

# North Carolina One Stop Voting Locations Disproportionately Favor Democrats in Violation of North Carolina Law

Verity Vote

## The Problem

North Carolina law allows for three methods of voting: Absentee Voting, In-Person Election Day Voting and One-Stop Voting, which is early in-person voting. In 2022, more than half of all North Carolinians chose to vote early at One-Stop Voting locations (OSV). Each County Board may, by unanimous vote, select appropriate locations for OSV sites, however, locations may not “disproportionately favor any party, racial or ethnic group, or candidate.”

College students disproportionately favor one party. Edison Research polling shows a 28 point margin for Democrats among young people.<sup>i</sup> A 2022 study by the Center for the Study of Partisanship and Ideology found that Democrats outnumber Republicans on college campuses by a 55-23 margin nationwide.<sup>ii</sup> While the size of the partisan advantage for Democrats has grown significantly in the last decade, the fact that it exists has been well documented since the 1960s. College faculty and staff also disproportionately favor one party. A 2020 study of more than 20,000 faculty members found 48.4 percent were registered Democrats and only 5.7 percent were registered Republicans.<sup>iii</sup>

Analysis of North Carolina’s OSV locations, campus voter registration and OSV ballots cast reveals noncompliance with the statutory requirement for neutrality in early voting venues. When OSV sites are operated on a college campus, it disproportionately favors Democrats.

Steps must be taken by North Carolina election officials, particularly the North Carolina State Board of Elections, to ensure compliance with state law by relocating campus One-Stop Voting locations to more neutral sites that do not significantly favor either political party, as required by North Carolina law.

## Statutory Requirements for Neutrality

In every reference to non-precinct voting locations, the North Carolina Statutes consistently provide that the voting locations selected **must not disproportionately favor or disfavor any party, racial or ethnic group, or candidate.**

Specifically, § 163-227.6 prohibits the use of one-stop voting sites that disproportionately favor any party or candidate<sup>iv</sup>. In violation of the law, many counties establish one-stop sites in locations that disproportionately favor the Democratic party and its candidates.

**§ 163-227.6 Sites and hours for one-stop voting. (b)** The State Board shall not approve, either in a Plan approved unanimously by a county board of elections or in an alternative Plan proposed by a member or members of that board, a one-stop site in a building that the county board of elections is not entitled under G.S. 163-129 to

demand and use as an election-day voting place, unless the State Board finds that other equally suitable sites were not available and that the use of **the sites chosen will not disproportionately favor any party, racial or ethnic group, or candidate.** In providing the site or sites for one-stop absentee voting under G.S. 163-227.2, 163-227.5, and this section, the county board of elections shall make a request to the State, county, city, local school board, or other entity in control of the building that is supported or maintained, in whole or in part, by or through tax revenues at least 90 days prior to the start of one-stop absentee voting under these sections.

Likewise, the statutes authorizing satellite voting locations (G.S. 163-130)<sup>v</sup> and out of precinct voting (G.S. 163-130.1(b))<sup>vi</sup> each prohibit the State and County Boards of Elections from approving any election plan that establishes a voting location that **unfairly favors or disfavors voters with regard to race or party affiliation.**

The requirement that polling locations for all out of precinct voting be chosen by election officials to ensure that no such location confers a partisan political advantage to one political party, or its candidates is being violated in more than a dozen counties across the State of North Carolina.

## The Analysis

More North Carolinians choose to vote early rather than on Election Day. In 2022, over **53% of ballots were cast at OSV locations.** Therefore, decisions related to the locations of the OSV can have a significant impact on the election.

North Carolina voter registration reflects a roughly even partisan make up. Statewide voter registration shows that nearly 37% of individuals register as unaffiliated. Democrats make up approximately 32% and Republicans account for 30% of the statewide registered voters. <sup>vii</sup>

Democrat	Republican	Unaffiliated	Other
2,406,003	2,235,450	2,744,040	59,933
32.3%	30.0%	36.9%	0.8%

*April 2024 Voter Registrations by Party*

Using the April 14, 2024, voter registration file,<sup>viii</sup> county and individual precinct partisan ratios were calculated by dividing the number of registered Democrats by the total number of registered Democrats and registered Republicans. [Statewide partisan ratio calculation:  $32.3 / (32.3 + 30.0) = 51.8$ ] Unaffiliated and minor party registrants were omitted.

The countywide partisan ratio could be a meaningful benchmark for selecting neutral locations for OSV. Election officials can evaluate the partisan ratio of each precinct, compare it to the

countywide ratio and establish a maximum threshold for the difference in partisan ratio to ensure that locations do not provide a disproportionate advantage. In most cases, the precinct is not exclusively university housing but includes the surrounding community.

