



CANDIDATE FILING

Now that the long process determining the House, Senate and US Congressional map is over (see update below), the candidate filing was restarted. Many political veterans and some newcomers filed to run for office in updated districts. The filing is now closed so we have a picture of the upcoming primaries. House Republicans had candidates file in 104 of 120 seats while House Democrats had just 79 file. Likewise, Senate Republicans outnumbered Senate Democrats' filings with at least one Republican filing in 48 districts, compared to Democrats' 36 districts. It may be a tough year for a variety of candidates, especially Democrats given President Biden's low approval rating. Although there are exceptions, this is a general trend for midterms to swing opposite from the party of our nation's leader. Historically, Republicans typically have a higher-percentage turnout rate for midterm elections than Democrats and unaffiliated.

See below for some notable changes from familiar faces at the legislature.

Speaker Moore filed for his current House seat. The Speaker was widely expected to run for Congress under the legislature-drawn Congressional map, which created an incumbent-free seat around the Speaker's home in Cleveland County. His opportunity for a Congressional run was dashed by the court's decision to use the special masters' map. Under this map, Speaker Moore would have had to run against incumbent Republican Rep. Patrick McHenry to represent his home district.

Rep. John Szoka has withdrawn his candidacy for the newly formed 9th Congressional District and now plans to run for County Commission in Cumberland County. The redistricting process left Rep. Szoka with few viable options, moving his current House seat further left and his Congressional district in Republican incumbent Congressman Richard Hudson's district.

Sen. Sarah Crawford is making an unusual change - she will be leaving her Senate seat to run for a seat in the House. "Since first being elected in 2020 I have been dedicated to the people of SD 18 in Eastern Wake and Franklin counties," she announced. "The new maps take most of that area out of the Senate District. Running for this House district will allow me to focus closer to home and continue doing work in my community."

NORTH CAROLINA SECURITY AND LOW VOLTAGE ASSOCIATION



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Former state Sen. Jeff Jackson jumped back into politics. Sen. Jackson was previously a candidate for the U.S. Senate race, but ultimately made way for the front-runner candidate Justice Cheri Beasley. He will now be running for North Carolina's newly-drawn 14th Congressional District.

Sen. Sam Searcy will be running in the newly-drawn 13th Congressional District, which represents portions of Wake, Harnett, Wayne, and Johnston counties. Sen. Searcy will have to face off with his Democratic colleague in the state Senate, Sen. Wiley Nickel, in the primary.

Sen. Don Davis stuck with his earlier announcement prior to the most recent map redraw, and is running for Congress in the 1st Congressional District. This seat is open following Congressman G.K. Butterfield's retirement announcement earlier this year.

Rep. Kandie Smith has filed to switch chambers, and run for Sen. Don Davis's seat, which represents northern Pitt County.

Sen. Kirk deViere could be facing a familiar opponent, former Cumberland County Republican Senator Wesley Meredith, who served four terms in the Senate before he was defeated by Democratic Senator Kirk deViere in 2018 and 2020. That's only if he gets through the primaries. Sen. deViere will have two Democratic opponents, as well, including former Fayetteville Councilwoman Val Applewhite (in a surprising move, Gov. Cooper has endorsed Applewhite).

MEDICAID EXPANSION

The Joint Committee on Healthcare Access and Medicaid Expansion met again this week to discuss the advantages of expanding Medicaid. Presenters on Tuesday made the case for Medicaid expansion by emphasizing how it could benefit our state budget, rural residents, providers, and health outcomes throughout the state. "We think Medicaid expansion is a really good deal for North Carolina. And that it's a good deal for a lot of reasons," said Dave Richard, Deputy Secretary for NC Medicaid, during his presentation to the committee. "It just makes great sense to improve the health of North Carolina citizens."

