North Carolina’s Proposed Voter ID Bill

Overview
North Carolina’s spring 2011 legislative session included the consideration of a controversial bill that would have mandated that all North Carolinians show a valid photo ID when voting. In this lesson, students will explore existing (as of spring 2011) voting laws in North Carolina and weigh the pros and cons of the proposed bill. Based on class discussion and the evidence they collect throughout the lesson, students will make an informed decision regarding their opinion about North Carolina’s proposed new voter ID bill. The lesson will culminate with students examining North Carolina’s decision regarding the bill.

Grade
10

North Carolina Essential Standards for Civics and Economics
- CE.C&G.4.3 - Analyze the roles of citizens of North Carolina and the United States in terms of responsibilities, participation, civic life and criteria for membership or admission (e.g., voting, jury duty, lobbying, interacting successfully with government agencies, organizing and working in civic groups, volunteering, petitioning, picketing, running for political office, residency, etc.)
- CE.C&G.5.1 - Analyze the election process at the national, state and local levels in terms of the checks and balances provided by qualifications and procedures for voting (e.g., civic participation, public hearings, forums, at large voting, petition, local initiatives, local referendums, voting amendments, types of elections, etc.)

Essential Questions
- What are North Carolina’s current voter ID requirements?
- Why is a voter ID bill being considered in the General Assembly?
- Is requiring a photo ID a reasonable measure against fraud, or a deterrent to voting?
- Will a voter ID law affect certain groups of people more than others?

Materials
- Hallie Smith’s Election Day Disappointment, scenario attached (to be provided to ½ of the class)
- Jeffrey O’Brien Votes Twice on Election Day, scenario attached (to be provided to ½ of the class)
  - If choosing to play the audio for students, teachers will also need access to the internet and speakers
- North Carolina’s Voter ID Bill – Pros and Cons, handout attached
  - This handout is three pages. The first page of the handout (containing the pro/con chart) should be copied on a separate sheet of paper and provided to students as a stand-alone piece for the first 5-8 minutes of the activity. The next two pages can be copied front/back and should be provided later in the activity.
- NC Voter ID Bill Bumper Sticker assignment, attached (optional)
Duration
60 minutes (time will vary depending on the depth of student discussion)

Procedure
Preventing Voter Fraud v. Securing the Right to Vote

1. As a warm-up, instruct students to partner up and provide half of the partner groups with the attached “Hallie Smith’s Election Day Disappointment” scenario. Provide the remaining sets of partners with the attached “Jeffrey O’Brien Votes Twice on Election Day” scenario. (Ideally, teachers will copy each scenario on a different color of paper, which will make the second part of this warm-up activity easier.) Instruct students to read the scenario with their partner and to discuss the questions on their handouts together.

2. After it seems that most partner sets are bringing their discussions to a close (likely around 5-8 minutes), bring the class back together and ask for a volunteer to first share a summary of Hallie Smith’s experience on Election Day. Ask additional students who worked with this scenario to summarize some of their thoughts to the questions. Further discuss as a class:
   - Why is what happened to Hallie upsetting?
   - What does it mean to be disenfranchised? Was Hallie disenfranchised? What are the arguments for “yes, she was?” What are the arguments for “no, she was not?” What is your personal opinion?

3. Next, ask a volunteer who read about Jeffrey O’Brien’s Election Day to summarize his scenario. Also ask some of the students to summarize their thoughts to the questions and further discuss:
   - Why was what Jeffrey did wrong and illegal?
   - How would you feel if you had spent just as much time as Jeffrey volunteering, but you were instead working for Senator Jones’s opponent?
   - What is the law regarding voter fraud in NC?
     - In North Carolina, there are a number of different acts that might be considered voter fraud, some of which are misdemeanors and other felonies.
     - For example, class 2 misdemeanors include things like taking a ballot out of the voting enclosure or helping someone use a mechanical device to mark a ballot.
     - Crimes such as falsely registering, representing yourself as someone else, voting illegally, paying someone to vote a particular way, falsely swearing to any document (like an absentee ballot application), etc. is considered more serious and deemed a Class I felony. (The principal statutes are GS 163-273, -274, -275.)
   - Based on this information, what is Jeffrey guilty of?
     - A person who fraudulently signs the poll book or impersonates another voter is guilty of a felony.
   - How often do you think this type of voter fraud occurs? (Allow students to discuss their thoughts and tell them you will come back to this point later.)
   - What could have prevented Jeffrey from committing voter fraud?
4. After students have discussed Jeffrey’s scenario, encourage them to compare and weigh the two scenarios together:
   - In what ways are these two scenarios similar? In what ways do they contrast?
   - Would Jeffrey have been able to cast Tyrone’s vote at Mrs. Smith’s nursing home? Likewise, would Mrs. Smith have been able to cast her vote at Jeffrey or Tyrone’s polling place?
   - Where is the balance between preventing voter fraud and securing a citizen’s ability and right to vote? How do we ensure both?

