

Study: ID laws adversely affect blacks

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

A recently-released study conducted by Dartmouth University and the University of Florida predicts that the implementation of new state voting laws – like those being implemented by Republicans in North Carolina – will adversely affect minority voters, impeding their Constitutional right to cast votes freely.

Since black voters have disproportionately voted during the first week of early voting, the shortened voting calendar under the state's Voter Identification Verification Act (VIVA) means that fewer of them may go to the polls, the study predicts.

Additionally, it states that black voters disproportionately lack the forms of identification deemed acceptable under VIVA. The study goes on to say that regulations placed within the laws which are meant to aid those who lack photo identification – particularly older voters – are more beneficial to white voters than black ones.

"The recent reports ... confirm what we have been saying all along: the extreme GOP in Raleigh is more con-

cerned about preserving its own power than serving the citizens of North Carolina," said Randy Voller, chair of the North Carolina Democratic Party. "These reports expose the hypocrisy of their intentions to eliminate a fraud that frankly is statistically non-existent by shining a searing light on their true intention: make it more difficult for African-Americans to vote in North Carolina."

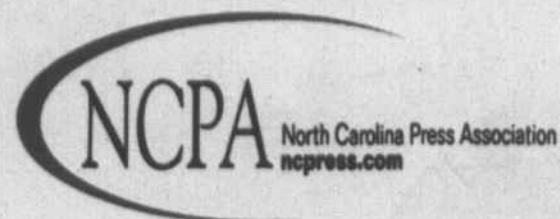
In addition to shortening the early voting period and eliminating same-day registration during the early voting period, VIVA eliminated pre-registration for 16 and 17-year-olds.

"I find it disturbing that the great-grandchildren of African-Americans who suffered through the horrors of Jim Crow laws when trying to vote during the early half of the 20th century may once again face these challenges at the voting booth," said Willie Fleming, president of the North Carolina Democratic Party African-American Caucus.

The North Carolina Democratic Party continues to maintain its position that the actions of the majority of the General Assembly are violations of North Carolinians' Constitutional rights. Following the U.S. Supreme Court's scaling back of portions of the Voting Rights Act in June 2013, Democrats in North Carolina expressed concern that the changes would open the door for a weakening of protections for minority voters in the state.



Fleming



Chronicle wins awards

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The Chronicle took home three N.C. Press Association 2013 News, Editorial and Photojournalism Contest awards last week. The honors were presented Thursday, Feb. 27 during NCPA's 2014 Winter Institute at the Hill Alumni Center at UNC-Chapel Hill.

The Chronicle – which competes in the category for mid-size community (non-daily) newspapers – won third-place honors in the "Best Community Coverage" and "News Coverage" categories, and T. Kevin Walker, the paper's managing editor, won second-place in the "Editorials" category.

"Todd (Luck), Layla (Garms) and I give it our all every week to put out a product of value and of interest," Walker said. "We don't do it for accolades, but having your hard work acknowledged by your peers certainly feels good and validating."

Piedmont

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catfish from Ayden, beef from Randolph County or cheese from West Jefferson. Buying from small, often family owned farms as opposed to larger conglomerates is not always cheaper, and utilizing components straight from the farm – such as whole pigs, which he regularly purchases on the restaurant's behalf – sometimes requires more manpower, but the one-on-one relationship he enjoys with farmers offers leeway in price negotiating, Pierce explained.

"I had to demonstrate to them first that I could drive our food costs down if we invested in people," he said, noting that the company has embraced the initiative wholeheartedly. "...It gave an order to my universe, and it also propelled me forward, because I saw that I could be the change I wanted to see in the world."

Last week at the Forsyth County Cooperative Extension Center, Pierce joined some of his fellow chefs, farmers and others committed to strengthening the relationship between local growers and cooks at the third annual conference of Piedmont Grown NC, Inc., a nonprofit brand-identity program that certifies food and agricultural products from farms in 37 counties.

Pierce serves as president of the board of Piedmont Grown, which wants its label to become synonymous with freshness and quality.

"There's a sense that people, when they connect with who produced (the food), it has a different value than just buying it in the grocery store," explained Dr. Noah Ranells, a small farm agribusiness specialist in the NC Cooperative Extension program at NC A&T State University and Piedmont Grown board member. "...In this day and age, people want to feel connected and to connect over food."

Ellen Polishuk of Potomac Vegetable Farms in Virginia gave the keynote address at the conference, which attracted more than 80 attendees. She gave what she called "a worm's eye view of marketing from the trenches." Polishuk, who has worked on farms most of her life, implored attendees to build their brand identity by employing people who are passionate about their food, educating their customers about the crops they sell, and capitalizing on the elements that set them apart from traditional food sources, such as grocery stores, before charging them to "Go forth and



Piedmont Grown board members (from left) Cheryl Ferguson, Lindsay Smith, Casey Roe, Mary Jac Brennan and Jay Pierce.

make money." "Freshness is really the advantage that we have over the local grocery stores; nobody at the grocery stores can compete with us in terms of freshness," she said. "... (and) you're accountable – that doesn't happen at other points of sale."

Attendees also took part in break-out and networking sessions and enjoyed a luncheon featuring local and organic products provided by Spring House Restaurant and Chef Tim Grandinetti.

Margo Bennett, who co-owns a produce farm in Chatham County, said the conference was a great learning experience for her, both as a farmer and as kitchen manager at Angelina's Kitchen, a Pittsboro-based farm-to-table restaurant and catering business that her farm also supplies. A growing awareness of the dangers preservatives and additives in food potentially pose is contributing to an increased interest in the farm-to-table concept, which utilizes ingredients from local growers at every opportunity, Bennett believes.

"The whole back to organics movement is so important, and we feel like we're walking the walk, in a sense," she said of her farm. "We care about the quality of the food because we eat it."

Extension Agent Mary Jac Brennan said promoting locally grown and raised products makes dollars and sense for Forsyth County, which is home to 86 farms.

"Some of the economic development folks and other businesses are recognizing that this is a great opportunity," Brennan, who also serves as a Piedmont Grown board member, said of the farm-to-table movement. "...Branding with Piedmont Grown is a wonderful way to recognize that (a product) really is grown in these 37 Piedmont counties. This could be a real economic driver for our area if more people would seek out

locally grown foods."

The conference was followed by optional "field trips" to the Lowe's Foods store in Clemmons, which features local food and products and a Chef and Farmer Summit led by Brennan and Extension Agent Christ Jeffcoat.

For more information about Piedmont Grown, visit www.piedmont-grown.org.



Margo Bennett

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