

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
THIRD EXTRA SESSION 2016

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HOUSE BILL 6

Short Title: Nonpartisan Redistricting Commission.

(Public)

Sponsors: Representative L. Hall.

Referred to: Elections

December 13, 2016

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A NONPARTISAN REDISTRICTING PROCESS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Chapter 120 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Article to read:

"Article 1B.

"Nonpartisan Redistricting Process.

"§ 120-4.51. Definitions.

As used in this Article, unless the context requires otherwise, the following definitions apply:

- (1) Census Bureau. – The United States Bureau of the Census.
- (2) Commission. – The Temporary Redistricting Advisory Commission established pursuant to this Article.
- (3) Federal census. – The decennial census required by federal law to be conducted by the Census Bureau in every year ending in zero.
- (4) Four selecting authorities. –
 - a. The President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
 - b. The minority leader of the Senate.
 - c. The Speaker of the House of Representatives.
 - d. The minority leader of the House of Representatives.
- (5) Ideal population. – The number determined by dividing the number of members in a plan into the population of the State as reported in the federal census.
- (6) Plan. – A plan for legislative and congressional reapportionment drawn up pursuant to the requirements of this Article.
- (7) Political party office. – An office in the national or State organization of a political party.
- (8) Public office. –
 - a. An elective State, local, or federal office.
 - b. An appointive State or federal office.
- (9) Relative. – An individual who is related to the person in question as father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, niece, husband, wife, grandfather, grandmother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, stepfather, stepmother, stepson, stepdaughter, stepbrother, stepsister, half brother, or half sister.
- (10) VTD. – A voting tabulation district reported by the Census Bureau.

"§ 120-4.52. Preparations for redistricting.



1 (a) The Legislative Services Office shall acquire appropriate information, review and
2 evaluate information, review and evaluate available facilities, and develop programs and
3 procedures in preparation for drawing congressional and legislative redistricting plans on the basis
4 of each federal census. Funds shall be expended for the purchase or lease of equipment and
5 materials only with prior approval of the Legislative Services Commission.

6 (b) By December 31 of each year ending in zero, the Legislative Services Office shall
7 obtain from the Census Bureau information regarding geographic and political units in this State
8 for which federal census population data has been gathered and will be tabulated. The Legislative
9 Services Office shall use the data so obtained to:

10 (1) Prepare necessary descriptions of geographic and political units for which
11 census data will be reported and which are suitable for use as components of
12 legislative districts.

13 (2) Prepare maps of counties, cities, precincts, VTDs, and other geographic units
14 within the State which may be used to illustrate the locations of legislative
15 district boundaries proposed in plans drawn in accordance with this Article.

16 (c) As soon as possible after January 1 of each year ending in one, the Legislative Services
17 Office shall obtain from the Census Bureau the population data needed for legislative districting
18 which the Census Bureau is required to provide this State under P.L. 94-171 and shall use that data
19 to assign a population figure to geographic and political units based upon that data. Upon
20 completing that task, the Legislative Services Office shall begin the preparation of congressional
21 and legislative districting plans as required by this Article.

22 (d) Upon each delivery by the Legislative Services Office to the General Assembly of a
23 bill embodying a plan, pursuant to this Article, the Legislative Services Office shall at the earliest
24 feasible time make available to the public the following information:

25 (1) Copies of the bill delivered by the Legislative Services Office to the General
26 Assembly.

27 (2) Maps illustrating the plan.

28 (3) A summary of the standards prescribed by this Article for development of the
29 plan.

30 (4) A statement of the population of each district included in the plan and the
31 relative deviation of each district population from the ideal district population.

32 **"§ 120-4.53. Preparations for redistricting.**

33 (a) Not later than April 1 of each year ending in one, the Legislative Services Office shall
34 deliver to the Principal Clerk of the Senate and the Principal Clerk of the House of Representatives
35 and to the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives identical bills embodying a
36 plan of legislative and congressional districting prepared in accordance with this Article. It is the
37 intent of this Article that the bill shall be brought to a vote in either the Senate or the House of
38 Representatives expeditiously, but not less than three legislative days after the report of the
39 Temporary Redistricting Advisory Commission required by G.S. 120-4.56 is received and made
40 available to the members of the General Assembly. The bill shall be voted in under a procedure or
41 rule permitting no amendments except those of a purely corrective nature. It is further the intent of
42 this Article that if the bill is approved on third reading by the first house in which it is considered,
43 it shall expeditiously be brought to a vote in the second house under a similar procedure or rule. If
44 the bill embodying the plan submitted by the Legislative Services Office under this subsection
45 fails to be approved on second or third reading in either the Senate or the House of
46 Representatives, the Principal Clerk of the Senate or the Principal Clerk of the House, as the case
47 may be, shall at once, but in no event later than seven days after the date the bill failed to be
48 approved, transmit to the Legislative Services Office information which the Senate or House may
49 direct by resolution regarding reasons why the plan was not approved.

