

# YOUR **POWER** AS A **VOTER**

2023 NON-PARTISAN GUIDE FOR THE *voter*



Cover Illustration: Lili M.



Digital Guide

**FREE GUIDE**



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# THE FIGHT FOR VOTER *rights*

Citizens over the age of 18 cannot be denied the right to vote on the basis of race, religion, sex, disability, or sexual orientation.

The U.S. for years did not grant all American citizens the full right to vote. The path to full voting rights regardless of race, religion, sex, disability, or sexual orientation was long and hard fought for by civil rights and suffrage activists.

1700 >>>

- Until the 1700s only white male landowners were able to vote.

1868 · 1870

- Between 1868 and 1870, the 14th and 15th amendments allowed all male citizens, regardless of race, to vote. However, some states still used discriminatory policies, such as poll taxes and literacy tests, to prevent African Americans from voting.

1964 ·

- In 1964, the 24 Amendment prohibited certain discriminatory policies designed to suppress the voting rights of African-Americans and low-income white people. Among those prohibited were poll taxes which required payment in order to vote and, at times, register to vote, and the grandfather clause which mandated that someone could not vote unless their grandfathers had voted before 1867. These grandfather clauses made it impossible to vote for those whose grandparents had been enslaved.



<<< 1920

- Women in the U.S. did not have the right to vote until 1920. For decades, several states had their own suffrage policies, but in 1920, the 19th Amendment granted all women in the country the right to vote.

1965 >>>

- In 1965, the Voting Rights Act eliminated the remainder of these discriminatory policies, protecting the right to vote for all African Americans and other minorities.

1971

- In 1971, the minimum voting age was lowered to 18 thanks to the 26th amendment which was hard fought for by students and young activists who were against the Vietnam War.

Over the years, the Voting Rights Act was expanded to protect the rights of other disenfranchised groups and changes were introduced to make voting more accessible.

- Jurisdictions with a significant number of voters who have limited or no proficiency in English were now required to be provided voting materials in other languages and to have access to multilingual assistance at the polls.

- Prohibited requiring that a citizen be able to read or write (literacy tests) or have a particular level of education in order to vote.

- Made voting sites more accessible through measures such as allowing those who cannot physically enter polling locations to vote from their vehicles.

- The fight to secure voting rights continues today and in the recent decade. However, unlike the extension of the right to vote, we have seen a series of

barriers put in place.

- In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a part of the Voting Rights Act that did not allow states with a history of voting rights suppression to modify their election laws without approval from the US Justice Department.

- Immediately following, various states, including North Carolina, enacted laws that increased barriers to the right to vote, such as requiring voter ID.

- Government representation

and the distribution of federal and state funds are two key decisions that are based on population numbers from the census. In the 2020 census, there were attempts to include a question asking if people were citizens of the US. This would have led to an undercount of immigrant communities that would have not filled out the census out of fear. As a result, communities with large immigrant populations would have had reduced political power and voice.

# YOUR BALLOT

There are generally two election cycles each year to elect partisan offices. These are the Primary Elections and the General Elections. Partisan races are those in which candidates run under a specific political party. Generally Republican, Democrat, or Libertarian.

## Primary Elections

During the Primary Elections you vote for the candidate you want to represent your party in the General Election. It's like reducing the list of candidates going to the final election.

If you are registered as unaffiliated or independent, during the primaries you will have the option to choose whether to vote a Democratic, Republican, or sometimes Libertarian ticket.

## General Elections

During the general election you vote for the person who will win and fill that position.

Nonpartisan races will not have primaries and you will vote only once during the General Election.

The ballot will not have descriptions for the candidates or the role of the offices. It is important to do your research to confidently decide who you would like to represent and make decisions on your behalf.

- You can take handwritten notes or notes in your phone with you to the ballot box. You can bring this voter guide with you! However, it is illegal to take photos or videos or communicate with anyone via voice, text or email, or any other method while voting.

