



NCLBC Statement About Voter Suppression Tactics at the General Assembly

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 21, 2018

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Voter suppression has been revived by the Republican leadership of the General Assembly with House Bill 1092, and the North Carolina Legislative Black Caucus (NCLBC) is voicing its firm opposition to this unjust measure that disproportionately affects communities of color. The NCLBC urges members not to support HB 1092 [Const. Amendment - Require Photo ID to Vote](#) and encourages the citizens of North Carolina to vote against the measure if it is placed on the ballot in November.

The NCLBC operates as a vehicle through which African Americans and other people of color residing in the State of North Carolina can able to exercise their political power in a unified manner and works to develop the political consciousness of citizens of all communities and cultures. The foundation of political engagement is utilizing one's fundamental right to vote.

Voter ID laws are part of a broad, national strategy to limit access to the ballot among communities of color. In North Carolina, Voter ID was first enacted in 2013 as part of a package of unconstitutional voter suppression measures, which the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals found "targeted] African Americans with almost surgical precision" and were enacted with "discriminatory intent." In 2017, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected legislative leaders' attempt to appeal the case, leaving the Fourth Circuit's ruling the law of the land. Unrepentant, legislative leaders have proposed a constitutional amendment to be placed on the November 2018 ballot that would revive the Voter ID requirement. The NCLBC is adamantly opposed to any measure that seeks to suppress the fundamental right to vote, especially when it has already been determined to target communities of color.

Voter ID has already disproportionately disenfranchised African-American voters. Instead of protecting voters, North Carolina's 2013 Voter ID law cheated honest citizens out of their vote and revived an ugly chapter in our state's history. Over 1,400 citizens lost their right to vote in the March 2016 primary when the ID law was in effect. Although African Americans made up only 23% of all voters in the March 2016 Primary, they were 34% of the 1,400 voices silenced by the Voter ID law. These numbers only reflect those voters that had the time to complete the cumbersome provisional ballot paperwork – many other voters simply left the polling place without voting, rather than face the additional line and extra hassle of voting provisionally. Indeed, the data shows that African Americans disproportionately lack the most common kinds of photo ID, those issued by the DMV, and are therefore disproportionately burdened and disenfranchised by a Voter ID requirement.

Racial and political gerrymandering and voter suppression policies and practices have plagued our communities for generations. Instead of stepping back on decades of civil rights progress, we must put forth proposals for fair redistricting, fair elections, increased voter access and voting rights protection. Chair of the NCLBC, Senator Erica D. Smith, filed [Senate Bill 800 with Senators Jeff Jackson and Terry Van Duyn](#) to offer an alternative path to increase voter access and promote greater, healthier civic engagement. SB 800 would enact independent redistricting, major campaign finance reform, online voter registration, non-partisan judicial elections, and new restrictions on lobbyists. Instead of passing legislation that suppresses voting rights, attention should be focused on such alternatives.

We should not obstruct citizens' paths to the ballot box with barriers such as voter ID requirements. With increasing political apathy and distrust of government, we should be creating more opportunities for citizens (especially from underrepresented communities of colors) to engage with the legislative process-- not taking them away. Voter suppression is a shameful tool that erodes the voices of North Carolinians. It was wrong in 2013, and it is wrong in 2018.

###