

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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SENATE BILL 698

Short Title: Fair Districts Stronger Democracy Act. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Applewhite and Mohammed (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

March 26, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO AMEND THE NORTH CAROLINA CONSTITUTION TO PROVIDE FOR AN
INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING PROCESS, TO ESTABLISH THE NORTH
CAROLINA INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION, AND TO MAKE
CONFORMING CHANGES TO THE GENERAL STATUTES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

PART I. INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING PROCESS

SECTION 1.(a) Section 3 of Article II of the North Carolina Constitution reads as
rewritten:

"Sec. 3. Senate districts; apportionment of Senators.

The Senators shall be elected from districts. ~~The General Assembly, at the first regular session
convening after the return of every decennial census of population taken by order of Congress,
shall revise the senate districts and the apportionment of Senators among those districts, subject
to the following requirements:~~Assembly shall establish an independent process to revise the
senate districts and the apportionment of Senators among those districts pursuant to Section 25
of this Article.

(1) ~~Each Senator shall represent, as nearly as may be, an equal number of inhabitants, the
number of inhabitants that each Senator represents being determined for this purpose by dividing
the population of the district that he represents by the number of Senators apportioned to that
district;~~

(2) ~~Each senate district shall at all times consist of contiguous territory;~~

(3) ~~No county shall be divided in the formation of a senate district;~~

(4) ~~When established, the senate districts and the apportionment of Senators shall remain
unaltered until the return of another decennial census of population taken by order of Congress."~~

SECTION 1.(b) Section 5 of Article II of the North Carolina Constitution reads as
rewritten:

"Sec. 5. Representative districts; apportionment of Representatives.

The Representatives shall be elected from districts. ~~The General Assembly, at the first regular
session convening after the return of every decennial census of population taken by order of
Congress, shall revise the representative districts and the apportionment of Representatives
among those districts, subject to the following requirements:~~Assembly shall establish an
independent process to revise the representative districts and the apportionment of
Representatives among those districts pursuant to Section 25 of this Article.

(1) ~~Each Representative shall represent, as nearly as may be, an equal number of
inhabitants, the number of inhabitants that each Representative represents being determined for~~



1 this purpose by dividing the population of the district that he represents by the number of
2 Representatives apportioned to that district;

3 (2) ~~Each representative district shall at all times consist of contiguous territory;~~

4 (3) ~~No county shall be divided in the formation of a representative district;~~

5 (4) ~~When established, the representative districts and the apportionment of~~
6 ~~Representatives shall remain unaltered until the return of another decennial census of population~~
7 ~~taken by order of Congress."~~

8 **SECTION 1.(c)** Article II of the North Carolina Constitution is amended by adding
9 a new section to read:

10 **"Sec. 25. Redistricting.**

11 The General Assembly shall establish by law an independent process to revise electoral
12 districts for Congress and the General Assembly after the return of every federal decennial census
13 of population taken by order of Congress. The process shall meet at least all of the following
14 requirements:

15 (1) The General Assembly shall have no role in revising electoral districts for Congress
16 or the General Assembly.

17 (2) Each member of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the General
18 Assembly and the House of Representatives of the United States Congress shall represent, as
19 nearly as may be, an equal number of inhabitants.

20 (3) Each electoral district shall at all times consist of contiguous territory.

21 (4) To the extent practicable and consistent with federal law, no county shall be divided
22 in the formation of an electoral district for the Senate or the House of Representatives of the
23 General Assembly.

24 (5) When established, the electoral districts for the Senate and the House of
25 Representatives of the General Assembly shall remain unaltered until the return of another
26 federal decennial census of population taken by order of Congress.

27 (6) Electoral districts adopted pursuant to the process shall have the force and effect of
28 acts of the General Assembly."

