



# HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR EARLY VOTING SITES & HOURS IN YOUR COUNTY



***This guide will help you win the Early Voting sites and hours that voters in your county need for the 2022 General Election!***

## What is an Early Voting Plan?

Each county board of elections decides the Early Voting sites and voting hours for upcoming elections. The information about site locations and hours forms the county's EARLY VOTING PLAN. This plan must be approved by the county board of elections by a unanimous vote, which must be held during a public board of elections meeting.

If the county board does not approve the Early Voting plan unanimously, any board member can submit an alternative plan to the State Board of Elections, which has the final authority to decide the plan. *The power of one Board member to submit an alternative plan is an important point of leverage to make a county's plan better.*

## Why are good early voting sites and hours important?

Early Voting is the most popular way to vote in North Carolina. In 2020, 66% of North Carolinians cast their ballot at an Early Voting site – compared to just 16% of voters who cast a ballot on Election Day.

Early Voting sites are so important because they give voters the option to register to vote or update their voter registration AND cast a ballot at the same time. They also help eliminate overcrowding and long lines at Election Day polling places.

It's very important to have enough Early Voting sites – and plentiful voting hours, particularly on the weekend – to ensure that voters have more options for casting a ballot. Fewer Early Voting sites and hours make it harder for all North Carolinians to cast a ballot.

## What's the timeline for the 2022 General Election?

**June:** Counties will begin the process of choosing and securing voting sites and determining hours. *This is a great time to ask your board for their draft plan.*

**July:** Counties will vote to approve their draft plan. *This is the time to attend your county board meeting and advocate for your plan.*

**August:** The State Board of Elections will meet to decide Early Voting plans for counties that did not unanimously approve their plan. *This is when plans will be finalized.*

## How can I improve my county's early voting plan?

- ✔ In order to win good Early Voting sites and hours, it's important to attend county board of elections meetings, get to know your board members, and speak out in favor of Early Voting sites and hours that benefit your community.
- ✔ Here are step-by-step instructions for how you can win better Early Voting sites and hours in your county.



## ✔ GATHER INTELLIGENCE

- ✔ Find out when your county board of elections is meeting next and what's on the agenda. This information should be available online.
- ✔ Contact your county board of elections staff or board member. Ask them: (1) what preliminary plans exist for Early Voting sites (if there's a draft plan, ask to see it!), (2) what is the schedule and process for making a decision, (3) will they consider or support opening additional Early Voting sites and (4) will they consider extending voting hours to Saturday and Sunday.

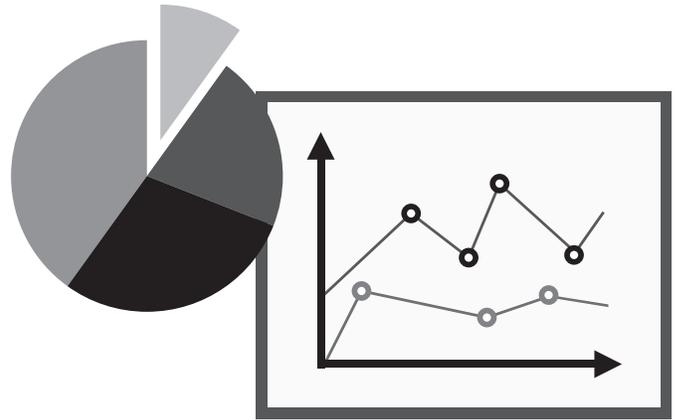
## ✔ MAKE A PLAN

- ✔ Review Early Voting sites and hours from prior elections in your county. Counties often reuse sites from previous years.
- ✔ Identify gaps that exist in the current draft plan or in past plans. Are there neighborhoods that would benefit from an Early Voting site? Are there enough weekend and evening voting hours? Visit <https://nc.cidsitingtool.org/> for great information about who is in your county and where they live!
- ✔ Develop your own plan for locations, days, and hours. Pull in local leaders and neighbors to get their ideas.
- ✔ See Tips for Assessing Your Plan (below) for more information.

## ✔ EXECUTE

- ✔ Consider holding a meeting with each Board member and a diverse group of your allies in support of your plan.
- ✔ Organize by asking your friends, neighbors, and others who live in your community to get involved. Try to get a good mix of people to show diverse support (for example: faith leaders who support Sunday voting and students who support campus sites).

