

# Voter ID: Harmful, Unnecessary, and Racist

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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 “target[ed] 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.

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## North Carolina’s Current System is Accessible, Fair, and Secure

Our elections are not riddled with somehow undetectable instances of voter fraud. In an April 2017 audit, the NC State Board of Elections & Ethics Enforcement (NCSBE) found that the vast majority of ineligible voters who cast a ballot in the 2016 election simply didn’t understand the rules, and warned the public not to conflate voter mistakes with voter fraud. NCSBE found only one case of in-person voter impersonation – the only kind of improper ballot that photo ID could even affect. NCSBE recommends increased voter education as the solution to voter confusion – not more restrictive laws.

**The reality is that in-person fraud is vanishingly rare.** A recent study found that, since 2000, there were only 31 credible allegations of voter impersonation across the country, during a period of time in which more than 1 billion ballots were cast.

**Identified instances of “fraud” are honest mistakes.** So-called cases of “fraud” are almost always mistakes made by poll workers or voters. Using these mistakes to bolster hyperbolic claims of fraud is political gamesmanship and discriminatory scapegoating, plain and simple.

## Voter ID Will Hurt North Carolinians

**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.

**Voter ID has already disproportionately disenfranchised African-American voters. 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.

**The so-called “safety nets” of “free IDs” and “reasonable impediment” did not work.** Even pro-ID legislators admitted that the DMV failed to provide the promised “free IDs” to voters who didn’t have an acceptable ID. The “reasonable impediment” option offered as the next “safety net” also failed – inconsistent implementation meant that these special provisional ballots were treated differently depending on which county they were in. Many voters who lacked ID weren’t even offered this option, and were disenfranchised as a result. And most importantly, neither “safety net” cures the fact that requiring a photo ID at the polls imposes an unnecessary, heavy, and discriminatory burden on the right to vote.

**A Voter ID law is a waste of taxpayer dollars.** Voter ID costs states millions to implement, including the cost of educating the public, training poll workers, and providing IDs to voters. Texas spent nearly \$2 million on voter education and outreach efforts following passage of its Voter ID law. Indiana spent over \$10 million to produce “free” ID cards between 2007 and 2010. North Carolina has already wasted millions implementing and defending its racially discriminatory 2013 voter law.

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**Time to Stand Firm: Voter ID hurts eligible voters in North Carolina, and disproportionately affects the sacred rights of voters of color. Unproven claims of voter fraud are being used to justify a strategic policy that harms real people, reduces access to voting, and wastes tax money. It was wrong in 2013, and it’s still wrong in 2018. There’s no version of photo ID that won’t harm voters – vote “NO” on the Voter ID constitutional amendment.**

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