29 **SECTION 1.(d)** Subsection (5) of Section 22 of Article II of the North Carolina
30 Constitution reads as rewritten:

31 "(5) ~~Other exceptions. Appointments to office. Every bill:~~

32 (a) ~~In bill in which the General Assembly makes an appointment or appointments~~
33 ~~to public office and which contains no other matter;~~

34 (b) ~~Revising the senate districts and the apportionment of Senators among those~~
35 ~~districts and containing no other matter;~~

36 (c) ~~Revising the representative districts and the apportionment of Representatives~~
37 ~~among those districts and containing no other matter; or~~

38 (d) ~~Revising the districts for the election of members of the House of~~
39 ~~Representatives of the Congress of the United States and the apportionment~~
40 ~~of Representatives among those districts and containing no other matter;~~
41 matter shall be read three times in each house before it becomes law and shall
42 be signed by the presiding officers of both houses."

43 **SECTION 1.(e)** The amendments set out in subsections (a), (b), (c), and (d) of this
44 section shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the State at the statewide general election to
45 be held on November 3, 2026, which election shall be conducted in accordance with the laws
46 governing elections at that time. The question to be used in the voting systems and ballots shall
47 be:

48 "[] FOR [] AGAINST

49 A constitutional amendment providing for an independent redistricting process for
50 electoral districts for Congress and the General Assembly. The General Assembly would
51 establish the process but have no role in the revising of districts."

SECTION 1.(f) The State Board of Elections shall certify the results of the referendum conducted under subsection (e) of this section. If a majority of votes cast on the question are in favor of the amendments set out in subsections (a), (b), (c), and (d) of this section, the Secretary of State shall enroll the amendments among the permanent records of that office. If a majority of votes cast on the question are against the amendments set out in subsections (a), (b), (c), and (d) of this section, the amendments shall have no effect.

SECTION 1.(g) If the certification from the State Board of Elections under subsection (f) of this section reflects that a majority of votes cast on the question are in favor of the amendments set out in subsections (a), (b), (c), and (d) of this section, the amendments set out in subsection (e) of this section are effective upon certification.

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

"Article 1B.

"Redistricting.

"§ 120-4.50. Definitions.

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

- (1) Census Bureau. – The United States Bureau of the Census.
- (2) Commission. – The North Carolina Independent Redistricting Commission established pursuant to G.S. 120-4.55.
- (3) Communities of interest. – An area or population with recognized similarities of interest, including racial, ethnic, economic, social, cultural, geographic, and historical identities. Communities of interest do not include common relationships with political parties or political candidates. Examples of communities of interest may include municipalities, neighborhoods, and census designated places.
- (4) Congressional districts or plans. – Districts or plans for the House of Representatives of the United States Congress.
- (5) Federal decennial census. – The decennial census required by federal law to be conducted by the Census Bureau in every year ending in zero.
- (6) Final plan. – A plan adopted by the Commission to be used for the purpose of nominating and electing identified representatives. In accordance with Section 25 of Article II of the North Carolina Constitution, final plans shall have the force and effect of acts of the General Assembly.
- (7) 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.
- (8) Identified representative. – A member of the Senate or the House of Representatives of the General Assembly or a member of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress.
- (9) Indigenous person. – A member of a federal or State-recognized Indian tribe.
- (10) Legislative districts or plans. – Districts or plans for the Senate and the House of Representatives of the General Assembly.
- (11) Metropolitan or micropolitan statistical areas. – Areas of the State defined as metropolitan or micropolitan statistical areas by the Office of Management and Budget of the United States.
- (12) Plan. – A plan for legislative or congressional reapportionment drawn in accordance with Section 25 of Article II of the North Carolina Constitution and this Article.
- (13) Preliminary plan. – An initial plan released by the Commission for public input at the beginning of the redistricting cycle.

- 1 (14) Proposed and alternative plans. – Plans released by the Commission following
2 public input.
3 (15) Public office. – Elective State, local, or federal office.
4 (16) Relative. – Spouse, lineal descendant, lineal ascendant, sibling, spouse's lineal
5 descendant, spouse's lineal ascendant, spouse's sibling, and the spouse of any
6 of these individuals.

