



To: Interested Parties
From: Progress NC
Date: April 2, 2013
Subj: Early Voting: Polling and Messaging

According to a recent Public Policy Polling survey conducted on behalf of Progress North Carolina, Tar Heel State voters overwhelmingly support early voting. 78% say they support early voting and 75% say they've used early voting in the past.

If early voting is so popular, then why do politicians in Raleigh want to shorten the early voting period from 17 to 10 days, eliminate Sunday voting and repeal same-day registration?

That's a question for another day. Today let's talk about how to message on the Early Voting issue. Public Policy Polling tested three different pro-Early Vote messages and here are the results:

Message	Strongly Agree/ Concerned	Total Agree/ Concerned
Shortening the early voting period will mean longer lines at the voting booth. State government should have a customer-service culture and try to shorten the voting lines, not lengthen them. We should make voting more convenient.	62%	78%
We should keep early voting open for 17 days because we should protect the right of all eligible voters to vote without interference. Voting should be fair and accessible because the right to vote is the basis for our democracy.	56%	72%
State lawmakers are trying to rig the system by disenfranchising certain types of voters, like women and minorities.	48%	60%

All three messages work well, but long lines argument is the most effective.

On the flip side, the anti-Early Vote message tested by Public Policy Polling isn't nearly as effective:

Message	Strongly Agree	Total Agree
Early voting is an expensive program that places a great financial burden on local governments that are already struggling. We should save money by reducing early voting requirements on the county boards of elections.	33%	52%

Lawmakers who want to shorten the early voting period are clearly on the wrong side of public opinion and common sense. Florida Gov. Rick Scott could teach them a thing or two.

In 2012, Florida’s elections were a debacle after the Florida legislature cut Early Voting from 14 to 8 days. Many voters were forced to wait in line up to six hours to vote. Some estimate that 200,000 Floridians gave up and never cast a ballot. Now, Gov. Scott wants to extend early voting.

Gov. McCrory might find a similar debacle on his hands difficult to explain, given his goal of creating a “culture of customer service” in state government and his penchant for complaining about lines at the DMV.

Finally, these survey findings reinforce national research on voter protection. Those studies found that voters believe the right to vote is sacred and object to policies that they see as making it more difficult to vote. Advocates shouldn’t use the words “voter suppression” or “disenfranchisement” because they are confusing, but instead say “making it harder for voters to vote.” The new language makes the old point, but adds a touch of self-interest. Nobody likes to be inconvenienced.

The longer lines argument tested by Public Policy Polling is a logical extension. Longer lines make it harder for everyone vote.

METHODOLOGY: Public Policy Polling surveyed 824 North Carolina voters from March 28-29, 2013. The poll has a 3.4% margin of error.