

# **Abriding the Vote: True the Vote in North Carolina**

## **Foreword: Where We Are in History**

**10.12.2012**

**We must admit that the history of voting in this country is a curious, contentious and contorted story.**

**And when you know this history; when you know where we are in history; then you understand why the NAACP and the civil rights community stand firm against any attempt to suppress, stagnate or violate the fundamental principles of the 15th Amendment. Ratified in 1870 in the aftermath of slavery, it declares that the "right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."**

**Here in North Carolina, between 1868 and 1872, African-American leaders demanded three fundamental rights. They wanted more than just freedom but full citizenship. They demanded and contended for the right to public education, the right to sit in a jury box and the right to put a ballot in a ballot box.**

**With the ballot they joined with progressive whites in what was called fusion politics and from 1868 to 1898 there were more black people in our general assembly than today. They led the effort to rewrite the state's constitution, passing some of the most progressive voting laws, education laws, labor rights laws, criminal justice reform laws and progressive tax reform laws.**

**And then there was a violent backlash against this reconstruction. The former slave owners could not handle the reconstruction of a nation out of its racist history going on around them.**

**They worked to pass new laws; Jim Crow laws to steal, segregate, suppress and isolate the black vote and nullify the promises of the 15th Amendment.**

The culmination of these efforts to stop coalition politics and the power of blacks and whites uniting together in a progressive voting block was the Wilmington riots and massacre of November 10, 1898.

Duly elected black and white officials were run out of office. Three to five percent of Wilmington's population was murdered. In the stronghold of black political power, they were shot in the streets in this effort promoted by radical white supremacists, leading newspapermen and the political machine of Charles B. Aycock, who would be awarded the governorship for his efforts.

Two years after the Wilmington Race Riot, the last African-American serving in the US Congress, George White was driven out of office. Another African-American from North Carolina would not walk those halls for another 90 years.

North Carolina used every tool, grandfather clauses, literacy tests and poll taxes, to stop the potential and power of the black vote. The legal effect of these racially-motivated tactics was not completely rendered illegal until after the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

When you understand this history then you understand why those of us in the civil rights community will fight against any attempt, under any guise or any camouflage by any party to suppress, steal, distract, disturb, discourage, isolate or intimidate anybody's right to vote.

We know what these tactics look like. We know what they smell like.

We fought to stop those who would have rolled back same day registration and won. We fought those who tried to pass Voter Photo ID laws targeted at disenfranchising African-Americans, students, the elderly and other minorities. And we won.

We are fighting right now in court to overturn the race-based redistricting plans that were passed. And we will win.

We know our history. We know the history of America and North Carolina. We have come too far. We must go forward together and not one step back.

The sons and daughters of freedom fighters, make one promise to America, from which we will never retreat...!! When it comes to our rights, ordained by God and guaranteed by our Constitution, we will never give in and we will never, never, never turn back!

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**ABRIDGING THE VOTE:**

***TRUE THE VOTE IN NORTH CAROLINA***

By Devin Burghart and Leonard Zeskind  
Institute for Research & Education on Human Rights

**Preface: Remembering George H. White, Congressman from North Carolina's Second District**

After the end of the Reconstruction Era in 1876, a violent campaign by former Confederate soldiers re-established white supremacy and whites-only rule throughout the South. There were a few notable exceptions, where black men held on to voting rights until the dawn of the 20th century. In North Carolina, Freedmen and other black men born after the Civil War's end held on to the right to vote through the 1890s. And the last black North Carolina congressman to win election in the 19th century was George Henry White.

He was born in 1852 to a father who was a free farmer of mixed race and a mother who was a slave. After the Civil War, George White attended a Freedmen's Bureau school, a normal school in Lumberton and graduated from Howard University in 1877. He became a lawyer, and was elected to both the North Carolina House of Representatives and the Senate.



CONGRESSMAN GEORGE H. WHITE  
(SOURCE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

He won election to congress in 1896 as a "fusion" candidate, according to his biography on a government website.<sup>[1]</sup> A black Republican, he adopted the Populist Party's platform plank calling for "free silver," a term used to describe a program that would help poor farmers. Thus he won votes from both Populists and Republicans. He was re-elected in 1898.

According to the aforementioned government profile, "his bold legislative proposals combatting disfranchisement and mob violence in the South distinguished him."

George White proposed legislation which made lynching a federal crime. The measure died in committee. He also unsuccessfully pursued federal funds for an exhibit on black achievement

at the Paris Expo in 1900. And he was proud of his appointment of black men to patronage positions as postmasters, despite the claim by white supremacists that he sought black "domination."

As the white supremacists' drive to end black voting rights gained power, Rep. White understood that they would not allow him to be re-elected to a third term in 1900.

In Wilmington, North Carolina white supremacists organized a coup d'état in 1898, overthrowing by force a recently elected multi-racial city government. A mob of 2,000 white men then set upon the relatively prosperous black community of Wilmington in a riot: robbing, burning and murdering in order to drive black people out of the city.

