



## MEDIA RELEASE

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For more information, contact:  
Chris Kromm, 919-419-8311 x26  
chris@southernstudies.org

### REPORT: N.C. VOTER ID LAW COULD COST STATE \$20 MILLION OR MORE

Analysis from other states finds that GOP's proposed voter ID measure would likely cost N.C. taxpayers tens of millions over next three years, exacerbating budget shortfall

DURHAM, N.C. – A bill North Carolina Republicans plan to introduce that would require voters to produce a photo ID card at the polls could cost the state more than \$20 million dollars over three years, just as leaders struggle to close a \$3.7 billion budget shortfall, a new report finds.

Drawing on data from other states, the Facing South/Institute for Southern Studies analysis concludes that **a full-scale voter ID program could easily cost North Carolina taxpayers \$18 to \$25 million over three years**, just slightly more than the estimated price tag for a similar program in Missouri.

“Even in good times, voter ID laws were suspect given the miniscule number of voter impersonation cases and the unnecessary barriers they pose to many voters,” said Chris Kromm, director of the non-profit Institute and author of the analysis.

“Now, with North Carolina poised to eliminate 18,000 teaching jobs due to the budget crisis, such an expensive bill would seem nearly impossible to justify,” Kromm said.

Basic costs that come with implementing a state voter ID bill include:

- **VOTER EDUCATION:** State officials agree that voter ID laws require aggressive publicity efforts to inform voters and ensure they aren't turned away at the polls. In 2010, **Missouri estimated it would cost \$16.9 million** over three years for TV announcements and other outreach to the state's 4 million voters; **it could cost North Carolina \$14 million or more over three years to inform its 6 million voters.**
- **WHO PAYS FOR I.D.?** With studies showing that seven to 11 percent of citizens don't have a photo ID, demands on DMV offices for ID cards will go up — and so will expenses if North Carolina issues free cards to avoid costly lawsuits which argue the costs of an ID card amount to a poll tax. In 2009, **Wisconsin projected a total \$2.4 million cost** for ID cards; **Missouri estimated \$3.4 million.**
- **IMPLEMENTING VOTER ID:** Voter ID laws add dozens of new costs for state and local officials, from updating forms and websites to hiring and training staff to inspect IDs and handle provisional ballots on Election Day. In 2009, **Maryland estimated it could cost one county over \$95,000 each election** just for precinct judges. With agencies strapped for cash, **the N.C. legislature would likely need to set aside millions of dollars each year** to help cover these new administrative expenses.

What's more, the cost estimates from other states likely don't reflect the full costs of voter ID programs. Facing South/Institute examined the fiscal notes, or cost estimates that accompany proposed bills, for voter ID measures in half a dozen states, and found **lawmakers routinely failed to include at least one basic expense needed to implement a voter ID law in their cost estimates**, such as voter education, added administrative expenses and hiring and training new poll workers.

In other cases, lawmakers acknowledged the added costs, but merely stated they would be "absorbed" by existing agencies — an unlikely scenario today, given the pressures to slash budgets at every level of government.

"For years, states have low-balled the costs of voter ID laws and pushed much of the burden onto local government," Kromm said. "That might have worked before, but in today's economic environment, as local lawmakers are forced to cut key services and eliminate core staff, they're unlikely to put up with such budgetary sleights of hand."

**Please see the following chart for a list of likely costs needed to carry at a voter ID bill in North Carolina.**

**For more information and background, visit: [www.southernstudies.org](http://www.southernstudies.org)**



# HOW MUCH WOULD A VOTER ID LAW COST NORTH CAROLINA?

Every place is different, but the experiences of other states offer clues to the likely cost of a voter ID bill for North Carolina taxpayers. The following projections come from fiscal notes, or cost estimates, prepared by state officials. A Facing South/Institute for Southern Studies analysis of fiscal notes for voter ID laws nationally found that most neglected to report key expenses or stated these costs could be "absorbed" by existing agencies -- an unlikely scenario today, with deep budget cuts at all level of government.

STATE EXPENSE	WHY IT'S NEEDED	3-YEAR ESTIMATES OTHER STATES	3-YEAR ESTIMATE NORTH CAROLINA
<b>EDUCATING VOTERS</b>	TV ads, mailings, other outreach to inform current and new voters; to avoid confusion and people being turned away at the polls	High End - <b>Missouri: \$16.9 million</b> (\$1.37/voter/year) Low End - <b>Texas: \$6 million</b> (15 cents/voter/year)	<b>\$13 - 15.8 million</b> (80 cents/voter/year)
<b>ID CARDS</b>	ID materials/equipment; increased demand at DMV ID stations; cost of issuing ID cards to avoid law becoming "poll tax" on those without ID	High End - <b>Missouri: \$3.4 million</b> (28 cents/voter/year) Mid-Level - <b>Wisconsin: \$2.3 million</b> (22 cents/voter/year) Low End - <b>South Carolina: \$675,000*</b> (3 cents/voter/year)	<b>\$2.5 - \$4.7 million</b> (20 cents/voter/year)
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE/IMPLEMENTATION COSTS</b>	Hiring/training more precinct judges and poll staff to handle IDs and provisional ballots; printing provisional ballots; updating forms/procedures and training staff; other expenses	<b>POLL STAFF: Montgomery County, Maryland: \$285,000</b> (16 cents/voter/year); <b>Minnesota: \$1.4 million</b> (15 cents/voter/year) <b>plus EXTRA BALLOTS: South Carolina: \$480,000</b> (2 cents/voter/year) <b>plus SYSTEMS/TRAINING: Wisconsin: \$138,000</b> (4 cents/voter) <b>plus other expenses</b>	<b>\$3.5 - \$5.5 million</b> (25 cents/voter/year)
<b>TOTAL COST</b>			<b>\$18.5 - \$25.2 million for three years</b>

\* Estimate for cameras and ID equipment ONLY; South Carolina's estimates did not include other costs associated with IDs

Source: Fiscal notes for Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, South Carolina, Texas and Wisconsin legislatures

Chart: Institute for Southern Studies, February 2011 ([www.southernstudies.org](http://www.southernstudies.org))