

Northampton County

"A GREAT PLACE TO RAISE FAMILIES, PROFITS AND EXPECTATIONS"

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHAMPTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ON JUDICIAL REFORM AND REDISTRICTING

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Constitution provides that the General Assembly shall, from time to time, divide the State into a convenient number of Superior Court districts, District Court districts, judicial divisions and prosecutorial districts;

WHEREAS, after a thorough three-year study, the Bell Commission reported to the North Carolina General Assembly in 1958, and the last comprehensive reforms to the judicial and prosecutorial districts were made in the 1960s beginning in 1962, which was four years after the presentation of the report;

WHEREAS, current Prosecutorial District 6 comprised of Bertie, Halifax, Hertford and Northampton Counties was created in 2013 by Session Law merging former Prosecutorial Districts 6A (Halifax) and 6B (Bertie-Hertford-Northampton), resulting in the elimination of two (2) critical judgeships in District 6B, the elimination of one (1) district attorney and reductions in other critical court positions and resources, causing significant challenges in court operations, understaffing and overworked judicial personnel, and access to justice and equity for our community;

WHEREAS, North Carolina Representative Justin Burr filed House Bill 717 entitled, "Judicial Redistricting & Investment Act," which is an act to revise judicial districts, on April 10, 2017;

WHEREAS, House Bill 717 was passed in the North Carolina House of Representatives by a vote of 69-43 on October 5, 2017, mainly along partisan lines, and is currently in the Committee on Rules and Operations of the Senate;

WHEREAS, the North Carolina General Assembly has established the House Select Committee on Judicial Redistricting, the Senate Select Committee on Judicial Reform and Redistricting, and the Joint Select Committee on Judicial Reform and Redistricting for the purpose of examining reforms to the State's judicial system, redistricting as it relates to the State's judicial districts, the present and future judicial needs of the State's population, and other judicial reform or redistricting issues;

WHEREAS, North Carolina Senator Bill Rabon filed Senate Bill 698 entitled, "Increase Voter Accountability of Judges," which is an act to amend the North Carolina Constitution to allow the frequent election of judges by creating two-year terms of office for justices and judges on October 17, 2017 in a special session of the North Carolina General Assembly;

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 698 is in the Committee on Rules and Operations of the Senate; and

WHEREAS, the Senate Select Committee on Judicial Reform and Redistricting presented four judicial selection plans including the Blue Plan (Federal-Style Appointment), the Orange Plan (Missouri-Style), the Red Plan (SC/VA Model) and the Purple Plan (Balanced Judicial Selection).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that we, the Northampton County Board of Commissioners oppose the passage of House Bill 717 and Senate Bill 698;

RESOLVED, that we, the Northampton County Board of Commissioners oppose the implementation of any of the four judicial selection plans presented by the Senate Select Committee on Judicial Reform and Redistricting before a more inclusive and comprehensive study takes place on judicial selection;

RESOLVED, that we, the Northampton County Board of Commissioners support a study allowing the collaboration of key stakeholders including members of the judiciary, the law enforcement community, and general public to review comprehensive reform of our judicial and prosecutorial districts for preserving a unified court system that will promote the most efficient allocation of judicial resources in order to serve the citizens of our State better; and

RESOLVED, that we, the Northampton County Board of Commissioners specifically request to be included in such study the following:

(1) Cost analysis of transportation, service and treatment coordination for Superior, District, Prosecutorial and Division Judicial Districts, especially districts covering a large geographical area (such as that proposed for current District 6, newly Proposed District 8) and encompassing Northampton County; where, for example, a required one-way trip from the Northampton County Detention Center in Jackson to the Vance County Detention Center in Henderson (Vance County being included in the newly Proposed District 8) would exceed sixty (60) miles and one hour and thirty minutes;

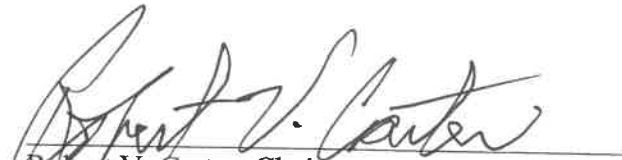
(2) Cost analysis of operating Criminal and Civil courts, including drug treatment, domestic, family, juvenile and any/all other court services;


(3) Restoring judgeships for Districts harmed in previous redistricting; and

(4) Cost analysis for the additional law enforcement manpower and associated resources to meet the increased financial and safety burden, which would be forced upon Tier I counties such as Northampton to conduct required judicial business in geographically remote counties such as Warren and Vance under Proposed District 8.

This the 31st day of January, 2018.




Robert V. Carter, Chair
Northampton County Board of Commissioners


Komita Hendricks, Clerk to the Board