Then in 1900, the North Carolina state legislature took the final steps to disenfranchise black voters. It passed a constitutional amendment that required a poll tax be paid and that a literacy test be passed in order to vote. Since such measures would likely disenfranchise poor whites as well as black men, a Grandfather Clause was added, "which stated that no one could be denied the right to register and vote" if they had an ancestor eligible to vote on January 1, 1867—well before voting rights for Freedmen were enshrined in the Fifteenth Amendment.

After this measure was passed, George White left North Carolina, and continued his effort to win democracy and justice in other states. Six-decades of legalized apartheid and oppression followed until it was broken by the bravery of the black freedom movement at Greensboro and elsewhere. The closed society *began* to open up for all. Now there are those who are trying to close it down again.

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### The Tea Party and Narrowing the Franchise

Over the past two years, the Tea Party movement has changed the American political and social landscape. It has given a megaphone to unfounded fears of an imaginary white dispossession and resentment.<sup>[2]</sup> It has helped reshape the anti-immigrant movement.<sup>[3]</sup> It has helped enforce measures to limit trade union rights.<sup>[4]</sup> It has unseated Republican Party moderates such as Indiana Sen. Richard Lugar, and elevated anti-choice Republicans such as Cong. Paul Ryan.<sup>[5]</sup> None of the accomplishments threaten the very fabric of democracy, however, in the same way as Tea Party efforts to suppress the vote.

In previous reports, IREHR has documented the existence of Tea Party national leaders opposed to voting rights for people without property, and Tea Party leaders who advocate the repeal of the Fourteenth Amendment, and equal rights before the law promised by

it. IREHR has pointed out some of the most prominent white nationalists in the Tea Party ranks, and those Tea Partiers who simply act like racists and bigots. In this report, the Institute for Research & Education on Human Rights details voter suppression efforts in North Carolina.

Pre-eminent among the Tea Party "poll watchers" is King Street Patriots and KSP True the Vote. King Street Patriots began as a chapter of Tea Party Patriots in Houston, Texas. Both are led by Catherine Engelbrecht, who has made herself and True the Vote ubiquitous in Tea Party circles.

Although Engelbrecht claims that the two organizations are separate and distinct, IRS Form 990s for the year 2010 show that both organizations share the same small three-person board of directors, and both operated out of the same post office box number.<sup>[6]</sup> King Street Patriots filed as a non-profit membership corporation, 501c4 on December 30, 2009. Six months later, in June 2010, KSP-True the Vote filed as a non-profit educational charity.<sup>[7]</sup> Both types of organizations need not reveal their donors.

In 2010, Texans for Public Justice filed a complaint with the Texas ethics commission that read, in part, "KSP/True the Vote violated the state's prohibition on corporate contributions to political parties and candidates."<sup>[8]</sup> And the complaint cited multiple instances where Engelbrecht's organizations worked directly with Republican Party candidates, and recruited "poll watchers" for them out of Tea Party ranks. KSP responded in typical Tea Party form, claiming they were being bullied by a "George Soros funded organization."<sup>[9]</sup>

On Aug 26, 2011, Engelbrecht changed KSP-True the Vote's corporate name to "True the Vote Inc."<sup>[10]</sup>

A second case, filed as a lawsuit by the Texas Democratic Party, claimed essentially the same thing. And a Travis County district judge ruled in March 2012 that King Street Patriots was not a non-profit organization but a political action committee that must operate by PAC rules and reveal its donors.<sup>[11]</sup> Engelbrecht said she would appeal the judge's decision, and the Liberty Institute is King Street Patriots' legal representation. The appeal is still pending.

Despite its legal troubles, Engelbrecht's organizations have grown and prospered. In Ohio, True the Vote joined Judicial Watch in filing suit against election officials. In Arizona, Engelbrecht gave one of the biggest speeches at a Tea Party Patriots convention. In Colorado she did something similar at a Heritage Foundation sponsored event. And she has done the same at dozens of other venues.

In 2011, True the Vote seized the national limelight inside the Tea Party movement with its first national summit, held in the hometown of Houston. The conference attracted delegates

from 27 states and laid the foundation for state-level election year efforts. At this conference, True the Vote (TTV) staff rolled out their plan to block the vote. The slickly-packaged campaign pinpoints vulnerable spots in the voting process, and instructs activists in tactics on how to overload elections officials, slow the vote, and block participation.

In an orientation video, TTV founder Catherine Engelbrecht innocently explained the organization's focus as "work at the polls," "researching the registry," and helping "fix what needs fixing." [\[12\]](#)

Researching the registry means that True the Vote has purchased voter rolls from states and counties, then circulated the lists to their gaggle of unsupervised volunteers, who are urged to challenge the registrations of voters that think may be improperly registered. The True the Vote "work at the polls" entails training volunteers to be "poll watchers" – people to go to the polls on election day and aggressively challenge the registration, the identity, or the eligibility of prospective voters.

