

EARLY VOTING

House Proposal

- Reduce in person, no excuse, early voting from 45-day period to 21-day period.
- Mandate one Saturday of in person, no excuse, early voting. Other Saturdays except immediately preceding the election will remain optional.

Key Points

- The low voter turnout that occurs at the beginning of early voting is not worth the cost to the taxpayer. In these instances, taxpayers are paying for convenience voting.
- This change makes early voting for all elections consistent – from city (which is presently 21 days) to county, state and federal.
- There will be no change in the ability to mail in ballots 45-days early. People do not have to wait to vote.
- These changes must be reviewed by the United States Department of Justice, which will serve as a safeguard and ensure voting rights are not adversely impacted.
- This change will bring Georgia closer to the national average for early, no excuse, in person voting, which is 24 days.
- There will be an increased opportunity to vote thanks to mandatory Saturday voting. This will allow people who normally work during early voting hours an opportunity to vote in person early.

Average Cost Per Vote During Early Voting*

Number of Registered Voters	2008 Primary	2008 General	2010 Primary	2010 General
Less than 10,000	\$9.90	\$3.76	\$78.31	\$11.79
Between 10,000-14,999	\$10.61	\$2.14	\$16.24	\$8.01
Between 15,000-24,999	\$7.99	\$1.11	\$7.68	\$2.40
Between 25,000-49,999	\$10.51	\$1.26	\$15.08	\$3.90
Between 50,000-99,999	\$5.94	\$1.18	\$5.58	\$1.77
More than 100,000	\$38.89	\$2.77	\$10.76	\$3.63
All Counties - Cost Per Vote	\$13.99	\$2.05	\$22.26	\$5.44

Top County-Reported Problems with Early Voting*

Cost to Taxpayers

- The low voter turnout does not justify the costs of providing early voting for 45 days.
- Maintaining the required three poll workers the entire 45-day period is expensive.
- County budgets and staff are stretched thin from the costs of hiring new employees, providing training, identifying suitable locations, advertising, preparing for election day while managing early voting, managing absentee mail out balloting and last minute voter registrations simultaneously.

Voter Confusion

- Voters vote so early that some think that Election Day is a separate election.
- Elderly voters forget they have voted already.
- Voters vote so early they want to change their vote later.
- Voters are unprepared for the ballot questions.

Voting begins (45 days out) before the voter registration dead-line (30 days out) has passed.

- Many voters want to vote before staff has had the chance to process their registration.
- Some voters want to vote the same day they register, leading to anger and confusion.

Staffing Difficulties

- Finding people available to staff the polls for the entire voting period is difficult.
- In some counties, staff are spread thin from all of the election activities they must do simultaneously. In other counties, there is not enough to do to keep staff engaged because voter turnout is so low.

Preparation Challenges

- It is difficult to predict voter turnout and prepare accordingly.
- The majority of early voters turn out in the last two weeks, not during the first weeks.
- It is challenging to identify adequate space and/or locations to hold early voting and still prepare for Election Day.

*Based on results from survey of counties during the winter of 2010. 37 counties completed the full survey. At least four counties from each registered voters range responded.