

Poll Tax ^[1]

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by John V. Orth, 2006

The poll tax, ordinarily a flat rate of one or two dollars that was to be paid before a voter was allowed to cast his ballot, was just one of several means devised in North Carolina and other states to [disfranchise](#) ^[2] blacks and other would-be voters. ("Poll" is an old English term for "head.") A poll tax was sometimes regarded as a revenue measure, primarily in the [colonial period](#) ^[3]. Together with the poll tax there might also have been a literacy test to determine whether the applicant voter could read and interpret the U.S. Constitution. Early in the twentieth century in certain sections of the United States, a poll tax was sometimes levied on each taxpayer at the same rate without regard to property owned or personal status. By state constitutional amendment in 1919, payment of the poll tax in North Carolina was eliminated as a qualification for voting. As a revenue measure, the poll tax continued in use until prohibited by the [North Carolina Constitution of 1971](#) ^[4].

Reference:

Frederic Ogden, *The Poll Tax in the South* (1958).

Additional Resources:

["NORTH CAROLINA BOURBON PLANS.: USING THE POLL TAX QUESTION AND PROHIBITION TO FURTHER DEMOCRATIC SCHEMES](#) ^[5]." *The New York Times*. February 22, 1881.

Subjects:

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From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[9]

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