

# VOTING MATTERS

“When voters stay home, special interests win.”

Elizabeth MacNamara

## Catawba County Voting Snapshot

	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Unaffiliated</u>	<u>Total</u>
Registered voters <sup>1</sup>	27,378	42,599	28,685	98,985
	<u>2008*</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2012*</u>	<u>2014</u>
Voter turnout	70,544	41,867	70,199	44,503
Percentage of Registered voters	67%	41%	67%	44%

\*Presidential year

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### *Elections Have Consequences*

In the 2010 election, Republicans took control of the NC General Assembly. Two years later, Republican Pat McCrory became governor. In 2014, Republicans retained control of the state government. Here are some consequences:

- Republicans dramatically reduced funding for public education. North Carolina used to be known for its commitment to education. The state now ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for teacher pay, 47<sup>th</sup> for funding per pupil, and holds an overall national ranking of 50<sup>th</sup><sup>2</sup>.
- North Carolina, under Republican leadership, twice refused Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act. A December 2014 study<sup>3</sup> shows expanding Medicaid in North Carolina:
  - Would extend health care coverage to 500,000 more people and *save lives*
  - Create 43,000 jobs
  - Attract \$21 billion in federal funding over five years

Further, Medicaid expansion would help rural communities by supplying federal funds to support struggling hospitals.

- Republicans abolished the Earned Income Tax Credit, which provides crucial support to working mothers and families, and ended long-term unemployment benefits.
- In 2015, lawmakers further restricted women’s reproductive health and freedom, cut funding for Planned Parenthood and limited sex education and pregnancy prevention.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.catawbacountync.gov/elections/docs/vtrstats.pdf> (Oct. 30, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> 2012-2013, <http://www.nea.org/home/rankings-and-estimates-2013-2014.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.conehealthfoundation.com/app/files/public/4202/The-Economic-and-Employment-Costs-of-Not-Expanding-Medicaid-in-North-Carolina.pdf>

# Key North Carolina Voting Issues

## *Changes in Voting Laws and Requirements*

In 2013, the Supreme Court overturned a key requirement for southern states to have “pre-clearance” for any changes to voting requirements. The Republican-controlled General Assembly immediately passed a 57-page bill<sup>4</sup> that rolled back or repealed a number of voter procedures. Changes include:

- Added requirement that voters will have to provide a photo ID in order to vote.
- Reduced the early voting period – from 17 days to 10 days.
- Eliminated same-day registration.
- Prohibited out-of-precinct votes to be counted on Election Day.

According to a 2013 SBOE report<sup>5</sup>, as many as 318,000 legally registered voters do not have a driver’s license or a state-issued photo ID. Experts say this law and other changes will disproportionately affect minorities, seniors, women, students, and people with disabilities – something the General Assembly knew and intended. There are several ongoing court cases to challenge these changes, notably *United States v. State of North Carolina*.<sup>6</sup> On the eve of the first court case, the photo ID law was “relaxed” to allow a voter without photo ID to cast a provisional vote (which may or may not be counted).

## *Changes in Voting Districts*

- After the Republicans gained control of the NC General Assembly they redrew the state’s districts, what is known as gerrymandering. The point: concentrate your opponents into a small number of districts and spread supporters across a greater number of districts.
- *The Washington Post*<sup>7</sup> says both parties routinely redraw districts, but “North Carolina Republicans outdid themselves in 2012...the North Carolina GOP’s efforts paid off...based on their (Democrats) statewide vote share (more than half of registered voters) you’d expect North Carolina Democrats to hold about seven seats.” In 2014, Democrats won three of 13 seats.
- Three of the nation’s most gerrymandered districts are in North Carolina – the 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup>. The 12<sup>th</sup> (pictured), stretches from north of Greensboro to Winston-Salem and then southwest to Charlotte, and holds the dubious title of the nation’s most gerrymandered district. Of the state’s 15 representatives in Congress, only three are Democrats, who represent the 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> districts.
- On Feb. 5, 2016, a federal court ruled NC’s 1<sup>st</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> congressional districts to be racially gerrymandered and must be redrawn in two weeks, barring elections in these districts until new maps are approved.<sup>8</sup>



## *Why Vote?*

As critic and editor George Jean Nathan said, “Bad officials are elected by good citizens who don’t vote.”

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/House/PDF/H589v9.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.democracy-nc.org/downloads/SBOE-DMVMatchMemoApril2013.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> North Carolina voting rights court cases Department Justice

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonkblog/wp/2014/05/15/americas-most-gerrymandered-congressional-districts/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article58756583.html>

*More Information on Gerrymandering*

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zd5rul6EdF0>
- <http://endgerrymanderingnow.org/>