7 **"§ 120-4.55. North Carolina Independent Redistricting Commission.**

8 (a) Establishment. – There is established the North Carolina Independent Redistricting
9 Commission in accordance with Section 25 of Article II of the North Carolina Constitution to
10 prepare preliminary, proposed, and alternative plans and to adopt final plans for the purpose of
11 nominating and electing members of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the General
12 Assembly and the House of Representatives of the United States Congress.

13 (b) Eligibility. – A resident of North Carolina is eligible to apply to the State Ethics
14 Commission for membership on the Commission if that person meets all of the following
15 requirements:

- 16 (1) Has been a registered voter in North Carolina with the same affiliation, or lack
17 thereof, for at least four years prior to applying for membership on the
18 Commission. This requirement does not apply to persons under the age of 25
19 or persons who became citizens of the United States within four years of
20 applying for membership on the Commission.
21 (2) Has not done any of the following within four years of applying for
22 membership on the Commission:
23 a. Been a candidate for or served in public office. This disqualification
24 shall not apply to persons serving in a federal or State-recognized
25 Indian tribe.
26 b. Contributed more than twenty percent (20%) of the limit on
27 contributions specified in G.S. 163-278.13(a) to any candidate for
28 public office and no more than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) in total
29 to candidates for public office.
30 c. Held a political appointment.
31 d. Served as an officer, employee, or paid consultant of any of the
32 following:
33 1. A political party or body of the United States.
34 2. A campaign or campaign committee of a candidate for public
35 office in the United States.
36 e. Served as an elected or appointed officer or paid consultant of a
37 committee at any level of government in the United States.
38 f. Been employed by Congress.
39 (3) Has not served as a member of the General Assembly or Congress within eight
40 years of applying for membership on the Commission.
41 (4) Is not any of the following:
42 a. A relative of a current member of the General Assembly, North
43 Carolina Council of State, or a covered person, as defined in
44 G.S. 138A-3(21).
45 b. A staff member or legal counsel to the General Assembly.
46 c. An official of a political party or a consultant or legal counsel to a
47 political party in the United States.
48 d. A legislative staffer, lobbyist, lobbyist principal, or legislative liaison,
49 or spouse of any of these persons.

- 1 (5) Has never been convicted of any of the following crimes against a
2 governmental body of the United States or a crime with a direct connection to
3 any of the following crimes:
4 a. Espionage.
5 b. Terrorism.
6 c. Treason.
7 d. Sabotage.
8 e. Sedition.
9 f. Insurrection, including any of the following:
10 1. Overthrowing or attacking any governmental body of the
11 United States.
12 2. Preventing any official of any governmental body of the
13 United States from performing his or her official duties.
14 3. Preventing persons from exercising their rights under the laws
15 of any governmental body of the United States.
16 (c) Membership Application; Evaluations. – The application process to be a member of
17 the Commission shall be as follows:
18 (1) The State Ethics Commission shall ensure that applications are available for
19 at least six months beginning in each year ending in nine. The State Ethics
20 Commission shall work with the North Carolina Human Relations
21 Commission to publicize the application process, including advertising the
22 application period, commission qualifications, and selection process in at least
23 all of the following ways:
24 a. In each of the following:
25 1. For at least one month, the 10 media outlets in the State with
26 the highest circulation.
27 2. The main website for all State agencies.
28 3. Appropriate local news broadcasts.
29 4. Media outlets that serve minority communities.
30 b. By distributing paper applications to at least the following:
31 1. At least one percent (1%) of all registered voters in North
32 Carolina. Recipients of paper applications shall be selected
33 randomly but in no event shall more than thirty-three percent
34 (33%) of the recipients be affiliated or not affiliated with a
35 particular party.
36 2. Any registered voter in North Carolina who selects to receive
37 an application on a completed voter registration form.
38 c. To tribal nations located in North Carolina. The State Ethics
39 Commission shall encourage indigenous persons to apply to be a
40 member of the Commission and may coordinate for that purpose with
41 the Division of Indian Affairs of the North Carolina Department of
42 Administration, the North Carolina State Commission of Indian
43 Affairs, and any State-recognized Indian tribe.
44 (2) As part of a person's application, that person shall (i) disclose all relevant
45 relationships, positions, and affiliations and (ii) submit to the State Ethics
46 Commission an attestation that the person is eligible to serve as a member of
47 the Commission pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.
48 (3) The State Ethics Commission shall evaluate applications to ensure they meet
49 the requirements of this section and any other requirements of State law. If
50 needed, the State Ethics Commission may request additional information from
51 an applicant.

