

Voting Rights & Fair Elections

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In many respects, the discriminatory and anti-voter laws enacted in the past three years are echoes of North Carolina's ugly past.

After the Civil War, newly enfranchised African-American Lincoln Republicans and low-income white Populists formed a "Fusion" alliance that elected scores of local and state candidates. They championed public education, began progressive taxation of corporations, and wrote a state constitution "for the good of the whole" that is largely the one we still have. Voter participation in the 1880s and 1890s exceeded 80% of eligible voters (men only).

To regain power, Democrats used force (Wilmington Massacre, etc.) and Jim Crow laws to restrict voting, spread racist propaganda, enforce discrimination, and send a message: politics is for the boss man.

Voter participation dropped to under 40%, and North Carolina was among the worst 12 states for voter turnout throughout the entire 20th Century, even after the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It was only after the beginning of Early Voting, Same-Day Registration, out-of-precinct voting, and other reforms that we climbed higher. North Carolina ranked #1 in the nation for increased turnout from 2004 to 2008, and we finally ranked among the top 12 states for turnout in 2012.

In 2011, Republicans regained control of the NC General Assembly, thanks to the surging anti-Obama turnout and record-breaking spending by outside groups in the 2010 election. Like the Democrats from the 19th Century, the GOP passed laws that divided voters by race, gave the super-rich more political advantage, and made voting more difficult. The results are stark, the racial impact is harsh:

Redistricting: The gerrymandered maps go way beyond anything Democrats did. District lines zigzag through precincts, dividing voters by race to block "Fusion" alliances. Blacks are packed in fewer districts and are 50% more likely than whites to live in split precincts. This is computerized apartheid.

Early Voting: The Monster Law (H589) cuts EV from 17 to 10 days. 70% of blacks who voted in 2012's general election used Early Voting, compared to 52% of whites. Blacks were 22% of registered voters in 2012 but 36% of those who voted in the first week of EV and 43% in the first Sunday, both now cut.

Same-Day Registration: The Monster Law repeals SDR which especially helps mobile voters. Youth age 18-25 were 12% of 2012 voters but 33% of those using SDR. Blacks were 34% of those using SDR.

Government ID: African Americans are 34% of voters without a NC ID (from DMV/Voter roll match-up, 2013). NC's ID law is one of the 3 strictest in the US. Old, poorer, female voters are most hurt.

Out-of-precinct voting: Black voters cast 31% of the "wrong precinct, right county" ballots in 2012.

Pre-registration: Latinos and blacks are a larger part of NC youth and used this disproportionately.

Straight-ticket voting: 56% of 2012 voters used STV; black voters are about 60% more likely to use it.

Mail-in voting: The only voting method made easier is the one that experts say is preferred by those who seek to commit voter fraud: absentee mail voting. This shows the hypocrisy of the Monster Law.

Challenge voters: H589 lets more voters challenge others & more partisan poll observers inside polls.

Judicial public financing: 80% of candidates in contested appellate races from both parties enrolled in this nationally acclaimed program, which helped women and black candidates be competitive.

More money, less disclosure: The law increases donation limits, allows more corporate money to parties, increases outside spending without disclosure, stops Stand By Your Ad and other disclosure.