

The struggle for voting rights in North Carolina continues – A Statement from Common Cause

In 2018, the state passed an amendment requiring voters to provide photo identification. Voter identification requirements place a burden on individuals who may have difficulty obtaining photo identification, such as transgender people and people without housing. Currently, the requirement is not in affect as litigation around the amendment continues. In 2019, a state court panel ruled against North Carolina's legislative maps as an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander, requiring new maps to be drawn. The General Assembly will be responsible for creating new congressional district lines following the 2020 Census.

The COVID-19 pandemic poses another threat to voting rights, as complex vote by mail requirements have forced voters in several states to stand in long lines for hours to cast their ballot, risking their health. North Carolina election officials project an increase of voting by mail from roughly 5% of ballots cast in 2016's general election to as much as 40% of ballots cast in 2020. This rise could put a strain on local boards of election who are responsible for producing and sending ballots to voters, in addition to verifying and counting them as they are received. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, North Carolina's DMV launched online voter registration through its website.

Every eligible voter should have access to the ballot in a democracy. A strong democracy requires fair elections and voting rights for all people, and work to ensure both is ongoing. Calls to restore the voting rights of people with prior felony convictions, to alter or eliminate the Electoral College, and to pass new voter protection laws will help strengthen our democracy.

-Trey Gibson, *Common Cause*