To "fix what needs fixing" True the Vote has also pushed legislative efforts to further restrict access to voting, including stringent new voter identification laws.

In practice, the TTV strategy has deterred people from registering to vote, created an atmosphere that frightens voters from showing up at the polls, overloaded election officials with baseless challenges, and slowed the vote by gumming up the process.

Out of the 2011 True the Vote Summit, the strategy to create state level groups helped spawn groups in Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, Ohio, Virginia, and North Carolina. Englebrecht encouraged the groups to adopt independent sounding names to disguise their relationship and free themselves from the True the Vote "baggage." [\[13\]](#)

At the 2012 True the Vote Summit, regional coordinator Vickie Pullen told the crowd that her organization had already added the voter rolls of nineteen states to its database: Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin. She added that California, Oregon, Washington state, and Colorado would soon follow. At that point in May 2012, she also noted that the group had already done over 120 training sessions for various groups.

At the same event, Catherine Engelbrecht, explained some of her point of view: it is all about "us," the white redeemers of the election process, she said: "I believe we can see a restoration, not only of our elections and our process, but I think it will be the beginning of a wave of restoration. Because once we assign priority to the polls, once we elect representatives who have come to us by the way of legal, lawful elections, then those

representatives go on to carry that credo of truth. And very soon you see a process that is no longer unrecognizable. It's one that truly reflects us, because it is of us. Because we started the ball rolling to begin with. Because we said it was important enough to show up." [\[14\]](#)

As a result of True the Vote's activities, Rep. Elijah Cummings (D. MD), the ranking Democrat of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, has launched an investigation of Catherine Engelbrecht and her organization. Rep. Cummings' October 4, 2012 letter to Engelbrecht cited True the Vote's record of "challenging the registration of thousands of legitimate voters based on insufficient, inaccurate, and faulty evidence." [\[15\]](#) He requested copies of its correspondence, copies of its training materials used for volunteers and affiliates, copies of its computer programs, all contracts and memoranda of understanding, and much more.

A number of news reports about Rep. Cummings' letter claimed the voter suppression group was under investigation for a possible "criminal conspiracy." It should be noted that if there is, in fact, an investigation of criminal conspiracy, Ms. Engelbrecht and others are presumed to be innocent until proven guilty. Engelbrecht agreed to meet with Rep. Cummings, but refused to hand over any of the materials, in a letter full of the usual Tea Party protestations.

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### True the Vote and Voter Integrity Project in North Carolina

In North Carolina, True the Vote has inspired two different statewide groups engaging in voter suppression activities: North Carolina True the Vote and the Voter Integrity Project. The Voter Integrity Project was started by Jay DeLancy, a retired Air Force officer from North Carolina. DeLancy was one of those new voter suppression activists who attended the 2011 True the Vote Summit in Houston. [\[16\]](#) On his blog, DeLancy explained his views: "Motivated by groups like the King Street Patriots (of Houston, TX) and their 'True The Vote' campaign, I want to make sure North Carolina's elected leaders understand that people are waking up to the danger our nation faces when good people do nothing and bad people steal elections by stuffing the ballot box or by abusing the 'motor voter' laws to register fictitious voters," he wrote. [\[17\]](#)

To Delaney, voter suppression efforts are essential: "I've reached the conclusion that some really bad people have used voter fraud to disenfranchise the rational voters (also called 'the producers') in our nation," he wrote. [\[18\]](#)

At first, DeLancy directly copied the Texas version of TTV directly, and created True the Vote North Carolina. But he broke from the national group, in part because True the Vote raised concerns about the Voter Integrity Project's nativist leanings. "They're not wanting to be branded some kind of anti-immigrant activist group," DeLancy told the *New York Times*.[\[19\]](#)

DeLancy started a Voter Integrity Project NC (VIP) and several months later, on May 30, 2012 Deirdre Morrison incorporated it and is the registered agent. Morrison, an accountant from Youngsville and a Tea Party activist, is a member of both the Patriot Action Network and Tea Party Nation national factions, and locally Triangle Conservatives Unite.[\[20\]](#) Despite claims of Voter Integrity Project non-partisanship, Morrison is also an elected GOP precinct captain in west Youngsville.[\[21\]](#) Although the Voter Integrity Project is registered as a for-profit corporation, it actually solicits donations.

The split between the Voter Integrity Project and True the Vote is a distinction without much of a difference. For example, Voter Integrity Project NC Research Director John Pizzo was still also listed as a True the Vote research team leader as of September 30.

Outside of DeLancy, Morrison, Pizzo and a mailbox at a UPS Store in a Raleigh strip mall, the Voter Integrity Project doesn't have much organizational infrastructure. Nevertheless, it has had an outsized role in working against voting rights.