**North Carolina’s Proposed Voter ID Bill**

5. Let students know that while these scenarios are fictional, and the requirement a valid photo ID in North Carolina when voting is a complicated and controversial issue that our state (as of spring 2011) is heavily weighing. Tell students that a bill has been proposed in the NC legislature that would require North Carolinians to show a photo ID at the polls. The bill’s Republican sponsors say if passed, it would fight voter fraud and ensure that every vote is counted. But Democrats oppose the bill, claiming it is a political tactic to keep many of their supporters away from the polls. They also claim it is a regressive measure that will disenfranchise certain voters. Tell students you want them to explore this proposal, but first, give them some background information on the current law in North Carolina:
   - Currently, new registrants are asked to provide their driver license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number on the registration form. If the applicant is registering by mail or through a voter registration drive and does not provide a license number or the last four digits of the Social Security number, then he or she will be required to present one of the following forms of identification to an election official when voting for the first time (HAVA documents):
     - A current and valid photo identification
     - A current utility bill, bank statement, government check or paycheck, or a government document that shows the voter’s name and address as it appears on the registration application.
   - When a voter is voting on Election Day he/she is asked to state their name and address to the election official. The voter must then sign the poll book. A person who fraudulently signs the poll book or impersonates another voter is guilty of a felony.
   (Source: NC Center for Voter Education)

6. Next, provide students with some background information on the proposed bill by playing the short audio clip “Voter ID bill causes controversy in legislature.” (Teachers may also want to project or handout the transcript for students to follow along.) The transcript is attached, and the transcript and audio is available at http://wunc.org/programs/news/archive/njj031711.MP3/view. (Teachers without access to the internet and speakers in the classroom can also print and distribute the transcript of the story for students to read.) After students listen to and/or read the story, discuss:
   - Why is North Carolina’s Republican Party sponsoring a voter ID bill in North Carolina?
   - What arguments does Timothy Moore pose in explaining why he thinks the bill is necessary?
   - Why is the Democratic Party opposing a voter ID bill in North Carolina?
   - Why does NC House minority leader Joe Hackney call the bill “nakedly partisan?”
   - What types of laws do other states have in regards to voter identification?
     - Additional information to share with students:
23 states including North Carolina have current voter identification policies that comply with, but do not exceed, federal guidelines set out under the Helping America Vote Act (HAVA). Under HAVA’s provisions, first-time voters who register by mail and do not provide ID verification with their registration must show some form of identification verifying their name and address before voting.

27 states have broader voter identification requirements than what HAVA mandates. In these states, all voters are asked to show identification prior to voting.

Of the 27 states that require additional identification, only 8 stipulate that it must be a photo ID.

Of the 8 that stipulate photo ID, 5 states permit voters without identification to sign affidavits and cast regular (non-provisional) ballots.

In no state is a voter who cannot produce identification to be turned away from the polls—all states have some sort of recourse for voters without identification to cast a vote. However, in 2 states - Georgia and Indiana - voters without ID vote a provisional ballot and must return to election officials within a few days and show a photo ID in order for their ballots to be counted.  
(Source: NC Center for Voter Education)

- In what ways might this bill make it more difficult for the elderly and young people (i.e. out-of-state college students) to vote?
- What is William Barber’s argument against the bill?
- What does the research say regarding how often voter fraud occurs? Is the bill justified in your opinion?
  - There is not a great deal of evidence that voter fraud of the type that could be deterred by photo ID is a significant problem in the United States. An October 2006 report to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission found, as reported by USA Today, that “most fraud occurs in the absentee ballot process, such as through coercion or forgery.” Similarly, a five-year effort by Bush Justice Department under the Bush administration “turned up virtually no evidence of any organized effort to skew federal elections,” according to reporting by the NYT. While 86 people were convicted of crimes related to elections, they were mostly felons and illegal aliens who voted despite not being eligible. They found no evidence of widespread conspiracy, much less double voting or other types of fraud that an ID requirement would prevent.  
  (Source: http://www.outsidethebeltway.com/do-photo-ids-help-prevent-vote-fraud/)
  - Others counter that even one fraudulent vote is one vote too many, since it undermines confidence in our election system and suspected voter inaccuracies can lead to expensive recounts.
- How much funding would it take to enact this bill if it becomes law? Do you feel this would be a good allocation of state funds? Why or why not?

