

Rigging The Courts | Public Comment Messages

North Carolina's District and Superior Court Judges are elected by voters in judicial districts. A plan to redraw these districts (House Bill 717), sponsored by bail bondsman Rep. Justin Burr, has passed the House and will likely be taken up by the Senate during a special session in January 2018.

HB717 is being roundly criticized by judges, the legal community, and the public as part of a broad attack on the courts in 2017.* In December, Republican Senate leaders proposed their own plan to redraw judicial districts, which is also being criticized for how it was introduced and what it does.

The Legislature has now opened a public comment portal to receive input on these and other bold legislative changes to how judges are selected. It's time to make our voices heard!

Tell Them: House and Senate Plans Are More Sham Redistricting

- This judicial redistricting process ***fails to engage key stakeholders – judges, the legal community, and the public – in developing these new maps.***
- GOP operatives have admitted new district lines were ***designed to elect more Republican judges.*** They were drawn to make it harder for Black and women judges to win re-election.
- ***If lawmakers sincerely believe changes are needed, there's a positive way to move forward:*** the N.C. Courts Commission recommended a judicial redistricting study (House Bill 124); it has bipartisan support, but did not advance in the N.C. General Assembly.

Tell Them: Judicial Districts That Target Black Judges and Black Voters Are Racist

Lawmakers need to learn from the court decisions striking down racially-biased maps for legislators.

- Some of the ***racially biased districts in the illegal legislative maps reappear*** in the Senate's judicial maps, particularly in urban counties like Cumberland, Guilford, and Forsyth.
- The proposed changes will ***overburden the court system in Black communities*** by reducing the number of judges elected from urban centers and rural areas with a significant number of African-American residents.

Tell Them: Judicial Attacks Are Another Effort to Rig the System for Partisan Control

Politicians in Raleigh fear the power of an independent judiciary to strike down their unconstitutional laws, so now they're trying to change the judges to cement their control.

- The new districts are designed to ***make it easier for Republican judges to win elections.***
- The legislature's highly partisan plans threaten the independence of our courts and ***compromise voters' ability to elect judges that will fairly and impartially preside over cases.***

* Lawmakers have also passed legislation (Senate Bill 656) that canceled 2018 primary elections for judges — currently being challenged in court — and they have proposed bills to cut judicial terms of duly-elected officials to two years (Senate Bill 698) and eliminate judicial elections altogether, allowing lawmakers to appoint their friends as judges; they will call it “merit selection,” but it's crony politics.