- You have the right to receive assistance while you vote, however, a poll worker can not offer it; you must ask for help. If

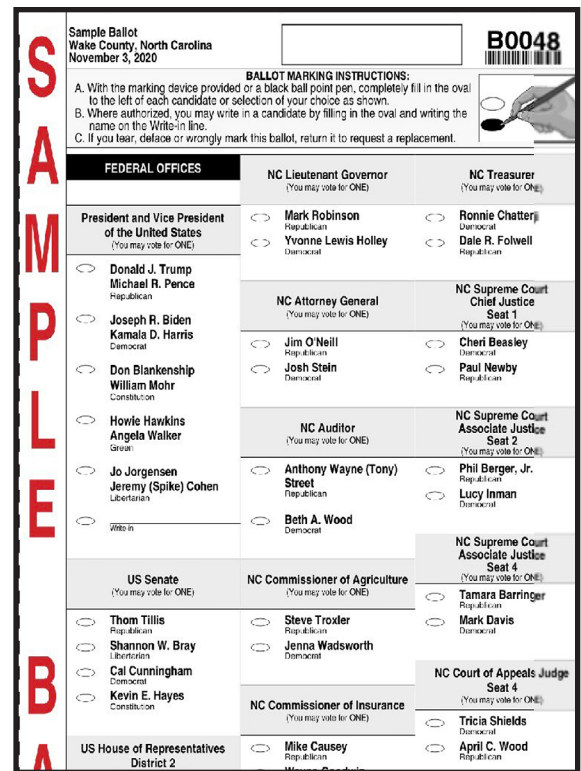


- you have a disability or difficulty with reading (due to language, vision, or other barriers) you can request help

- from any person of your choosing except for your employer or union agent.

- You may also remain in your car and vote from curbside voting outside of the polling place if you have difficulties entering due to age or disability. In that case, a poll worker will bring you a ballot.

**Referendums:** At times the NC General Assembly or your local government will refer to a question or issue to be voted on by the people. These usually have to do with bonds where you vote to decide if your municipality should be authorized to raise or borrow funds for capital projects.



The image corresponds to a sample ballot in 2020 for Wake County. Not all ballots will have the same offices or the same candidates.

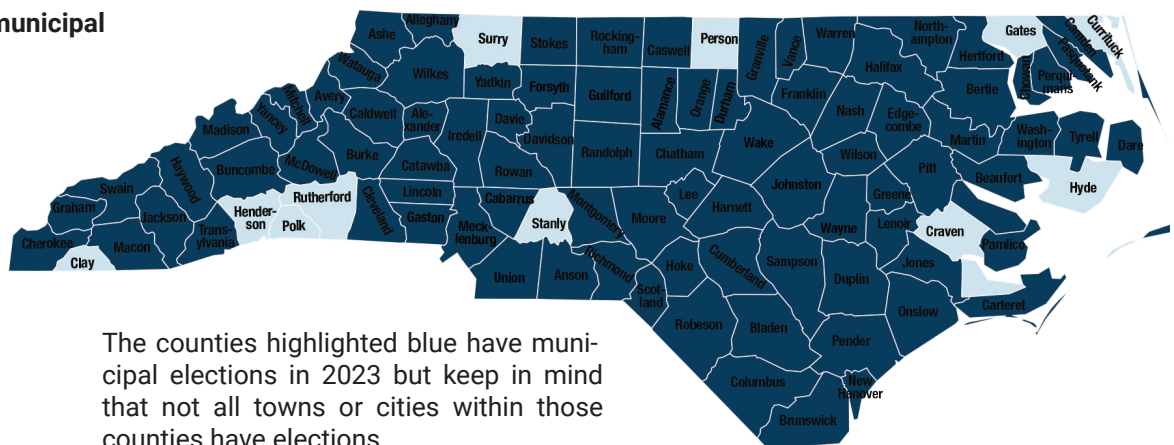
Your ballot will divide offices by Federal, State, District, County, Nonpartisan offices, and Referendums. The candidates on your ballot will depend on where you live. That's why it's important to update your voter registration every time you move.