50 (b) If the population data for legislative districting which the Census Bureau is required to
51 provide this State under P.L. 94-171 and, if used by the Legislative Services Office, the

1 corresponding geographic referencing data file for that population data are not available to the
2 Legislative Services Office on or before February 15 of the year ending in one, the April 1 date set
3 forth in subsection (a) of this section shall be extended by a number of days equal to the number of
4 days after February 15 of the year ending in one that the federal census population data and the
5 geographic encoding and referencing data file for legislative districting become available.

6 (c) If the bill embodying the plan submitted by the Legislative Services Office under
7 subsection (a) of this section fails to pass second or third reading in either house, the Legislative
8 Services Office shall prepare a bill embodying a second plan of legislative and congressional
9 districting. The bill shall be prepared in accordance with this section and, insofar as it is possible
10 to do so within the requirements of G.S. 120-4.54, with the reasons cited by the Senate or House
11 of Representatives by resolution for the failure to approve the plan. If a second plan is required
12 under this subsection, the bill embodying it shall be delivered to the Principal Clerk of the Senate
13 and the Principal Clerk of the House of Representatives and to the members of the Senate and the
14 House of Representatives not later than 35 calendar days after the date of the vote by which the
15 Senate or the House of Representatives fails to approve the bill submitted under subsection (a) of
16 this section. If it is necessary to submit a bill under this subsection, the bill shall be brought to a
17 vote not less than seven calendar days after the bill is submitted and made available to the
18 members of the General Assembly, under a procedure or rule permitting no amendments except
19 those of a purely corrective nature. It is further the intent of this Article that if the bill is approved
20 on third reading by the first house in which it is considered, it shall expeditiously be brought to a
21 vote in the second house under a similar procedure or rule. If the bill embodying the plan
22 submitted by the Legislative Services Office under this subsection fails to be approved on second
23 or third reading in either the Senate or the House of Representatives, the Principal Clerk of the
24 Senate or the Principal Clerk of the House, as the case may be, shall transmit to the Legislative
25 Services Office in the same manner, as described in subsection (a) of this section, information
26 which the Senate or House may direct by resolution regarding reasons why the plan was not
27 approved.

28 (d) If the bill embodying the plan submitted by the Legislative Services Office under
29 subsection (c) of this section fails to be enacted, the same procedure as prescribed by subsection
30 (c) of this section shall be followed. If a third plan is required under this subsection, the bill
31 embodying it shall be delivered to the Principal Clerk of the Senate and the Principal Clerk of the
32 House of Representatives and to the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives not
33 later than 35 calendar days after the date of the vote by which the Senate or the House of
34 Representatives fails to approve the bill submitted under subsection (c) of this section. If it is
35 necessary to submit a bill under this subsection, the bill shall be brought to a vote within the same
36 time period after its delivery to the Principal Clerk of the Senate and the Principal Clerk of the
37 House of Representatives as is prescribed for the bill submitted under subsection (c) of this section
38 but shall be subject to amendment in the same manner as other bills.

39 (e) Prior to delivering any plan and the bill embodying that plan in accordance with this
40 section, the Legislative Services Office shall provide to persons outside its staff only such
41 information regarding the plan as may be required by policies agreed upon by the Temporary
42 Redistricting Advisory Commission. This subsection does not apply to population and geographic
43 data furnished to the Legislative Services Office by the Census Bureau.

44 **"§ 120-4.54. Redistricting standards.**

45 (a) Legislative and congressional districts shall be established on the basis of population.

46 (b) Senatorial and representative districts, respectively, shall each have a population that is
47 within five percent (5%) of the ideal population for that district.

48 (c) Congressional districts shall each have a population as nearly equal as practicable to
49 the ideal population, but in all cases within one-tenth of a percent (0.1%) of the ideal population.

50 (d) Legislative and congressional districts shall be drawn in a manner that complies with
51 requirements of federal and State law.

1 (e) To the extent consistent with other standards provided by this section, district
2 boundaries in a plan shall coincide with the boundaries of political subdivisions of the State. In
3 Senate and State House plans, the "whole county" requirements established by the North Carolina
4 Constitution shall be complied with in a manner consistent with federal law. The number of
5 counties and cities divided among more than one district shall be as small as possible, but in the
6 case of cities located in more than one county, minimizing the division of counties prevails. The
7 division of VTDs shall also be minimized consistent with the other standards of this section.

8 (f) Districts shall be composed of convenient contiguous territory. Areas which meet only
9 at the points of adjoining corners are not contiguous.