7. Next, tell students that in partners (or small groups of 3-4), they are going to weigh the pros and cons of the NC voter ID bill argument. Give students the attached North Carolina’s Voter ID Bill – Pros and Cons handout and go over the instructions. (Teachers should copy the first page of the handout containing the chart on a separate piece of paper. After students have spent 5-8 minutes compiling their own pros/cons into the chart, provide them with the next two pages of the handout. Students should take another 10+ minutes to consider these additional arguments as well as note their
individual opinions at the end of the activity.) Once discussion has waned within the groups, allow students to share some of their opinions regarding the bill. Encourage students to back their opinions up with evidence that they have learned throughout class.

8. Optionally, students can be given one of the following culminating assignments for homework:
   • Write an e-mail to your NC legislative representatives stating your opinion about the voter ID bill and explaining what action you would like them to take. Your e-mail should be at least three paragraphs long and include:
     o Your opinion on the bill
     o Evidence to back up your opinion
     o The action you want the NC General Assembly to take on the bill and why they should do so
   • Create a bumper sticker (see attached assignment sheet)

9. Upon expressing their own views of the Voter ID bill, let students know that the Voter ID bill ended up passing in both the House and Senate of the NC General Assembly, but was vetoed in June 2011 by Governor Perdue. Assign the attached reading and further discuss with students:
   • Why do you think Republicans passed the bill?
   • Why did Governor Perdue veto the bill?
   • Do you agree with her decision to veto? Why or why not?
Hallie Smith’s Election Day Disappointment

On Election Day last November, Hallie Smith, a 78 year-old woman, used her walker to slowly make her way downstairs to the polling station set up in the lobby of her Indianapolis retirement home. Mrs. Smith voted every year and always looked forward to Election Day. An African American woman, she well understood the hard work so many Civil Rights activists had done to ensure she had the right to vote. Even though she was feeling tired that day and her back was bothering her again, she wouldn’t miss Election Day for anything in the world.

As soon as she entered the lobby, Mrs. Smith said hello to several of the election officials and volunteers working the polls. She’d known them for years and had watched several of them grow up. Yet, as she stood there at the table prepared to cast her ballot, holding herself up on walker as best she could, she was told that she could not vote. The poll workers said the forms of identification she had with her, which she had always used—a phone bill with her name on it, a Social Security letter with her address on it, and an expired Indiana driver's license—were no longer valid under Indiana's new voter ID law. The new law required a picture ID, such as a valid driver’s license or another current state-issued photo identification card.

Ms. Smith cast a provisional ballot that day, but it was never counted. She would have had to go down to the elections office within 10 days to prove her identity with a new photo ID. Mrs. Smith, who has trouble walking, wasn’t able to find a ride to the office.

1. In what way did Indianapolis’s voter laws change?

2. Although several of the poll workers has known Mrs. Smith their whole life, and even though she had several documents that proved her identity, why was she unable to cast a regular ballot?

3. Why didn’t Mrs. Smith have a valid photo ID?

4. In what other situations might someone not have a current state-issues picture ID?

5. How do you think Mrs. Smith felt not having her vote counted?

6. Was what happened to Mrs. Smith at her polling place fair and just? Why or why not?
Jeffrey O’Brien Votes Twice on Election Day

During the last presidential election, Jeffrey O’Brien spent hundreds of hours volunteering for his presidential candidate of choice. He believed more than anything that Senator Sheila Jones would make the best leader for this country and he was willing to do whatever he could to ensure she won.

He volunteered at the local campaign headquarters, knocked on doors and handed out literature about her, registered voters at several voter registration drives around town, and helped direct traffic at several events that Senator Jones spoke at in his state.

On Election Day, Jeffrey was incredibly excited but equally nervous. After all that work, what if his candidate didn’t win? He was first in line at his polling place that morning. As is currently the law in North Carolina, he provided his name and address to the poll worker, who then had him sign the poll book.

After Jeffrey had voted, he called his friend Tyrone who lived one county over. Jeffrey was distraught when Tyrone said he wasn’t planning on voting that day. Tyrone explained that he didn’t have time, since he was working a 12 hour day. Jeffrey well understood the difference just one vote could make. He decided that he couldn’t stand the thought of Sheila Jones losing even one vote.

