

# A Consumer's Guide to HAVA

## Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HR 3295)

After the mess in Florida and elsewhere in 2000, political leaders, election officials, civil rights groups, public-interest advocates and people in general all said the voting system needed improvement. The final package of reforms – and money to implement them – reflects the hopes and fears of many different players who didn't agree but who finally compromised to get a new federal law enacted. That means the changes (and use of money) provided for in HAVA are:

- Sometimes Fuzzy
- Sometimes Firm
- Sometimes Flexible
- Sometimes Funky

Here are some changes you will see as a user of the election system in North Carolina.

### When You Register to Vote

- New form to use, with new information requested – available in Spanish
- Must give a drivers license number if you have one; if not, give last 4 numbers of SS#. If no SS#, Elections Bd. assigns you a number. New emphasis on verifying identity using license/SS#
- New process if you mail in your registration form. You must mail copy of ID when you mail registration or you must show an ID when you first vote (several options work for valid ID).
- Information goes into a statewide database of registered voters (the official record) to match for duplicates, deaths, felons, and wrong drivers license or SS#. Push for accuracy and uniformity gives central Board of Elections more control/responsibility; it also creates new opportunities to update lists (e.g., when felons serve time and regain their citizenship) and to begin new ways of voting (by mail, same-day registration, etc.) *(Major \$\$ in HAVA for statewide data system)*

### When You Go To The Polls

- Polling places must be accessible for people with disabilities, older adults, etc. *(HAVA \$\$)*
- NC Election Board's wish-list includes website showing access features for all polling places

### When You Go Inside the Polling Place

- A list of Voter Rights and a sample ballot should be posted. The poster should be in Spanish in many precincts (how many??). Includes info on how to file complaint if refused at polls, etc.
- Poll workers could be college or high school students. All workers should be better trained *(\$\$)*
- Poll workers may have computers for “poll books” and to update/review information *(\$\$)*
- No need to show ID to poll worker, unless you're new voter who mailed in registration w/o ID

### When You Cast Your Vote

- New Machines: Punch card and lever machines are out, Direct Record/Touch Screen are in. Machines must be able to produce “paper record” of the votes for manual recount. *(Major \$\$)*
- Must have at least one machine per precinct accessible to blind voters and other people with disabilities, for use in privacy, by 1/2006; e.g. voting machine with headset and sound. *(\$\$)*
- Ballot will kickback to give you 2nd chance if you “overvote” for too many people in one race
- Provisional ballots offer ‘safety net’ for people who aren't found on voter rolls but who say in writing they are registered. You can later learn if your vote was counted or rejected, and why.