In June 2012, the Voter Integrity Project challenged—unsuccessfully—the registrations of more than 500 Wake County voters, most of whom were voters of color, according to the Brennan Center for Justice. In response, DeLancy called the Brennan Center "Race-baiting Leftist(s)."[\[22\]](#)

On August 31, the Voter Integrity Project presented to the elections board a list of 30,000 individuals listed as current North Carolina voters. VIP claimed these persons were actually deceased, but still registered to vote. The organization argued that that these names could be used to fraudulently vote in the dead voter's place. Of the 30,000 names it presented, only 4,946 names actually approximated those on the actual voter rolls in a manner close enough to warrant further investigation. It should be noted that as of this writing, North Carolina elections officials have not found a single instance of anyone on the group's challenge list who voted fraudulently. These challenges, however, have overwhelmed the staff and resources of the Board of Elections.

True the Vote's new North Carolina state director is Donna Yowell. For the last three years, Yowell, of Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina, has been a Tea Party stalwart out to defeat the president. She joined the Tea Party almost right away in 2009, becoming a member of groups like the Haywood County, NC 9-12 Project and Triangle Conservatives Unite.[\[23\]](#) She also became a member of four different national Tea Party factions: FreedomWorks, the Patriot Action Network, Tea Party Nation, and Tea Party Patriots.[\[24\]](#)

After the 2010 midterm elections, she formed the Tea Party spin-off group, Feet to the Fire. Through this group she bashed on teachers unions in Wisconsin, supported nativist legislation, promoted the anti-environmental conspiracy theory around "Agenda 21," and tried to "to insure a conservative platform for NCGOP." The Heritage Foundation's political arm, Heritage Action, awarded her group with "Activist of the Month" status in 2011.[\[25\]](#)

For Yowell, the fight is personal and it's partisan. "It is time to wake up. Get out and work for your conservative views. Voting is NOT enough. BE a block captain in your precinct.- NOVEMBER IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. WE HAVE TO TAKE BACK CONGRESS or SOCIALISM WILL BE IN FULL FORCE." [caps in original][\[26\]](#)

Yowell, who holds an official position in the Wake County Republican Party as House District 37 Vice Chair, has made it clear it's all about getting rid of President Obama. "Why are we allowing this person [President Obama] to destroy this wonderful country with his selfishness and his lies? His type of change is killing our country. He needs to be stopped and only our votes can stop him. Do not forget about his tactics when it's election time. Vote Obama out of the Presidency in 2012. '2012: THE END OF AN ERROR,'" she wrote.[\[27\]](#)

Already active in far-right circles and familiar with voter suppression efforts, Yowell stepped in to become the True the Vote state director after DeLancy spun off and created the Voter Integrity Project NC.

It may not be that million person army that Engelbrecht once envisioned, but Yowell and True the Vote have built up a small battalion of volunteers in North Carolina. As of September 30, True the Vote had 286 volunteers in sixty different North Carolina counties.[\[28\]](#) The largest concentrations of voter suppression volunteers are in Wake (71), Guilford (22), Mecklenburg (19), Forsyth (17), Durham (15), and Henderson (11) counties.

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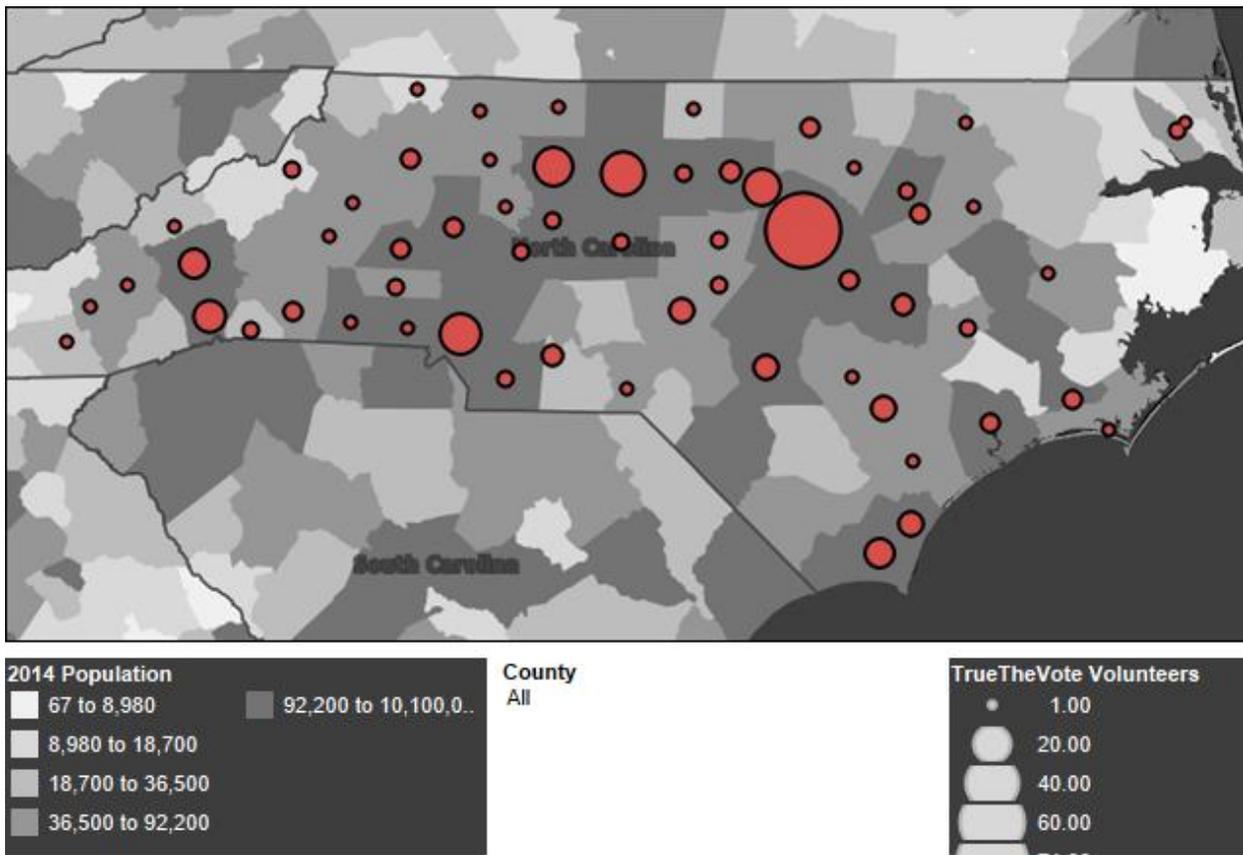
**TABLE: North Carolina True the Vote Volunteers by County**

