

Roadblock to democracy?



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THE CHRONICLE

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VOTER ID LAW



Photo by Erin Mizelle for the Winston-Salem Chronicle.

The NC State Board of Elections public comments hearing drew in a large crowd of interested parties prepared to speak on behalf of the 2013 Voter Information Verification Act (S.L. 2013-381) on Tuesday, June 9, at the Forsyth County Government Center in Downtown Winston-Salem. The Voter Information Verification Act (S.L. 2013-381), passed in 2013 by the NC General Assembly, requires photo identification for in-person voting starting in 2016.

ID law hearing draws large crowd

State elections board gets earful from public

BY TORI PITTMAN FOR THE CHRONICLE

On Tuesday, June 9, citizens of Forsyth County gathered at the multipurpose room of the Forsyth County Government Center on Chestnut Street to voice their opinions about the new N.C. voter ID law.

On Aug. 12, 2013, Gov. Pat McCrory signed a law that

requires citizens of North Carolina to have valid photo identification in order to vote. This law will take effect on Jan. 1, 2016, during the year of the presidential election.

The room was filled with people — college students, middle-aged and senior citizens — that were present to listen or speak.

Public Information Officer John Lawson, Jennifer Faulkner and Greg Michalek, who are with Voter Outreach, were seated in front of the crowd, taking notes and listening.

Three pages of citizens signed up to have their two-minute time slot to speak. Those who signed up either had a speech written or were verbally expressing their opin-

ions and concerns.

The biggest issue mentioned multiple times were college IDs would no longer be valid in the new year.

"A lot of college students don't have the money to purchase an ID," said Isaiah Fletcher, chairman of the Forsyth County Young Democrats. "It makes no sense why I can't use a state-funded ID from a public university."

Fletcher is also a student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro who strongly expressed how most students are in debt and can't afford to get a photo ID when they have easy access to use their college IDs that's already a part of their funding to an accredited college or

See ID Law on A2

NATIONAL BLACK THEATER FESTIVAL



Brewington

Photos by Erin Mizelle for the Winston-Salem Chronicle.

At right, Dasia Amos, of The POINTE! Studio of Dance, performed a segment from the dance version of "Annie" for the National Black Theatre Festival press conference at the Embassy Suites Hotel in downtown Winston-Salem on Monday, June 8.



N.C. Black Rep unites with W-S to provide entertainment for teens at theater festival

BY TEVIN STINSON THE CHRONICLE

The phrase "Put on your purple and black, because the National Black Theatre Festival is back!" continued to echo through the halls of the Embassy Suites in downtown Winston-Salem, on Monday June 8.

To build momentum for this year's 14th bi-annual fes-

See NBTF on A2

'That's a long walk'

At final WSTA meeting, new bus routes displease many

BY TODD LUCK THE CHRONICLE

The final comment meeting on the new proposed Winston-Salem Transit Authority bus routes held at the Clark Campbell Transportation Center was filled with passengers asking about which of the new routes will serve them.

Some didn't care for the answer.

"That's a long walk," said one woman who will have to walk further to get to the closest proposed bus route.

"That's three miles!" another woman exclaimed in reaction to the distance from her home to the proposed route. She said she currently walks at least two miles to get to her current route.

WSTA Director Art Barnes went over each of the 26 new proposed routes with about 40 attendees who were present at the beginning of the final comment session this week. He then took questions, as he and WSTA staff tried to help passengers figure out which of the proposed routes they need to take to get where they're going. He urged attendees to put their comments in writing so the WSTA can see what changes need to be made on the new routes.

"This process is far from over," he said, while assuring attendees that they will have ample notice when the finalized routes go into effect.

It was the last out of 21 comment meetings held by WSTA. The new proposed routes were created using passenger surveys, passenger counter data and looking at which destinations generate the most passengers. The new routes would operate under the current WSTA budget with a similar amount of miles and man-hours



Barnes

as the current routes. The routes are designed to be shorter, with most being 30 minutes long, and are designed to be more direct ways to get to popular destinations.

This is the first overhaul of routes in WSTA history and radically changes the shape of routes that have been traveled for decades. As a result, some passengers who are used to a bus coming close to their homes are going to be walking more to get to their routes.

"We know that people will be inconvenienced and convinced no matter what we do in the end," he said. "There are people who will be happy and there are people who won't be happy. It's not going to be a perfect system that services everyone because we're limited to our current resources, the number of hours or miles that we operate now."

Carolyn Wright was among the attendees. The 68-year-old has no car or driver's license and has used the bus to get around her whole life. She said bus service is vital for both her and her daughter, Latonya, to get where they need to go, especially to their jobs. She works as an usher for the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, a job that takes her either to the college's campus or to the downtown Stevens Center.

Wright lives on West 14th Street. She currently has convenient Saturday service and has to walk to Cherry Street for a Sunday bus. The new routes change that and she'll need to cross a busy University Parkway to catch the weekend bus. She said she hoped the routes stayed the same.

"I think they should leave the routes just as they are and not change any-

See WSTA on A2

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