Jeffrey got in his car and drove to the neighboring county, finding the polling place where Tyrone would have cast his vote were he not working that day. Jeffrey went inside and when the poll worker asked for his name and address, Jeffrey pretended to be Tyrone. He signed the poll book with Tyrone’s name and for a second time that day, he cast a vote for Sheila Jones.

1. As a registered voter in North Carolina, what did Jeffrey have to do to be able to cast his ballot at his polling place?

2. Was what Jeffrey did fair and just? Why or why not?

3. In what way did Jeffrey break North Carolina law on Election Day? Do you know what could happen to Jeffrey if he were caught?

4. Was what Jeffrey did fair and just? Why or why not?

5. Is there anything that could have prevented Jeffrey from committing voter fraud?
TRANSCRIPT - Voter ID Bill Causes Controversy in Legislature

Jessica Jones: Under current law, North Carolinians are not required to show identification in order to vote. But Republican representative Timothy Moore of Kings Mountain says that makes it too easy for people to commit voter fraud.

Timothy Moore: There’s evidence out there, there’s data showing where there are people who are going out there and unfortunately they’re doing this. They’re going out and committing. There aren’t very many criminal convictions, it’s nearly impossible to prosecute.

Moore believes requiring North Carolinians to present one of a number of appropriate photo IDs would help eliminate problems including double voting and impersonation.

Moore: Right now we’ve just- we’ve got our law written in such a way that the door is wide open to be exploited fraudulently. And so the purpose of this bill very simply is to restore confidence in the process and not inhibit access.

The bill sets aside six hundred thousand dollars to help finance new voter ID cards and public service announcements to help residents stay informed. The bill is modeled after similar measures that became law in Georgia and Indiana in 2005.

Jennie Bowser: In those two states, when voters go to the polls, they have to show a photo ID.

Jennie Bowser tracks voter ID laws for the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Bowser: And if they don’t have a photo ID, they’re given a provisional ballot, which is then segregated from the rest of the ballot, and those voters who did not have ID, have to go back to an election official after the election, and present a photo ID. And doing that is necessary for their ballot to be counted.

Bowser says of the eight states that currently require photo IDs at the polls, Georgia and Indiana have the most stringent laws.

Nearly a dozen other states are considering similar legislation this year. Many of those states are led by Republican lawmakers. Here in North Carolina, Democratic legislators aren’t happy about the measure. House Minority leader Joe Hackney is one of them.

Joe Hackney: This bill is nakedly partisan, nakedly partisan, nakedly partisan, that’s what it’s about. It’s just a partisan bill. It’s about suppressing the vote in two groups in particular: older voters and younger voters. It’s about voter suppression.

Hackney says college students and the elderly are less likely to have the kind of state or federal photo ID the measure would require. It would affect some African-Americans too, according to leaders in the black community. Earlier this week, NAACP state president William Barber railed against the measure in a boisterous public hearing at the legislature.

William Barber: It is ridiculous, it is regressive, it is wrong, and it is a political form of racism and classism, and we need to stop this foolishness in the people’s house and work on education, and
jobs, and the issues that really matter. I give you a copy of the fifteenth amendment of the constitution.

The fifteenth amendment prohibits denying suffrage based on “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” But just outside the hearing, another sponsor of the bill, Republican House member Ric Killian of Charlotte said the measure will help all North Carolinians exercise their right to suffrage. He then ticked off what he said were a few instances of voter fraud.

**Ric Killian:** First of all we’ve heard about the one in the Washington County Sheriff’s race. We’ve also- in Scotland Neck in both 2007 and 2009 there were instances of people voting twice and other fraudulent things, and it caused that election in both cases to be questioned.

State election officials say the race in Washington County was investigated because of an administrative mixup, but no fraudulent votes were found to have been cast. And a State Bureau Investigation in Scotland Neck didn’t come back with any findings. Gary Bartlett heads the state Board of Elections.

**Gary Bartlett:** There have been some wild allegations about different kinds of fraud, or something that was supposed to happen but didn’t, a mistake by an elections official, but with that comes very few details. And certainly we want to know if there is an issue, because we want to address it.

Bartlett says the number of instances of voter fraud in North Carolina is small. Last year for example, only 21 total cases of double voting and absentee fraud were referred to district attorneys. Bartlett says most of the incidents election officials investigate turn out not to be violations. But he says he appreciates the efforts of citizens to keep an eye on what happens at the polls.