<b>County</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>
<b>Wake</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>Onslow</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Carteret</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Guilford</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>Wilkes</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Caswell</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Mecklenburg</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>Wilson</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Cleveland</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Forsyth</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Alamance</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Davie</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Durham</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Avery</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Edgecombe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Henderson</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Chatham</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Franklin</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Brunswick</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Davidson</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Gaston</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Buncombe</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Lee</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Halifax</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>Cabarrus</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Lenoir</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Haywood</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Cumberland</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Jackson</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Moore</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Nash</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Macon</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>New hanover</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Pasquotank</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Madison</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Orange</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Polk</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Pender</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Wayne</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Randolph</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Richmond</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Yancey</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Rowan</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Sampson</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Catawba</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Union</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Stokes</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Dare</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Alleghany</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Surry</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Granville</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Beaufort</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Washington</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Iredell</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Burke</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Yadkin</b>	<b>1</b>

Johnston	3	Caldwell	1		
Mitchell	3	Camden	1		

**MAP 1 - True the Vote Volunteers**

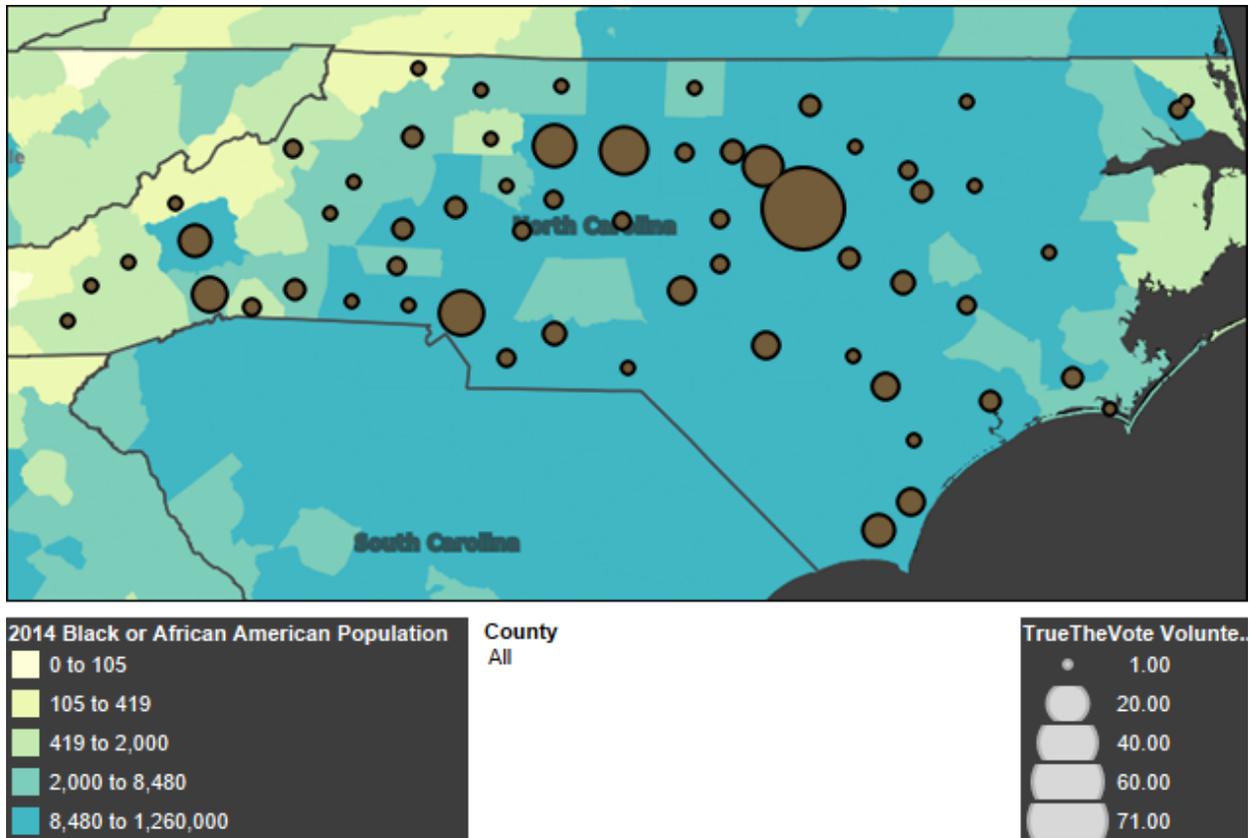


[Powered by Tableau](#)

<> As indicated in Map 2, True the Vote has been able to attract the highest levels of volunteers in areas of the state with the highest levels of African American population. Of the twenty-five counties with the highest level of African American population in the state, True

the Vote has volunteers in twenty-four of them. By contrast, of the ten counties with the two lowest levels of African American population (0-167 and 167-810), True the Vote has only one volunteer in two different counties.

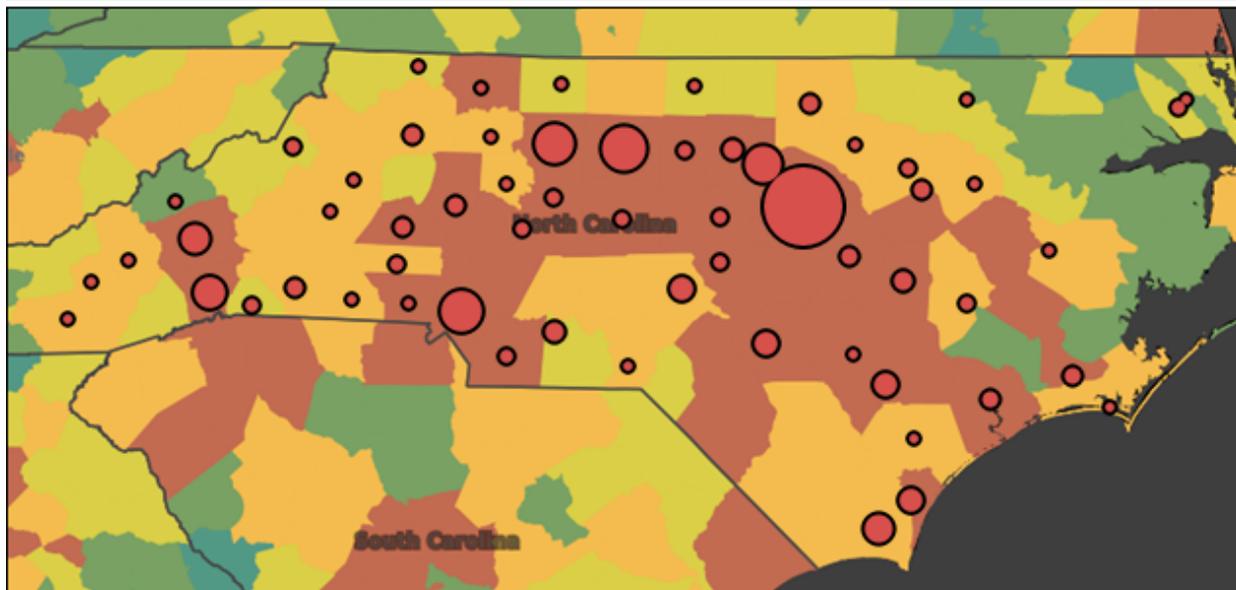
Map 2 – True the Vote Volunteers and the African American Population



[Powered by Tableau](#)

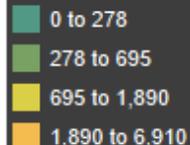
True the Vote also has recruits in nine of the ten North Carolina counties with the highest Hispanic or Latino ancestry population. By contrast, True the Vote only has recruits in 4 of the twenty-five least Latino populated counties.

