

Chatham County tops state in voter turnout

by Randy Voller

The Chatham County Board of Elections has done an excellent job administering elections in Chatham County and ensuring open and convenient access to the ballot box for the citizens.

Their stewardship combined with the prevalent community spirit in Chatham County have yielded impressive results: **Chatham County has consistently led or been a leader in voter turnout in North Carolina over the past decade with 2016 being a banner year as the county once again led the entire state with a turnout of 78.1 percent of its registered voters.**

This Chatham-wide democratic spirit has even crossed over to off-year municipal elections. In Pittsboro voter turnout has consistently exceeded long term national trends that indicate voter turnout for local elections, which are typically held in off-cycle years, consistently lag behind state and federal races.

In fact according to a 2014 article in Governing magazine which utilized data from 144 large US cities "26.6 percent of the cities' voting-age population cast ballots in 2001, while less than 21 percent did so in 2011."

As researchers dug into the data over much longer periods they found that "turnout for primary and general local elections fluctuate from year to year, but long-term trends in many larger cities suggest voter interest has waned."

This unfortunate trend is happening in the Triangle as well where aggregate municipal turnout in Wake County has gone from 21.16 percent in 2011, to 13.99 percent in 2013, to 12.51 percent in 2015. In Chatham County the trend is similar although the general turnout percentages are higher: In 2011 the overall municipal

turnout in Chatham County was 27.5 percent, in 2013 it was 22 percent and in 2015 it was 22.8 percent.

If Siler City could increase its turnout, Chatham County could really buck the trend and be a shining beacon of local democratic participation.

Here are the turnout results for the last three municipal elections for Pittsboro (PITT) and Siler City (SC):

2011 turnout: 36.90 percent (PITT) and 21.1 percent (SC)

2013 turnout: 26.78 percent (PITT) and 20.0 percent (SC)

2015 turnout: 31.40 percent (PITT) and 19.1. percent (SC)

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