Jessica Jones, North Carolina Public Radio, WUNC.

North Carolina’s Voter ID Bill – Pros and Cons

In your small group, discuss the various arguments for supporting and opposing NC’s proposed voter ID bill. Come up with as many legitimate pros and cons as you can and note them in the chart below. Consider what we have discussed in class as well as your own new ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRO</th>
<th>CON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arguments in Support of the Bill</td>
<td>Arguments in Opposition to the Bill</td>
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North Carolina’s Voter ID Bill – Pros and Cons

Has your group considered all the arguments in your pro/con chart? Read through the information below and determine whether each statement works in support of the bill (pro) or opposes the voter ID bill (con). Some statements may work for both.

- If the statement works in favor of the bill (PRO), write a P in the blank.
- If the statement works in opposition of the bill (CON), write a C in the blank.
- Place both letters in any blank for which the statement could work for either side.
- If you already considered the statement in your group’s chart, place a check in the blank along with the P or C.

- _____North Carolina is not the only state where increased identification requirements are under consideration. There is a nationwide push to increase identification requirements.

- _____There is a growing consensus that requiring photo ID to vote may raise barriers to voting for traditionally disadvantaged groups (i.e. students, the elderly, low wealth communities and others who do not possess the most common form of photo ID, a driver’s license).

- _____Adding a photo ID requirement is not of concern to many voters and when asked in public opinion surveys, many are inclined to support adding a photo ID requirement.

- _____The registration policies already in place in North Carolina and in many other states make photo ID laws redundant and hardly justifiable in light of their projected negative and undemocratic consequences.

- _____Even one fraudulent vote is one vote too many. It undermines confidence in our election system and our state should do anything possible to ensure voter fraud doesn’t take place.

- _____Voter turnout in the United States is already low. This bill will add yet another inconvenience, thus resulting in even less people voting.

- _____The $600,000 it would take to implement the bill is not a lot of money in comparison to other state expenditures. Thus, if it becomes law, instituting the voter ID requirement will not be a financial burden.

- _____In this tough economy, the $600,000 it would take to implement the bill should be allocated to more pressing needs in our state, such as education or jobs creation.

- _____It is easy to get a state-issued photo I.D. There is no reason every person eligible to vote can’t easily get such an ID and most will already have one.

- _____If passed into law, the ID requirement can cause discrepancies when IDs are checked. It can be difficult for poll workers compare ID photos with actual faces. Drivers’ licenses and US Passports are valid for a number of years, so some people won’t look all that much like their photos.

- _____The 1965 Voting Rights Act outlawed literacy tests and poll taxes as a way of assessing whether anyone was fit or unfit to vote. The legislation determined that all an individual needed to vote was American citizenship and the registration of their name on an electoral list. No form of hindrance to this would be tolerated by the law courts.
• ____Amendment XIV - Section. 1. Of the US Constitution states that “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

• ____Crawford v. Marion County Election Board, 553 U.S. 181 (2008) was a United States Supreme Court case holding that an Indiana law requiring voters to provide photo IDs did not violate the Constitution of the United States. A 2005 Indiana law required all voters casting a ballot in person to present a United States or Indiana photo ID. Under the Indiana law, voters who do not have a photo ID may cast a provisional ballot. To have their votes counted, they must visit a designated government office within 10 days and either bring a photo ID or sign a statement saying they can't afford one. The District Court and 7th Circuit Court of Appeals both upheld the law. The circuit court was deeply divided, with the dissent characterizing the law as a thinly-veiled attempt to disenfranchise low-income Democratic Party voters. The US Supreme Court also upheld the voter ID law.

**Your final opinions (answer individually):**

• Is requiring a photo ID an undue burden upon voting? Why or why not?

• In your opinion, would this bill disenfranchise certain voters, or make it more difficult for particular groups of people to cast a ballot?

• Would the bill ensure less instances of voter fraud, in your opinion?

• What action do you recommend that NC General Assembly takes regarding this bill and why?
The North Carolina Voter ID Bill Bumper Sticker

Two components make up this assignment: The first is a bumper sticker that contains a slogan (either for or against the NC Voter ID bill), and the second part is a written paragraph explaining several different aspects of your bumper sticker. The expectations for both parts of this assignment are listed below in the grading rubric.

**The Bumper Sticker**

*Possible Points*

/ 15 Points  The bumper sticker must contain an original slogan, word, or phrase that expresses an attitude about the proposed NC voter ID bill.