10 (g) Districts shall be reasonably compact in form, to the extent consistent with the
11 standards established by this section. In general, reasonably compact districts are those which are
12 square, rectangular, or hexagonal in shape, and not irregularly shaped, to the extent of natural or
13 political boundaries or those of VTDs. If it is necessary to compare the relative compactness of
14 two or more districts, or of two or more alternative districting plans, the tests prescribed by this
15 subsection shall be used as follows:

16 (1) Length-width compactness. – The compactness of a district is greatest when the
17 length of the district and the width of the district are equal. The measure of a
18 district's compactness is the absolute value of the difference between the length
19 and the width of the district. In general, the length-width compactness of a
20 district is calculated by measuring the distance from the northernmost point or
21 portion of the boundary of a district to the southernmost point or portion of the
22 boundary of the same district and the distance from the westernmost point or
23 portion of the boundary of the district to the easternmost point or portion of the
24 boundary of the same district. The absolute values computed for individual
25 districts under this subdivision may be cumulated for all districts in a plan in
26 order to compare the overall compactness of two or more alternative districting
27 plans for the State or for a portion of the State.

28 (2) Perimeter compactness. – The compactness of a district is greatest when the
29 distance needed to traverse the perimeter boundary of a district is as short as
30 possible. The total perimeter distance computed for individual districts under
31 this subdivision may be cumulated for all districts in a plan in order to compare
32 the overall compactness of two or more alternative districting plans for the
33 State or for a portion of the State.

34 (h) No district shall be drawn for the purpose of favoring a political party, incumbent
35 legislator, or member of Congress, or other person or group, or for the purpose of augmenting or
36 diluting the voting strength of a language or racial minority group. In establishing districts, no use
37 shall be made of any of the addresses or geographic locations of incumbents.

38 Except to the extent required by the North Carolina or United States Constitutions, the Voting
39 Rights Act of 1965, and applicable court decisions, no use shall be made of:

40 (1) Political affiliations of registered voters.

41 (2) Previous election results.

42 (3) Demographic information, other than population head counts.

43 **"§ 120-4.55. Temporary Redistricting Advisory Commission.**

44 (a) Not later than February 15 of each year ending in one, a five-member Temporary
45 Redistricting Advisory Commission shall be established as provided by this section. The
46 Commission's only functions shall be those prescribed by G.S. 120-4.56.

47 (b) Each of the four selecting authorities shall certify to the Chair of the State Board of
48 Elections the authority's appointment of a person to serve on the Commission.

49 (c) Within 10 days after the four selecting authorities have certified their respective
50 appointments, but in no event later than February 15 of the year ending in one, the four
51 commission members so appointed shall select, by a vote of at least three members, and certify to

1 the Chair of the State Board of Elections the fifth Commission member, who shall serve as
2 chairperson.

3 (d) A vacancy on the Commission shall be filled by the initial selecting authority within 15
4 days after the vacancy occurs.

5 (e) Members of the Commission shall receive from funds appropriated to the General
6 Assembly per diem, travel expenses, and reimbursement for other necessary expenses incurred in
7 performing their duties as provided by G.S. 138-5 or G.S. 138-6, as applicable.

8 (f) No person shall be appointed to the Commission who:

9 (1) Is not a registered voter of this State at the time of selection.

10 (2) Holds public office or political party office.

11 (3) Is a relative of or is employed by a member of the General Assembly or of the
12 United States House of Representatives or Senate or is employed directly by the
13 General Assembly or by the United States House of Representatives or Senate.

14 **"§ 120-4.56. Duties of Commission.**

15 The functions of the Commission shall be as follows:

16 (1) Answer a written request for direction made by the Legislative Services Office
17 when in preparation of plans as required by this Article; the Legislative
18 Services Office is confronted with the necessity to make any decision for which
19 no clearly applicable guideline is provided by G.S. 120-4.54 and requests
20 direction from the Commission.

21 (2) Authorize by adoption of policies the release of information under
22 G.S. 120-4.53(e).

23 (3) Upon the delivery by the Legislative Services Office to the General Assembly
24 of a bill embodying an initial plan, as required by G.S. 120-4.53(a), the
25 Commission shall:

26 a. As expeditiously as reasonably possible, schedule and conduct at least
27 three public hearings, in different geographic regions of the State, on
28 that plan.

29 b. Following the hearings, promptly prepare and submit to the Principal
30 Clerk of the Senate and the Principal Clerk of the House of
31 Representatives a report summarizing information and testimony
32 received by the Commission in the course of the hearings. The
33 Commission's report shall include any comments and conclusions which
34 its members deem appropriate on the information and testimony
35 received at the hearings or otherwise presented to the Commission. The
36 report as to a plan shall be submitted no later than 14 calendar days after
37 the date the bill embodying an initial plan is delivered to the General
38 Assembly."

39 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law and applies to redistricting
40 following the return of the 2020 federal decennial census.