**CAUTION: Early Voting sites that are not used by voters can set a bad precedent and make it harder to advocate for more voting sites in the future. So make sure to advocate for sites that you feel confident that voters will actually use!**



- ✔ Contact local media outlets. Let them know that the County Board is holding a public meeting that will determine how easy or difficult it will be for voters to cast ballots. Write letters to the editor in support of the hours and sites that you support and share why others should help them too.
- ✔ Attend your county board of elections meeting where Early Voting plans will be discussed. Speak out about any gaps in sites or hours that you identified. County boards of elections are required to announce their meetings and agenda ahead of time. These meetings are open to the public. Ask CBOE staff to include you on the email or media list for all notices of meetings.
- ✔ STAY CONNECTED.
- ✔ Use our report form to update us about Early Voting decisions: [demnc.co/evreportform](https://demnc.co/evreportform).
- ✔ If you have questions along the way, email [elections@democracync.org](mailto:elections@democracync.org).

# TALKING POINTS FOR EARLY VOTING ADVOCACY

## We want Early Voting plans that:

- ✔ **Have weekend voting hours – especially hours on Sunday.** Early Voting sites provide flexible opportunities for working voters, by opening on weekends and evenings after normal working hours. Saturday and Sunday voting have the highest use per hour.
- ✔ **Are in communities where Black and Brown voters live.** Voting sites should not only be in wealthier and whiter parts of the county.
- ✔ **Are near on or near college communities.** A college campus can have as many students and staff as a city – and many students also lack transportation off campus.

## Why we need Early Voting:

**Limit Election Day Traffic:** When more voters have the chance to vote early, it can relieve long lines and stress on election officials on Election Day. Early Voting can also reduce the need to divide precincts or open more Election Day polling sites.

**Provide More Opportunity for Working Voters:** Not everyone has the luxury to take time off work to vote on Election Day. Early Voting ensures that people who are caretakers, work during the weekdays, or have other responsibilities can cast their ballot.

**Early Voting Solves Problems:** Voters who have moved within the county or changed information can easily update their registration at any Early Voting center. Voters do not have this ability on Election Day – meaning that voters who have problems with registration will have to cast a provisional ballot. Provisional ballots result in more headaches for election workers, and for the county board of elections.

## Reasons you'll hear NOT to open Early Voting sites or extend hours:

- ✔ **Not Enough Money:** The budget is fixed and there's no money for more sites.  
**Your Response:** By law, county commissioners MUST appropriate reasonable and adequate funds necessary for the legal functions of the county board of elections. Has the county board of elections asked the county commissioners for additional funds? If not, why?
- ✔ **The Plan is Done:** The decision about locations and times for Early Voting centers has already been made.  
**Your Response:** We hope there's an opportunity to revisit the decision, especially after seeing local support for a better plan and seeing plans offered by other counties. County BOEs can easily call a new meeting and bring the topic up for consideration, voting to approve a new plan, even if a vote has already been taken.
- ✔ **Sunday Voting is Anti-Religious:** Opening the polls on Sunday disrespects the church and its worshipers.  
**Your Response:** Ministers are leading the efforts for Sunday afternoon voting; they want their members engaged in civic life – “Souls to the Polls.”
- ✔ **We Have Enough Voting Options:** Registration and voting are easy enough; people shouldn't participate if they can't take more initiative.  
**Your Response:** Voting is a constitutional right in NC, not a privilege for the “qualified.” We should do what we can to ensure that all eligible citizens vote – especially those with limited transportation and working voters.

# TIPS FOR ASSESSING EARLY VOTING PLANS

Information from prior election cycles is one of the most critical tools you have for developing an Early Voting plan for your county. Prior plans can be found at [demnc.co/evadvocacy](https://demnc.co/evadvocacy).

1. **How many Early Voting sites have there been in recent elections?** If you're looking at sites for a Primary Election, look at Early Voting sites for previous primaries.
2. **Has your county offered weekend Early Voting hours in past elections?** If your county offered Saturday and Sunday voting hours in 2020 but is not doing so in 2022, ask why.
3. **Where are the Early Voting sites located, and how do these line up to the unique communities in your county?** Distance, transportation access, and education around such changes are both factors that should be accounted for.
4. **Are there any college / university communities in my county – and if so, did they have an Early Voting site nearby?** A college campus can have as many students and staff as a city. Many students also lack transportation off campus.

NEED HELP? We are here to assist you with your Early Voting Advocacy! Drop us a line at [elections@democracync.org](mailto:elections@democracync.org).