Some of the OSV locations with the largest precinct partisan advantage for Democrats are early voting sites on college campuses.

<b>COLLEGE or UNIVERSITY OSV LOCATION</b>	<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>Dem To Major Party Ratio in Campus Precinct</b>	<b>Advantage Over Countywide Ratio</b>
WINSTON-SALEM STATE UNIV	FORSYTH	96.5%	<b>38.7%</b>
FAYETTEVILLE STATE UNIV <sup>ix</sup>	CUMBERLAND	95.7%	<b>31.8%</b>
NC A&T STATE UNIV	GUILFORD	94.8%	<b>31.1%</b>
UNC ASHEVILLE	BUNCOMBE	90.5%	<b>28.7%</b>
ELIZABETH CITY STATE UNIV	PASQUOTANK	83.2%	<b>24.4%</b>
APPALACHIAN STATE UNIV	WATAUGA	71.5%	<b>24.0%</b>
UNC GREENSBORO	GUILFORD	86.5%	<b>22.8%</b>
UNC CHARLOTTE	MECKLENBURG	83.8%	<b>16.3%</b>
NC CENTRAL UNIV	DURHAM	99.5%	<b>15.3%</b>
NCS UNIV RALEIGH	WAKE	76.2%	<b>14.3%</b>
WESTERN CAROLINA UNIV	JACKSON	59.2%	<b>9.6%</b>
UNC CHAPEL HILL <sup>ix</sup>	ORANGE	87.5%	<b>8.4%</b>
DUKE UNIV	DURHAM	90.5%	<b>6.3%</b>
EAST CAROLINA UNIV	PITT	63.9%	<b>2.9%</b>
QUEENS UNIV	MECKLENBURG	62.7%	<b>-4.7%</b>
EAST CAROLINA UNIV	PITT	39.9%	<b>-21.1%</b>

*OSV Locations on College Campus Showing Democrat Advantage (Community College Locations Have No Student Housing)*

When One-Stop Voting is located on college campuses, it can present a barrier for voting by the non-campus population due to restricted campus parking and access. Signage requiring permits in certain lots and complex campus navigation can make access to the polling location a challenge for individuals who are not familiar with or do not regularly access the campus as a student, employee, or faculty member. As the data above shows, selecting a campus location for One-Stop voting provides a significant known advantage to the Democrat party and Democrat candidates. The registration percentages of Dem/(Dem+Rep) and the results from 2020 campus One-Stop voting locations show that these locations violate § 163-227.6.

The results of the 2020 Presidential Election were used to examine, not just the disproportionate advantage for registered Democrats, but the actual votes cast at campus One-Stop location by all voters, including the large percentage of unaffiliated voters who voted early at the campus site. Comparing the overall county election results from the 2020 Presidential Election to the results from the campus One-Stop locations shows a significant advantage to the Democrat candidate.

Wake County	Total Votes	County %	NC State Campus One Stop	Campus OS %
<b>Biden</b>	393,336	62.5%	16,020	76%
<b>Trump</b>	226,197	35.8%	4,540	22%

Durham County	Total Votes	County %	Duke Univ Campus One Stop	Campus OS %
<b>Biden</b>	144,688	80.4%	11,188	88%
<b>Trump</b>	32,459	18.0%	1,283	10%

Buncombe County	Total Votes	County %	UNC Asheville One Stop	Campus OS %
<b>Biden</b>	63,594	59.7%	4,375	90%
<b>Trump</b>	20,176	38.6%	427	9%

Watauga County	Total Votes	County %	Appalachian Campus One Stop	Campus OS %
<b>Biden</b>	17,122	53.1%	5,212	79%
<b>Trump</b>	14,451	44.9%	1,233	19%

New Hanover County	Total Votes	County %	Cape Fear Com-Coll One Stop	Campus OS %
<b>Biden</b>	66,138	50.2%	4,941	82%
<b>Trump</b>	63,331	48.0%	994	16%

*Sample County Election Results v. Campus OSV Location Results Illustrative of the Democrat Advantage*

## Correlation with Campus GOTV Initiative

There are over 126 colleges and universities in North Carolina but on inspection, only 24 had OSV locations on or adjacent to campus<sup>ix</sup>. Each of 17 non-community college campuses with OSV sites were participants in Civic Nation’s All In Democracy Challenge. The template for Civic Nation<sup>x</sup> approved actions plans includes advocacy for on campus voting locations for Election Day and early voting. This research did not include the timing of when the campus OSV location was first used or the catalyst of the site selection.

