

Democracy North Carolina

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60,000+ TEENAGERS ADDED TO VOTER ROLLS THANKS TO UNIQUE LAW IN NORTH CAROLINA

High School Registration Drives Now Underway, Surprising Some Parents and Students

More than 60,000 North Carolina teenagers will be eligible to vote in the November election as a result of a unique state law that let them preregister when they were as young as 16 years old.

That's enough voters to change the outcome of many tight contests, from president to county sheriff, but the political affiliation of these young adults indicates that neither party will gain an easy advantage from their addition to the voter rolls, said Bob Hall of Democracy North Carolina, a nonpartisan election reform organization.

An analysis by Democracy North Carolina of teenage preregistrants indicates that 30 percent are affiliating with the Democratic Party and the same share - 30 percent - is signing up with the Republican Party. One percent is aligning with the Libertarian Party and 39 percent are choosing none of the parties.

"These young voters run the gamut, from those signing up at the DMV almost automatically when they get their first driver's license, to those who fill out the form in high school after studying the election process in their civics class," said Hall. "They are more independent and more inclined to evaluate candidates without relying on party labels."

Thousands more teenagers are signing up this month because the same North Carolina law requires county boards of elections to conduct voter registration and preregistration drives in high schools each year during Citizens Awareness Month (September).

More than 8,500 youth age 16 and 17 preregistered during September 2011, Hall said, and at least that number will likely sign up this year.

The preregistration law, which became effective in 2010, had broad bipartisan support when it passed. It was co-sponsored by four legislators including Rep. Justin Burr (R-Albemarle), the youngest Republican in the General Assembly, and Rep. Tricia Cotham (D-Charlotte), the youngest Democrat.

Five other states allow citizens to preregister as young as 16, but North Carolina's law is the only one that requires election officials to hold drives in high schools annually, said Hall. The five states are Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, and Rhode Island.

A memo* from the State Board of Elections to county boards in late August says, "This will be the third year that county boards of elections will be required to conduct voter registration and

preregistration drives at public high schools in your county. You will need to work with your local school district to arrange these events.”

The memo notes that county election officials “may partner with other groups in order to staff these voter registration drives” and help inform the new voters about the election process. The League of Women Voters is assisting in several counties, but in many places parents, students and teachers are still surprised to learn about the preregistration program.

Previous reports of activities sent by counties to the State Board of Elections in 2010 and 2011 indicate that some local election boards are more effective at engaging the students than others. Hall said some of the most successful initiatives occurred in Burke, Cabarrus, Chatham, Craven, Edgecombe, Madison, Nash, Richmond, and Wayne counties.

Larger counties, including Cumberland, Forsyth, Guilford and Union, are signing up an average of over 1,000 preregistrants a year; Wake and Mecklenburg add more than 3,000 a year.

In the 32 months since the new law took effect (January 2010 through August 2011), a total of 107,400 16 and 17 year olds have preregistered and automatically become fully registered when they reach voting age. The analysis by Democracy North Carolina includes a table of total preregistrants by county and a statewide summary broken down by party and race.

*The memo is at: http://www.app.sboe.state.nc.us/erc/Documents/SBE_memos/2012-19%20Citizens%20Awareness%20Month_Sept%202012.pdf

A packet from the State Board of Elections about the program is at: <ftp://www.app.sboe.state.nc.us/Citizens%20Awareness%20Month%202011/Drive%20Organizing%20Packet%202011.pdf>

For more details about the preregistration program, contact Veronic Degraffenreid at the State Board of Elections at 919-715-1830 or Gary Bartlett at 919-715-1827.

Breakdown of Teenage Preregistrations by Year, Party and Race, Jan. 2010 thru Aug. 2012								
	2010		2011		Jan. thru Aug. 2012		32-Month Total	
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	Number	% Total
Total Preregistrants	35,681	100.0%	39,534	100.0%	32,207	100.0%	107,422	100.0%
Approx. # Who Are Eligible to Vote in Nov. 2012 Election	34,409	96.4%	25,692	65.0%	2,984	9.3%	63,085	58.7%
Democrats	10,395	29.1%	11,385	28.8%	10,802	33.5%	32,582	30.3%
Republicans	10,803	30.3%	12,672	32.1%	8,668	26.9%	32,143	29.9%
Libertarians	312	0.9%	321	0.8%	263	0.8%	896	0.8%
Unaffiliated	14,143	39.6%	15,123	38.3%	12,372	38.4%	41,638	38.8%
Black	8,317	23.3%	8,868	22.4%	9,743	30.3%	26,928	25.1%
White	23,431	65.7%	27,006	68.3%	18,253	56.7%	68,690	63.9%
Race Undesignated	975	2.7%	578	1.5%	1,568	4.9%	3,121	2.9%
Hispanic/Latino	1,218	3.4%	1,312	3.3%	1,239	3.8%	3,769	3.5%