# SNAPSHOT OF 2023 ELECTIONS

<p><b>Mayor</b></p>	<p><b>2 or 4 years</b></p> <p>Varies by county with no term limits.</p>	<p>Is the Chief representative of the city. Presides over City Council meetings, and reports to residents regarding the condition of the city's affairs both financial and other. Signs contracts on behalf of the city, and votes during city council meetings only in events of a tie.</p>
<p><b>Council Member/ Alderman</b></p>		<p>Establishes general city policies regarding arts and cultural resources, economic development, transportation and transit, growth, and natural resources to benefit the residents of the city. They review annual budgets and make recommendations. May be responsible for hiring city manager, city attorney, and city clerk.</p>
<p><b>County Commissioner</b></p>		<p>Adopts the county's annual budget and establishes the annual property tax rate. Assesses and establishes priorities on the many community needs, especially those related to health, education, welfare, mental health, and the environment. Appoints commission members.</p>


There are three 2023 municipal election dates in NC

- Tuesday, Sept 12**
- Tuesday, Oct 10**
- Tuesday, Nov 7**



The counties highlighted blue have municipal elections in 2023 but keep in mind that not all towns or cities within those counties have elections.

To obtain more information about elections for your town or city, visit: <https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/upcoming-election>



# DISTRICT VOTE AND STATEWIDE VOTE

OFFICE	TERMS OF OFFICE	OFFICE DESCRIPTION
President	<b>4 years</b> two-term limit	The president <b>holds the highest office in the country</b> and is the commander-in-chief of the US Armed Forces and holds ultimate authority over the military. They also act as chief diplomat, shaping and conducting US foreign policy. The president <b>has the power to propose legislation, sign or veto bills</b> passed by Congress, and nominate federal judges (including Supreme Court Justices with Senate confirmation).
Vice President	<b>4 years</b> No term limit	<b>The Vice President acts as the 2nd highest ranking official</b> in the government. Their primary role is to <b>support the president</b> in carrying out their duties and <b>to be ready to assume the presidency</b> if the president is unable to fulfill their responsibilities. The VP of the US serves as the <b>President of the Senate</b> and has the authority to cast tie-breaking votes if needed. You vote for the Vice President and President as one
US House of Representatives	<b>2 years</b> No term limit	Both the Senate and the House of Representatives <b>have the power to propose, debate, and pass federal laws</b> . Both chambers must pass identical versions of a bill before it can be sent to the president for signature or veto. The House and the Senate share the same legislative authority and duty to represent the interests and concerns of the American public.  All tax-related bills must originate in the House of Representatives. This gives that House a <b>fundamental role in shaping the fiscal policies of the country</b> . - Contrastingly to the Senate, in the House, the number of representatives is based on the population of each state.
Governor	<b>4 years</b> limited to two consecutive terms	<b>The Governor of NC holds the highest office in the state</b> . They act as chief executives, administering and enforcing state laws and ensuring the efficient functioning of the executive branch. The governor proposes and approves a state budget and signs or vetoes bills passed by the NC General Assembly, The governor plays a critical role in responding to emergencies and disasters within the state. The governor acts as the spokesperson for the state of NC, <b>advocating for the interests of its residents</b> at the state and national levels.