/ 15 Points  The slogan must be an expression that is effective and convincing to its intended audience.

/ 10 Points  The overall work should be creative and must clearly show to its viewer that great effort was put forth in creating and completing the bumper sticker.

/ 10 Points  The bumper sticker should be appropriate for its intended audience.

**The Paragraph**

*Possible Points*

/ 15 Points  The paragraph should explain why you chose the expression you did and exactly what it means.

/ 15 Points  The paragraph should also explain the target audience. (Example: Republican or Democratic leaders, general citizens, civil rights activists, etc.)

/ 10 Points  The paragraph should include an explanation of the artistic qualities of the bumper sticker. (Example: Why did you choose the colors that you did?)

/ 10 Points  The paragraph needs to be written in legible pen or typed. You must use complete sentences that connect ideas to receive full credit for the assignment.

/ 100 Points  **Total Points for this Assignment**
Perdue vetoes photo ID voter bill
Charlotte News & Observer
By Jim Morrill

In a move that could influence next year's presidential election in North Carolina, Democratic Gov. Bev. Perdue vetoed a bill Thursday that would have required voters to show a photo ID.

Republicans hailed the bill as a common-sense way to ensure against fraud. Critics said it would suppress voter turnout, particularly among students, African-Americans and elderly people, calling it a modern-day poll tax.

"We must always be vigilant in protecting the integrity of our elections," Perdue said in a statement. "But requiring every voter to present a government-issued photo ID is not the way to do it."

Perdue said the bill would "unfairly disenfranchise" voters.

Republicans roundly criticized the move. It's unclear whether they can override the veto.

"We shouldn't be surprised by how far the governor will go to score political points with the liberal wing of her party," Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger of Rockingham County said in a statement. "A measure that ensures voters are who they say they are is a no-brainer, and most North Carolinians agree."

A recent Elon University poll found 75 percent of North Carolinians support voter ID requirements.

The voter ID bill was the centerpiece of an array of voting legislation considered by the recently adjourned General Assembly that also weighed measures to shorten the early voting period and eliminate straight-ticket voting.

North Carolina would have joined six other states, including South Carolina, that have passed voter ID laws since January. A similar bill is pending in one other state.

Override prospects

Senate Republicans have the numbers to override Perdue's veto. But in the House, the ID bill passed with 67 votes, five short of what's needed for an override. No Democrats voted for it.

This month, when House Republicans overrode Perdue's budget veto, they needed the help of five Eastern N.C. Democrats.

House Speaker Thom Tillis of Cornelius said he's not worried about collecting enough votes.

"If seven Democrats don't show up for a publicly announced session, that would be the easy way to override it," he said in an interview, referring to the required three-fifths needed.

It was Perdue's eighth veto since February. She has now vetoed as many bills in 10 months as her predecessor did in eight years.
But Perdue is the first governor to face a legislature led by the other party since 1996, when North Carolina became the last state to give its chief executive a veto.

A passionate debate

Few measures elicited as much passion as the voter ID bill.

Researchers said it would affect more than 500,000 N.C. voters without driver's licenses. Voters could get free picture IDs at their local elections board, but critics called that a burden. And pointing to the few documented cases of fraud, they said the measure was a solution in search of a problem.

And some Democrats, particularly minorities, evoked the old days of Jim Crow. State Sen. Dan Blue, a Raleigh Democrat, called it "a throwback to what happened in this state between 1900 and 1965."

They were joined by others who said the ID bill and other voting proposals would reduce turnout in a state that has tried to increase it.

"The measure would have placed undue burdens on law-abiding citizens, making it harder for thousands of qualified voters to cast a ballot, without making our election system any more secure," Damon Circosta, executive director of the N.C. Center for Voter Education, said in a statement.

Most of the groups that critics say would be affected by the ID requirement, particularly African-Americans, tend to vote Democratic. In a state Democrat Barack Obama won by only 14,000 votes in 2008, Democrats have a clear interest in maximizing turnout. So does Perdue, who expects a tough rematch with former Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory.

Michael Cobb, a political scientist at N.C. State, said if it were to become law, the ID requirement would be a factor. But not the only one.

"Our best guess is we know that overall it will reduce turnout. All things being equal, it will be harder for certain kinds of voters to vote," he said. "That doesn't mean that turnout in North Carolina in 2012 will be lower than it was in 2008. That depends on how successful Obama and Perdue are in turning out voters."

By Jim Morrill