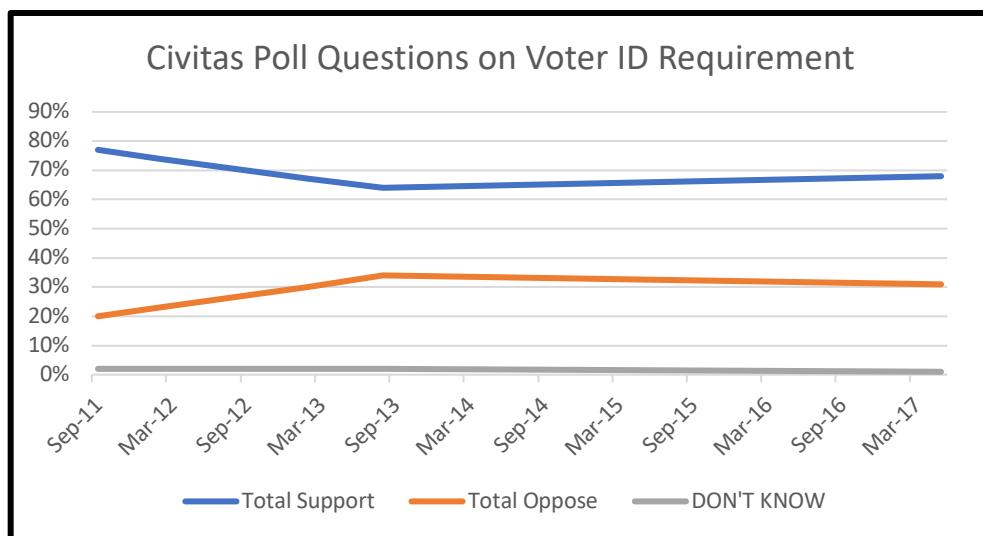
### Voter ID

First, Civitas supports legislation requiring all voters to present a voter photo ID when casting a ballot. In place of a voter ID bill, in 2018 the legislature should focus on putting on the ballot this fall an amendment to the North Carolina Constitution that would allow the legislature to require all voters present a valid photo ID in order to cast a ballot.

In the [February 2018 Civitas Poll](#) voters were asked whether they would support amending the state constitution to allow for a valid photo ID requirement. Included in the poll question is the statement: "The state would provide a free ID to those who can't afford one." Seventy percent of respondents said that they would support a constitutional amendment, while only 27 percent opposed an amendment.



In North Carolina, there are currently some voters\* who are required to show an ID to vote and others who are not required to present an ID. Until now, North Carolina's attempts to implement a voter ID requirement have been unsuccessful. Failed attempts to introduce this reform in 2011 and 2013 fly in the face of the majority of voters who believe the measure is a common-sense reform that would introduce security into North Carolina's election process.



## Voter Verification

Another way to ensure all voters are treated equitably is voter verification. Same-day registration (SDR) voters and inactive voters bypass the necessary address verification process that all other voters must undergo when registering to vote. Simply stated, the voter verification process is the mailing of a voter card to the voter's stated address after they register to vote or change their address. If the mailing is not returned to the county board of elections as undeliverable within a certain window of time, the voter is considered "verified."

North Carolina's current address verification procedures do not even verify voters' residence addresses. These procedures have been modified through the years to verify mailing addresses, even post-office boxes. Problems and inconsistencies have also arisen in the way verification procedures are applied. Updates to the voter verification process are long overdue. There are several avenues the legislature can take to achieve a higher level of security.

One solution is to require all SDR voters to complete the voter verification process before the ballot is approved and counted. This can be accomplished by simply requiring SDR ballots be voted as provisional ballots. If the SDR voter's verification card is returned undeliverable a second time, the voter's ballot would not be counted and the case would be forwarded to law enforcement for investigation as voter fraud.

The verification process, if done correctly, can take more than four weeks to complete. To accommodate SDR verification, the election certification schedule should be extended since – as

the schedule now stands – there is not enough time to properly complete the verification process. Under current rules, in General Elections, results are certified at the time of the state canvass, three weeks after Election Day. Extending the window by 10 days would enable election boards to more accurately verify SDR ballots.

If the legislature will not consider having SDR voters vote provisional ballots and decide to count votes only if individuals have completed the voter verification process, lawmakers should require an official photo ID for SDR voters that includes the voter's current address.

Since there is not enough time for many of these voters to complete the verification process, SDR voters should be subject to a higher level of scrutiny when it comes to identifying who and when a ballot is cast. Currently, unregistered voters have the option of avoiding the stricter ID requirement by following the established registration process — in other words, registering to vote before the 25-day deadline.

To accommodate the SDR voter who cannot meet the voter ID requirements, legislation should allow SDR voters to return no later than Election Day to provide proof of identity and have their ballot counted.

Greater scrutiny should also be placed on inactive voters. Inactive voters are voters who have had at least two mailings returned to the board of elections as undeliverable. Most inactive voters are often individuals who have either moved or died. Official photo ID (including correct address) should be required for these voters. Greater scrutiny is required because if these voters have moved, they have yet to go through the voter verification process at their new address. If an inactive voter cannot meet the voter ID requirements, the individual should have the option to complete a provisional ballot, and return it no later than Election Day to provide proof of identity to have the ballot counted.

These common-sense election reforms are a few of the steps lawmakers can take to make our election processes more secure. Other simple steps to do the same include:

1. Require proof of citizenship to register to vote in North Carolina. In 2014 the North Carolina State Board of Elections discovered more than 10,000 additional registered voters whose citizenship status was questionable, and, after analysis, 15 percent were believed to be noncitizens. Currently, when registering to vote, [applicants are only required to provide](#) their full name, residential address, date of birth, and citizenship status. Providing citizenship status is accomplished by answering the question: “Are you a citizen of the United States of America?” and by checking “Yes” or “No.”
2. Require Clerks of Court to record the reason an individual is excused from jury service and send the information to the local boards of elections. Felon status and non-citizenship are frequently used as reasons to be excused from jury duty. Active felons and non-citizens

are not eligible to vote in North Carolina's elections.

3. Begin in-person, early voting a week earlier and end it at least a week before Election Day. The change will extend the verification process. The extra days will also give those working local elections staff the time to update voter records to reflect who and who has not voted before Election Day.
4. Change the voter verification process to verify the voter's residence address and not merely the mailing address, as the current system allows. Exceptions can be made with proof from voters that they can't receive mail at their residence address. This change would be comparable to the Department of Motor Vehicles requirement for obtaining a driver's license.
5. Require local boards of election to report all suspected cases of voter fraud to the local District Attorney's Office, and require the State Board of Elections to provide 30/60/90-day reports on these incidents to the legislature so they can track cases that are submitted to district attorneys.
6. Require all changes to a voter's registration record be signed by the voter. This is current law, but the State Board of Elections (SBE) administrative staff changed the policy and now allows voter changes from the DMV without signature. This change is another step toward universal registration and is reminiscent of the state board's move to allow online voter registration by the Obama campaign in 2012.

\* "First-time voters who at the time of their initial voter registration did not provide their North Carolina driver license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number, or who provided a number that could not be validated, will be required to show identification when they vote."