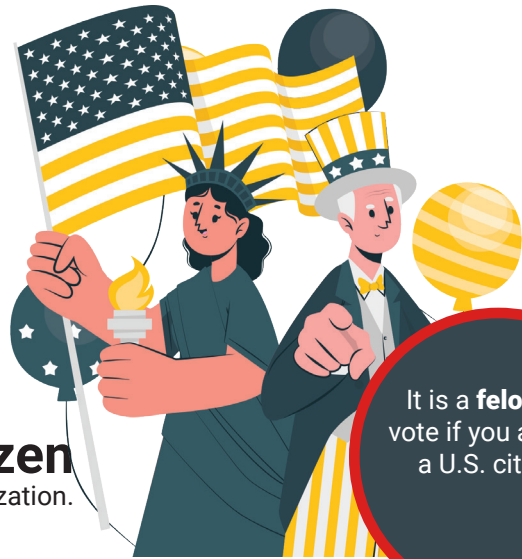
OFFICE	TERMS OF OFFICE	OFFICE DESCRIPTION
<b>Lieutenant Governor</b>	<b>4 years</b> limited to two consecutive terms	Primary responsibility is to <b>preside over the North Carolina Senate</b> . The lieutenant governor is first in line to succeed the governor in case of vacancy, resignation, impeachment, or death. The lieutenant governor reviews bills, can suggest legislation, and engages with lawmakers to <b>advance their policy priorities</b> .
<b>Attorney General</b>	<b>4 years</b> No term limit	<b>Provides legal opinions to the General Assembly, the Governor, or any other public official when requested.</b> They <b>advise and consult judges, district attorneys, magistrates, and county attorneys when they request assistance</b> and when permitted under the Rules of Professional conduct. The attorney general may intervene in proceedings before any courts, either state or federal on behalf of the State. They handle all criminal appeals from state trial courts.
<b>Secretary of State</b>	<b>4 years</b> No term limit	Responsible for the administration of business entities, public records, and elections conducted within the state.
<b>State Auditor</b>	<b>4 years</b> No term limit	Possesses extensive authority to thoroughly <b>review the books, records, files, papers, documents, and financial affairs of every state agency</b> . Additionally, they hold the power to call upon individuals to produce records and to respond to questions under oath.
<b>State Treasurer</b>	<b>4 years</b> No term limit	State Chief Financial Officer and a member of the Council of State. They are responsible for <b>issuing and managing the State's debt</b> in a cost-effective manner. The treasury manages the state's pension and healthcare plans, unclaimed property, and <b>provides financial support to local governments</b> .
<b>Superintendent of Public Instruction</b>	<b>4 years</b> No term limit	<b>Directly administers and supervises the public school system's rules and regulations</b> established by the State Board of Education. They report statistics of the public schools and provide their recommendations for improvement, and suggest amendments to school law to the governor once every two years.
<b>Commissioner of Insurance</b>	<b>4 years</b> No term limit	<b>Serves as State Fire Marshal</b> , helping to improve building codes, training fire and rescue personnel, and awarding grants to fire and rescue departments for equipment. Also <b>combats insurance fraud</b> to drive rates lower for the North Carolina consumer. Works toward making the office more consumer-friendly to <b>help residents attain their insurance needs</b> .

OFFICE	TERMS OF OFFICE	OFFICE DESCRIPTION
<b>Commissioner of Labor</b>	<b>4 years</b> No term limit	They are responsible for <b>overseeing safe and healthy working conditions</b> , enforcement of labor laws, and fair labor practices.
<b>Commissioner of Agriculture</b>	<b>4 years</b> No term limit	The Commissioner of Agriculture's primary goal is to <b>protect and enhance the ability of agriculture</b> to produce an adequate supply of food and to enforce regulations to that effect.
<b>State Senators</b>	<b>2 years</b> with no term limits. There are 50 Senators, one for every district in North Carolina	Their role is to represent the interests of their constituents and participate in the legislative process at the state level. They <b>draft laws, approve budgets, have oversight of the state executive branch, and lastly debate and vote on proposed laws.</b>
<b>State House Representatives</b>	<b>2 years</b> with no term limits. There are 120 Representatives, one for every district in North Carolina	State representatives represent smaller districts than state senators. They <b>draft laws, approve budgets, have oversight of the state executive branch, and lastly debate and vote on proposed laws.</b>
<b>State Supreme Court</b>	<b>8 years</b> There are 7 judges and only one seat is up for partisan election in 2024.	<b>Make decisions on cases that have been appealed</b> from lower courts, including the Court of Appeals.
<b>Intermediate appellate courts</b>	<b>8 years</b> There are 15 judges on the Court of Appeals. In 2024 there are only 3 seats up for election.	<b>Review proceedings that occurred in the trial courts for errors of law or legal procedure</b> , and decide if the trial court correctly applied the law to the case.