Teenage Preregistrations By County, January 2010 thru August 2012

COUNTY	2010	2011	Jan-Aug 2012	32-Month Total	COUNTY	2010	2011	Jan-Aug 2012	32-Month Total
ALAMANCE	416	269	512	1,197	JONES	77	38	29	144
ALEXANDER	112	164	115	391	LEE	91	131	51	273
ALLEGHANY	39	53	9	101	LENOIR	111	259	538	908
ANSON	151	199	76	426	LINCOLN	304	231	223	758
ASHE	67	104	74	245	MACON	104	94	19	217
AVERY	28	32	38	98	MADISON	140	183	111	434
BEAUFORT	186	177	198	561	MARTIN	50	120	87	257
BERTIE	110	53	59	222	MCDOWELL	285	196	86	567
BLADEN	27	44	44	115	MECKLENBURG	4,307	3,829	4,112	12,248
BRUNSWICK	436	399	337	1,172	MITCHELL	117	28	25	170
BUNCOMBE	873	879	647	2,399	MONTGOMERY	64	90	13	167
BURKE	609	474	347	1,430	MOORE	395	415	257	1,067
CABARRUS	673	1,378	723	2,774	NASH	568	680	468	1,716
CALDWELL	472	310	306	1,088	NEW HANOVER	603	884	435	1,922
CAMDEN	8	6	2	16	NORTHAMPTON	108	30	93	231
CARTERET	134	428	214	776	ONslow	489	685	489	1,663
CASWELL	69	40	30	139	ORANGE	692	581	469	1,742
CATAWBA	1,078	488	334	1,900	PAMLICO	65	44	45	154
CHATHAM	255	277	112	644	PASQUOTANK	145	80	129	354
CHEROKEE	135	218	144	497	PENDER	342	285	85	712
CHOWAN	73	79	60	212	PERQUIMANS	59	30	41	130
CLAY	52	78	44	174	PERSON	56	30	25	111
CLEVELAND	188	173	181	542	PITT	695	844	993	2,532
COLUMBUS	138	138	30	306	POLK	74	62	58	194
CRAVEN	463	535	481	1,479	RANDOLPH	585	600	531	1,716
CUMBERLAND	851	1,045	1,282	3,178	RICHMOND	248	350	140	738
CURRITUCK	25	36	29	90	ROBESON	441	356	466	1,263
DARE	108	160	96	364	ROCKINGHAM	258	335	213	806
DAVIDSON	673	728	580	1,981	ROWAN	352	537	493	1,382
DAVIE	64	216	121	401	RUTHERFORD	393	251	140	784
DUPLIN	112	121	58	291	SAMPSON	84	41	39	164
DURHAM	898	615	891	2,404	SCOTLAND	87	66	57	210
EDGECOMBE	348	380	291	1,019	STANLY	273	423	164	860
FORSYTH	1,166	1,200	790	3,156	STOKES	139	154	61	354
FRANKLIN	339	414	221	974	SURRY	142	189	88	419
GASTON	981	715	637	2,333	SWAIN	69	105	41	215
GATES	29	29	17	75	TRANSYLVANIA	206	262	144	612
GRAHAM	67	47	23	137	TYRRELL	17	19	9	45
GRANVILLE	80	156	113	349	UNION	638	1,833	2,134	4,605
GREENE	101	73	123	297	VANCE	234	263	204	701
GUILFORD	1,318	1,165	1,485	3,968	WAKE	3,440	4,711	2,589	10,740
HALIFAX	178	293	307	778	WARREN	112	124	56	292
HARNETT	170	237	460	867	WASHINGTON	73	67	53	193
HAYWOOD	119	397	116	632	WATAUGA	245	302	185	732
HENDERSON	494	494	290	1,278	WAYNE	609	687	487	1,783
HERTFORD	62	13	47	122	WILKES	59	150	65	274
HOKE	257	212	226	695	WILSON	258	329	490	1,077
HYDE	32	10	12	54	YADKIN	199	219	86	504
IREDELL	490	698	605	1,793	YANCEY	91	61	23	175
JACKSON	30	51	19	100	STATE TOTAL	35,681	39,534	32,207	107,422
JOHNSTON	704	751	412	1,867					