While the presentations were encouraging, many Republican lawmakers remain skeptical, specifically on the House side. Their main concern appears to be around if the state can handle covering an even-larger percentage of North Carolinians with government health care. Much of their discussion in committee revolved around that idea, coupled with our state's doctor and nursing shortages. Other speakers on Tuesday linked expansion to increased industry employment and improved patient outcomes. More meetings will follow, but as the state Medicaid Director suggested, there's never been a more appealing time to expand given the pandemic's impact on Medicaid enrollment and the federal money on the table for states who have not yet expanded.

JUDGE BLOCKS EFFORT TO KEEP CAWTHORN OFF BALLOT

A federal judge blocked the state candidate challenge against Congressman Cawthorn. The North Carolina Board of Elections can no longer proceed with an inquiry that could have ruled Cawthorn ineligible to run for office in the state due to his actions surrounding the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol. The North Carolina Board of Elections has appealed the ruling.

END OF SESSION

On Friday, March 11th, the legislature ended its record-breaking long session, which stretched over 14 months. The adjournment resolution has the General Assembly reconvening on April 4th

and then again on May 4th, but no votes are planned for either of these dates. “I suspect we’ll gavel in and gavel out,” said Senate leader Phil Berger. The beginning of short session will officially begin on May 18th, the day after our state’s primary election.

The General Assembly concluded their business for the 2021 long session with several bills and resolutions. Please see below for a run-down of some of the measures the legislature took up during its last week.

BUDGET TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS

A budget clean-up bill passed the legislature on Thursday, and is headed to Gov. Cooper’s desk. The 52-page omnibus bill includes various technical changes to items currently in our state’s two-year budget. Some argued that this technical bill included some substantive changes, as well. The lengthy bill includes a provision to open a second round of applications for Business Recovery Grants, providing funds to businesses with 20 percent or greater losses in 2020 during COVID. It also creates a second write-off for eligible businesses. The bill includes pay raises to \$15 per hour for home healthcare and personal-care workers covered by government health programs.

UTILITIES COMMISSION CONFIRMATION

The Senate unanimously confirmed a nominee to the North Carolina Utilities Commission last week. Karen Kemerait is an attorney with Fox Rothschild and previously served as the Chair of the Raleigh Board of Adjustments. “I believe that I am uniquely qualified to serve as a commissioner with the Utilities Commission. I have decades of experience as an attorney practicing in all of the areas that the Utilities Commission regulates, and that’s in energy, natural gas, water and wastewater and telecommunications. And I have represented both utilities and intervenors in virtually all aspects of utility regulation,” Kemerait told committee members. Her nomination passed unanimously through the House in September.

FREE THE SMILES ACT

The Senate failed to override Gov. Cooper’s veto of the Free the Smiles Act. This bill, which would have given parents the ability to opt out of a school mask mandate policy for their children, passed by a veto-proof majority in the Senate back in February. Two Democratic senators voted “yes” on the bill when it passed the Senate: Sens. Kirk deViere and Ben Clark. Both members changed their position and voted to not override the Governor’s veto. Sen. deViere’s decision to stand with the Governor on his veto was somewhat of a surprise given that, in an unusual move, Gov. Cooper endorsed one of deViere’s primary opponents just last week.

U.S. SUPREME COURT DENIES LEGISLATORS’ REDISTRICTING APPEAL

In a 6-3 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court denied the Republican legislators’ request to block the use of the court-drawn congressional map in our upcoming election. Justices Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch, and Clarence Thomas dissented from the decision. “This case presents an exceptionally important and recurring question of constitutional law, namely, the extent of a state court’s authority to reject rules adopted by a state legislature for use in conducting federal elections,” Alito wrote. “There can be no doubt that this question is of great national importance. But we have not yet found an opportune occasion to address the issue.” This decision likely marks the final legal action taken against our state’s maps ahead of the 2022 election.

We have been honored to represent you at the General Assembly both last year and this year! The beginning of the short session is right around the corner in May, so we will be preparing for that as well as taking a bit of time off. We look forward to continuing to work with you this year.

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