# Eligibility Requirements to Voting

To Register to vote and vote, you must meet these requisites:

**Be a U.S. citizen**  
either by birth or naturalization.



It is a **felony** to vote if you are not a U.S. citizen



**Be at least 18 years**  
of age on election day

- Those who are 17 years old may register and vote in primary elections if they will be 18 years old by the day of the general election.
- Those who are 16 years old can pre-register but they cannot vote.

**Be a resident of the county**  
for at least 30 days before the day of election.



**Students**

and members of the armed forces who are living outside of the country and people who have been charged with minor crimes or are waiting to receive a sentence are eligible to register and vote.



**Not currently be in jail or prison**

completing a felony sentence.

- Once a person has been sentenced with a felony charge, they lose their right to vote in NC until they complete their sentence. This includes any probation and post-release supervision.

- Once they have completed all aspects of their felony sentence, they automatically regain their right to vote but will need to register to vote once again.





# REGISTERING *and voting*



You have to be registered to vote at least 25 days before the election day.

**VOTE**

To vote in any election, you have to be registered to vote at least 25 days before the election day. Once you register to vote, you don't have to worry about re-registering unless any of the following applies to you:

- **You moved**
- **You changed your legal name**
- **You changed political parties**
- **You are removed from the voter roll during list maintenance**

The state regularly does list maintenance (removing inactive, dead, or moved voters from the voter rolls). In most states, if a voter doesn't vote in two elections they are listed as inactive and sent a mailing, asking if they still live at that location. The voter must respond to not be removed. If a voter allows four years to pass without casting a vote, their registration can be removed.

You can either register to vote by mail, in person at the DMV, with organizations who do civic engagement work, or online. You can register at this page: [votemosnc.com/voter-registration/](https://votemosnc.com/voter-registration/)



**N**orth Carolina has previously not required voters to present an ID or voter ID (except for special cases such as first-time voting). However, beginning with the 2023 fall elections, voters will have to have an ID when they go to vote.

## VOTER ID *section*

### Acceptable IDs that can be expired more than a year:

- NC driver's license
- Non-driver's ID from NC DMV, free to residents who show a birth certificate and other documents
- U.S. Passport or U.S. Passport Card
- Driver's license or non-driver ID from another state, District of Columbia or U.S. territory. Only if voter registered in North Carolina within 90 days of the election.
- College or university student ID approved by the NC State Board of Elections (NCSBE)
- State or local government or charter school employee ID approved by the NCSBE.
- NC Voter Photo ID card (free, issued by a county board of elections). The voter must provide name, date of birth, and the last four numbers of their Social Security number, and have their photo taken.

### Acceptable IDs that may be expired or have no expiration date

- Tribal Enrollment Card. Must be issued by tribe recognized by NC or federal government.
- Military or veteran ID card issued by the U.S. government
- Public Assistance Program ID card issued by U.S. government or State of North Carolina
- A voter 65 or older may use an expired form of acceptable ID if the ID was unexpired on their 65th birthday – it's good for life!
- No photo identification is required for military servicemembers or voters overseas using special absentee voting procedures protected by federal law.

# WHAT ELSE *do I need* TO KNOW?



- **The address on your ID does not matter** – the law says an ID is only used to prove who you are, not where you live. (Make sure your voter registration matches your current address!)
- **Mail-in absentee voters** must send a copy of an identity document with their ballot request or with the returned ballot OR an affidavit noting lack of access to a method to attach an electronic or physical copy of the identification card to the written request as a reasonable impediment..
- **No photo identification is required for military servicemembers or voters overseas** using special absentee voting procedures protected by federal law.