- (4) As part of the evaluation described in subdivision (3) of this subsection, the State Ethics Commission shall create an applicant review panel consisting of five staff members, composed of two persons affiliated with the largest political party in the State, two persons affiliated with the second-largest political party in the State, and one person affiliated with neither the largest nor second-largest political party in the State. The panel shall review applications on the basis of experience, skill, and commitment to fairness and impartiality and make recommendations to the State Ethics Commission.
- (5) The State Ethics Commission shall submit a diverse group of up to 60 applications to the General Assembly, as follows:
- a. Applications submitted to the General Assembly shall reflect the State's diverse races, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, indigenous tribal affiliations, and geography. The State Ethics Commission shall make every effort to include indigenous persons in this group.
 - b. No more than 20 applications shall be submitted from persons in each of the following ways, as reflected by the latest registration statistics published by the State Board of Elections:
 1. As affiliated with the political party with the highest number of registered affiliates.
 2. As affiliated with the political party with the second-highest number of registered affiliates.
 3. As not affiliated with either of the two political parties having the highest and second-highest number of registered affiliates.
 - c. If there are fewer than 20 applications from persons registered in accordance with any sub-sub-subdivision of sub-subdivision b. of this subdivision, the State Ethics Commission may submit additional eligible applications to the General Assembly, as necessary, to reach a total of 60 applications.
- (6) Of the pool of candidates submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to subdivision (5) of this subsection, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the minority leader in the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the minority leader in the House of Representatives shall each strike six candidates.
- (d) Appointment. – The Commission shall be composed of 15 members appointed from the pool of candidates that remains after the leaders of the General Assembly have made their strikes pursuant to subdivision (6) of subsection (c) of this section, as follows:
- (1) Two members affiliated in each of the three ways identified in sub-subdivision b. of subdivision (5) of subsection (c) of this section, by the State Ethics Commission, for a total of six members.
 - (2) Three members affiliated in each of the three ways identified in sub-subdivision b. of subdivision (5) of subsection (c) of this section, by the six members appointed pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, for a total of nine members.
 - (3) All appointing authorities shall do the following when making their appointments:
 - a. Consider the importance of diversity, as defined in sub-subdivision a. of subdivision (5) of subsection (c) of this section, when making their appointments.
 - b. Make every effort to ensure that at least one member of the Commission is a resident of each congressional district in the State

from the prior election. In the event there are more than 15 congressional districts, the Commission shall be as geographically diverse as possible.

c. Make every effort to ensure that at least one member of the Commission is an indigenous person.

(e) Term of Office. – The term of office for members of the Commission shall begin on July 1 of each year ending in zero. The members shall continue in office for 10 years until their successors are appointed and qualified.

(f) Chair. – The position of chair of the Commission shall rotate every three months, following a schedule randomly generated at the beginning of the redistricting cycle. No two members who share the same party affiliation, or lack thereof, shall serve as chair in the same six-month period. No member shall serve as chair more than once in a 12-month period.