Map 3 – True the Vote NC Volunteers and the Latino Population

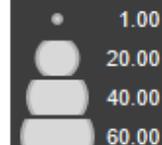


County  
All

2014 Hispanic or Latino Ancestry P..



TrueTheVote Volunteers



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### [Powered by Tableau](#)

Of the 286 True the Vote volunteers in North Carolina, IREHR has identified thirty percent of them that are members of at least one of the national Tea Party factions. For instance, Linda Harper of Goldsboro, North Carolina, is a member of FreedomWorks, Patriot Action Network, Tea Party Nation, and Tea Party Patriots. She's also President of Citizens for Constitutional Liberties, AKA the Wayne County Tea Party. Many of the volunteers are also members of one or more of the different local Tea Party groups in the state. For instance, Debbie Arceneaux of Mill Spring, an activist with 9.12 Project Polk Co NC as well as being involved with the Haywood County 9-12 project and Triangle Conservatives Unite!, in addition to being a member of FreedomWorks, Patriot Action Network, Tea Party Nation, and Tea Party Patriots.[\[29\]](#) And volunteer Laurie McBroom, of Indian Trail, NC openly supported nativist Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpiao - "hang in there Joe, you are an American HERO!"

An IREHR examination of Wake County GOP Poll Observers, Runners and Greeters, also found at least eighteen different True the Vote activists had already signed up for poll duty as of October 1, 2012.[\[30\]](#) As such, it is incumbent upon voting rights advocates, those who have

pushed open the door to greater voting rights, to take notice of those Tea Partiers and others who seek to close the door to voting rights.

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## The North Carolina Context

In North Carolina, knowledge of and opposition to those who would narrow voting rights is of great importance; in part because of the history of voter suppression and oppression in North Carolina. Recent events in North Carolina also provide a context for this current contest, and throw the battle lines on this issue into sharp relief.

In 2006, the North Carolina NAACP led the creation of a broad coalition aimed at seeking necessary reforms from the state government. Known as "Historic Thousands on Jones Street," or HKonJ, the coalition has grown to include 125 different NAACP units in the state plus 140 other social justice organizations. Its first annual mobilization in February 2009 attracted approximately 3,500 marchers, and its demonstration in 2012 drew over 15,000 individuals. Most significantly for this report, HKonJ has changed the shape of North Carolina's political and social life.

Among HKonJ's many achievements, it won a dollar an hour increase in the state's minimum wage that the Governor signed in 2007. In 2010 it won passage of the Racial Justice Act, which gave death row inmates an avenue to challenge their sentence if race was a significant factor in the sentencing. Although there were a couple of legislative attempts to repeal and revise this statute, the Governor vetoed them. HKonJ also successfully pushed the legislature to pass a same-day registration for early voting measure in 2007.

As a result, in the 2008 election, North Carolina recorded the highest *percentage increase of voter turnout of any state in the country, with a 9.4% increase.* [\[31\]](#)

In response, the Republican-controlled North Carolina legislature made several attempts to restrict the vote. In 2009, HB 430 "Voter Identification" was introduced, but never gained traction. [\[32\]](#) Following GOP gains in 2010, a strict new bill requiring photo identification to vote was introduced in March 2011 as HB 351, the deceptively named "Restore Confidence in Government" Act.

The nonpartisan voter advocacy group Democracy North Carolina noted that the bill could affect more than 450,000 North Carolina residents. State officials also added that more than

550,000 residents have no identification at all, and many don't have the money or time to get to a Department of Motor Vehicles branch and obtain one.[\[33\]](#)

Nevertheless, the bill was ratified by the legislature on June 16, 2011. Gov. Bev Perdue, with the support of HKonJ, vetoed the bill on June 23, 2011. "This bill, as written, will unnecessarily and unfairly disenfranchise many eligible and legitimate voters," Perdue wrote in her veto announcement.[\[34\]](#) In her statement, she also noted, "There was a time in North Carolina history when the right to vote was enjoyed only by some citizens rather than by all. That time is past, and we should not revisit it."

On July 26, 2011, the House attempted to override the Governor veto, but failed to reach the three-fifths majority necessary. In a party line vote, 68 Republicans voted to override the veto, while 51 Democrats voted against the measure.[\[35\]](#) Yet again, in 2012, the bill rose from the dead and it was re-introduced in May, and a move was made to get a modified version passed.

Then in June, at the height of final attempt to craft a bill that might override Gov. Perdue's veto, North Carolina House Speaker Thom Tillis took time to conference with several of the leading voices in support of the voter ID law.[\[36\]](#)

Among those in attendance:

William Gheen of the nativist group ALIPAC. Gheen has suggested that "illegal and violent" "extra political activities" might be the only way to save "white America" from "Dictator Barack Obama."[\[37\]](#)

David DeGerolamo of the Tea Party group NC Freedom. In a 2010 interview DeGerolamo told another Tea Party leader, "I want the 14th Amendment repealed."[\[38\]](#)

Donna Yowell of Feet to the Fire (who would go on to be the state coordinator for the True the Vote voter suppression efforts).

Ron Woodward of the anti-immigrant group, NC Listen.

James and Maurine Johnson of the grassroots nativist outfit NC FIRE.

Despite this push by Tea Party and nativist groups, enough votes to override a veto threat couldn't be wrangled before the end of the session. HKonJ played a significant role in these events, providing the political energy to protect voting rights.