- **You can vote a provisional ballot**, but then you must take an acceptable ID to your county elections board by the day before election results are certified (canvass day, the Monday after Election Day for municipal elections).
- If you are unable to show photo ID (whether voting in person or by mail), **you may fill out an ID Exception Form** (also known as a reasonable impediment form) and vote a provisional ballot.

# WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE AN *Identification?*



- You can contact VoteRiders through their website, email **Helpline@VoteRiders.org**, interact with their Chatbot at **VoteRiders.org**, or call or text their toll-free number **866-ID-2-VOTE** (866-432-8683). One of their volunteers will call you back to start the process of getting an ID. **All services are available in English and Spanish.**

**Student IDs** that have been approved by the Board of Elections are an eligible form of voter ID. Find out here if your school's ID was approved:



# ALTERNATIVES FOR THOS WHO *cannot vote*

Regardless of your ability to vote, there are many ways to be active and make sure your voice is being heard and represented.

- **Elected officials represent you regardless of whether you voted for them or not. If you live in their district they have a responsibility to serve you as a constituent.** And with that comes your right to lobby elected officials. The NC General Assembly is public and you are always able to visit in person. **You can schedule video or in person meetings with your legislator usually by emailing**

**them or their legislative assistant. Many organizations also hold lobby days around a wide variety of issues.**

- Supporting organizations who do work that you find valuable and representative of what you hope to see in your community. Supporting can look like volunteering, donating, or participating in calls to action.

- You can use this guide and your knowledge of voting to empower your loved ones and community to vote.



## HOW TO FIND YOUR DISTRICT, WHO REPRESENTS YOU, AND THEIR CONTACT INFO

 <https://ncleg.gov/>

**1.** On the legislature page ([ncleg.gov](https://ncleg.gov)) on the top right corner click on "Find Your Legislators."

**2.** On the "Find your Legislators" page, you will find a box with a map to search by address (**By Address**). Type your home address in the "Enter address" box.

**3.** Once you've entered your address, **it should automatically update to give you your legislators' information** (Representatives and Senators), your districts, and maps of your districts.

**4.** On the same page, you'll have the option to toggle between US legislators and NC legislators. **When you click on the name, you will be redirected to their profile page.** Their phone number and email will appear in a blue font. You will also see their Legislative Assistant's contact information.

**5.** In their profile page, there will be **various tabs at the top** you can click between to see how they've voted on previous legislation, what

bills they've previously introduced, and what committees they are a part of.

Their information is public and you are always welcomed and encouraged to contact them with your concerns and opinions concerning issues or policies affecting you and your community.

Their Legislative Assistants typically manage their calendar and citizen communications and are a great resource if you have questions.



# TO FIND MORE *information*

To obtain an ID

- ✉ [helpline@voteriders.org](mailto:helpline@voteriders.org)
- 🌐 [voteriders.org](http://voteriders.org)
- ☎ 866-ID-VOTE (866-432-8683)

Find who is on your ballot

- 🌐 [ballotpedia.org](http://ballotpedia.org)

If you have questions on the day of elections

- ☎ 888-VE-Y-VOTA (888-83-9-8682)

Where and when you can vote during the early voting period

- 🌐 [ncvoter.org/early](http://ncvoter.org/early)

Read more about voting, elections, and to register to vote

- 🌐 [votemosnc.org](http://votemosnc.org)



Learn about elections, how to register to vote, and how to go beyond voting



[www.votemosnc.com](http://www.votemosnc.com)

To find information about your ballot: [ballotpedia.org](http://ballotpedia.org)

*This Voter Guide was produced by El Pueblo, designed by Gerardo Arizmendi, and translated by Plural Editorial who are not affiliated with any political party or candidate. The information in the voter guide is based on information found at the NC State Board of Elections and UNC School of Government webpages, who are not affiliated with any of the organizations involved with the production or any political party or candidate. To find the digital version of this voter guide, more information about voting and elections, or to register to vote, visit [VotemosNC.org](http://VotemosNC.org). Votemos NC is an initiative by El Pueblo Inc.*

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