Civic Nation is one of dozens of progressive non-profit organizations that have established a college student turnout machine. While many of the organizations claim to be non-partisan, voter registration drives and get out the vote on college campuses have a high return on investment for Democrats. When Civic Nation announced their campus get out the vote initiatives in 2016, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities opted not to endorse the All In Challenge because of its ties to the Obama administration. "It was hard to know where one ended and the other began," said David Warren, president of the

private college association. "The issue of the White House and Civic Nation, either separately or together, moving in this direction struck me as an entangling perception at best that I did not want."<sup>xi</sup>

More than 100 North Carolina colleges and universities do not have on campus early voting locations. Only 15 county boards have selected campus locations for OSV.

A July 2023 Politico article detailing how “college towns are decimating the GOP,” described the impact in the Tar Heel state.

“North Carolina offers a revealing snapshot of a state whose college towns have altered its electoral landscape. Five of the state’s nine counties that contain so-called college towns have gone blue since voting for George W. Bush in 2000. Back then, the nine counties together netted roughly 12,000 votes for Bush, who carried the state by nearly 13 percent. Twenty years later, those numbers had broken dramatically in the opposite direction — Biden netted 222,000 votes from those counties. He still lost the state, but the margin was barely more than 1 percent.”<sup>xii</sup>

## Conclusion

One-Stop voting locations in precincts that disproportionately favor either party create an unfair advantage. The NCSBE and county officials should immediately review all campus One-Stop locations and eliminate any site that confers an advantage to one political party and its candidates. When evaluating potential OSV locations, county officials should ensure that sites are only operated in precincts and sites that are more representative of the entire population of the county.

The North Carolina General Assembly clearly intended that polling locations be neutral, conferring no advantage or disadvantage to any candidate, race, or political party. The election administrators across the state of North Carolina are falling short of their statutory duty to ensure neutrality and the NCSBE has an obligation to immediately take steps to reverse the current situation and ensure compliance with the law.

Submitted April 22, 2024

[Verity Vote](#)

*Verity Vote is a nonpartisan think-tank dedicated to the promotion of good government through research, investigations, and analysis of election systems.*

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.newsnationnow.com/politics/elections-2022/exit-poll-data-young-voters-held-off-the-red-wave/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.cspicenter.com/p/diverse-and-divided-a-political-demography>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/partisan-registration-and-contributions-of-faculty-in-flagship-colleges>

<sup>iv</sup> [https://www.ncleg.gov/enactedlegislation/statutes/pdf/bysection/chapter\\_163/gs\\_163-227.6.pdf](https://www.ncleg.gov/enactedlegislation/statutes/pdf/bysection/chapter_163/gs_163-227.6.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> **§ 163-130. Satellite voting places.**

A county board of elections by unanimous vote may, upon approval of a request submitted in writing to the State Board of Elections, establish a plan whereby elderly or disabled voters in a precinct may vote at designated sites within the precinct other than the regular voting place for that precinct. Any approval under this section is only effective for one year and shall be annually reviewed for extension. The State Board of Elections shall approve a county board's proposed plan if:

- (1) All the satellite voting places to be used are listed in the county's written request;
- (2) The plan will in the State Board's judgment overcome a barrier to voting by the elderly or disabled;
- (3) Adequate security against fraud is provided for; and
- (4) **The plan does not unfairly favor or disfavor voters with regard to race or party affiliation.**

<sup>vi</sup> **§ 163-130.1. Out-of-precinct voting places.**

A county board of elections, by unanimous vote of all its members, may establish a voting place for a precinct that is located outside that precinct. The county board's proposal is subject to approval by the Executive Director of the State Board of Elections. The county board shall submit its proposal in writing to the Executive Director. Approval by the Executive Director of the county's proposed plan shall be conditioned upon the county board of elections' demonstrating that:

- (1) No facilities adequate to serve as a voting place are located in the precinct;
- (2) Adequate notification and publicity are provided to notify voters in the precinct of the new polling location;
- (3) **The plan does not unfairly favor or disfavor voters with regard to race or party affiliation;**
- (4) The new voting place meets all requirements for voting places including accessibility for elderly and disabled voters; and
- (5) The proposal provides adequately for security against fraud.

<sup>vii</sup> <https://vt.ncsbe.gov/RegStat/Stats?Date=04/20/2024&CountyName=Totals> (accessed 4/20/2024)

<sup>viii</sup> Voter Registration File 4-15-2024 used

<sup>ix</sup> Campus adjacent locations are OSV sites that are not in a campus facility but are adjacent to the campus. For example, the UNC Chapel Hill OSV location was operated in a church that is not a university facility. But the OSV church site is located between two university buildings.

<sup>x</sup> <https://verityvote.us/student-data-sharing-for-partisan-advantage/>

<sup>xi</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/07/08/confusion-surrounds-student-voting-effort-linked-white-house>

<sup>xii</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2023/07/21/gop-college-towns-00106974>