Nevertheless, these issues remain hotly contested. North Carolina House Speaker Thom Tillis told the state's delegation to the Republican National Convention in Tampa that if things go well for Republicans this fall, a voter ID bill likely will become law next year.[\[39\]](#) The

Republican candidate for governor, Pat McCrory has also added that if elected, he would sign a similar bill.[\[40\]](#)

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### Know Your Rights and Protect Them

Under North Carolina state law, "only an individual *registered to vote in a precinct* may challenge a voter at that precinct on Election Day," according to *Bullies at the Ballot Box*, a report by Demos and Common Cause, which cited N.C. Gen Stat 163-87. Further, challenges to voters "shall not be made indiscriminately," and "mail returned as undeliverable is *not* admissible as evidence in a challenge hearing on Election Day." [Italics added] pp. 22 and 56.

Add to the law, organizations such as the NAACP who are prepared to defend everyone's right to vote. According to Rev. Dr. William Barber II, "We have built a broad based 140 member coalition named NAACP HKONJ PEOPLES ASSEMBLY COALITION in NC. This form of 21 century fusion politics won same day registration early voting the most progressive of its type in the South. We fought and blocked this year voter ID through grass-roots activism and giving our Governor support to veto the attempt of the Tea Party led majority of the legislature. Now we are fully committed not only to turnout the vote but to fight and stand against any effort to suppress, depress, stifle, or discourage the power and potential of the black brown and progressive vote in any way". Our members will be poll watchers and we will have a coalition of lawyers to defend and protect our rights."

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### Appendix:Voter ID Laws and other Measures on a National Level

There are various forms of Voter ID laws on the books in 30 of the 50 states, and most have been passed since 2006. After the Tea Party victories in 2010, state legislatures passed the most stringent versions of these laws, in some cases making it necessary for poor people without drivers' licenses to secure their birth certificates (some of the rural poor and elderly do not have birth certificates because they were not born in a hospital). These people then have to pay for a special state photo ID they can use to register and vote. Proponents use the claim that these laws are necessary to stop "massive voter fraud."

All objective accounts, however, indicate that voter fraud is not large, and is perhaps miniscule. *The New York Times* reported in 2007 that there had been 120 cases of all types of voter fraud filed by the U.S. Justice Department during the previous five years. Another news organization found ten voter impersonation cases (the kind voter ID is supposed to stop)

since 2000. By contrast, these new laws—prior to their challenge in the courts—could have made it harder for more than five million eligible voters, according to a 2011 study by the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law.

Some of the most restrictive state laws have been blocked by the courts. In Texas, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, for example, judges have effectively enjoined these laws and prevented their enforcement. Nevertheless, there have been problems in many states.

In Florida, for example, the legislature enacted a statute in 2011 that punished groups like the League of Women Voters if they failed to turn in new voter registration forms within 48 hours of completion—a virtual impossibility for a completely voluntary organization such as the League. The law also shortened the number of days available for early voting and took other stringent measures. After its passage, the League of Women Voters withdrew from registering new voters in that state.

Finally, in May 2012, a Federal District Court Judge issued a temporary injunction blocking the law's most onerous provisions; and then in August issued a permanent injunction against it.

During the same period, Florida Governor Scott—a Tea Party favorite—announced that Florida officials would "purge" the voting rolls of those they deemed as ineligible to vote. Scott initially developed a list of 180,000 people he wanted off the rolls. Election supervisors narrowed that to 2,600 names and then claimed to verify only 207 voters who were not citizens.

Scott's actions were challenged by several citizen groups as well as the U.S. Justice Department, which filed suit against the state, arguing that it was violating Voting Act requirements. Finally, the Secretary of State relented; voters were restored to the rolls, and Gov. Scott backed down.

In Kansas, birthers inside and outside of the state are working to keep the President off the ballot entirely. Birthers deny that President Obama is a natural-born citizen and is thus constitutionally unable to run for president. One such person, Joe Montgomery, who works for Kansas State University as a communications director, filed a complaint with the state's Objections Board. He had his claim that Obama was not born in the USA adjudicated, and it failed. He dropped the matter.

Continuing the nonsense, Californian Orly Taitz, often known as the "Birther Queen," is suing the state and the Objection Board over the matter, and will have a date with a Kansas district judge on 3 October. According to Democratic State Representative Ann Mah, the affair has made the Republican-dominated state a "laughing stock."

Voting participation levels are already relatively low. The USA ranks 120th in the world, with a vote to registration ratio of 66.5%, according to data collected by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. That is lower than Australia at 94.5%, Canada, France, the United Kingdom and Jamaica, and only slightly higher than Benin and Mexico. When considering voter turnout in relationship to the age-eligible population, the numbers are even lower, at 38%. That is lower than Greece, Italy, Spain, Germany, France and Korea.

Obviously, the problem is low numbers of registered voters, who often do not vote even when registered.