(g) Removal from Office. – A member of the Commission may be removed from office, as follows:

(1) By the authority that appointed the member for any of the following:

a. Failure to comply with G.S. 120-4.65.

b. Ineligibility pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

(2) By a vote of at least 11 members of the Commission, including at least one member of the commission who shares the same party affiliation, or lack thereof, in open session at any duly held meeting, for any cause that renders the member incapable or unfit to discharge the duties of the office, including neglect of duty or gross misconduct. All Commission member votes on removal of a member pursuant to this subdivision shall be recorded.

(h) Vacancies. – Any vacancy occurring in the membership of the Commission shall be filled in the manner prescribed in this section by the authority that made the initial appointment. Vacancies shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term.

(i) Prohibition on Legislative Service. – No member of the Commission shall serve as a member of the General Assembly or Congress until the conclusion of the term as a commissioner that they were appointed to serve. This prohibition applies even if a commissioner resigns or is removed from the Commission prior to the conclusion of his or her term.

(j) Stipend. – Members of the Commission shall receive a stipend of two thousand dollars (\$2,000) for each month that the Commission meets.

(k) Other Expenses. – Members of the Commission may receive travel and subsistence, as follows:

(1) Members who are officials or employees of a State agency or unit of local government, in accordance with G.S. 138-6.

(2) All other members at the rate established in G.S. 138-5.

"§ 120-4.60. Staff.

(a) The Commission shall be administratively housed in the Legislative Services Office of the General Assembly.

(b) The Commission may exercise its prescribed powers independently of the General Assembly and the Legislative Services Officer. In order to pay expenses incidental to implementing its purposes, the Commission may enter into contracts, own property, and accept funds, grants, and gifts from academic and nonprofit entities that have never contributed to political parties, persons holding public office, or candidates for public office.

(c) The Legislative Services Officer shall provide general administrative support to the Commission, including purchasing, payroll, and similar administrative services.

(d) The Commission shall retain independent staff under contract, including an executive secretary and any additional necessary supporting staff. As a whole, the political affiliations of staff members, or lack thereof, shall be divided approximately into thirds among the two political parties with the highest number of affiliates and among persons unaffiliated with a political party.

A person is ineligible to serve as a staff member to the Commission if that person would be ineligible to serve as a member of the Commission pursuant to G.S. 120-4.55(b). Staff shall be selected by a vote of at least nine members composed of at least three members appointed to the Commission from each sub-sub-subdivision of G.S. 120-4.55(c)(5)b.

"§ 120-4.65. Open meetings and public records.

The Commission shall be subject to the Chapter 132 of the General Statutes and Article 33C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, except to the extent those enactments conflict with the below requirements:

- (1) Members of the Commission and staff shall not discuss the business of the Commission outside of public meetings.
- (2) If a member of the Commission violates subdivision (1) of this section, he or she shall place in the public records of the Commission (i) any violating written communication and (ii) a written description of any violating oral communication. The written description of an oral communication must include the name of the parties to the communication, the date and approximate time of the communication, and a description of the nature and substance of the communication.
- (3) The Commission shall provide at least 14 days' notice prior to any meeting in which votes will be taken.
- (4) All public meetings must be live-streamed and minutes from the meetings must be made available to the public.

"§ 120-4.70. Redistricting criteria.

All plans shall meet the following goals, in order of priority:

- (1) Each identified representative shall represent a single district. The population for a legislative district shall be within five percent (5%) of the ideal population for that district. Congressional districts shall each have a population that is as nearly equal as practicable to the ideal population but in all cases within one-tenth of one percent (0.1%) of the ideal population for that district.
- (2) Compliance with the North Carolina Constitution, State law, the Constitution of the United States, including the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, and federal law to ensure that all persons, including racial and language minorities, have an equal opportunity to elect representatives of their choice. A plan shall not diminish or dilute the ability of a member of a minority from electing a candidate of his or her choice, whether alone or in coalition with others.
- (3) All districts shall be geographically cohesive and contiguous. Areas that are logically connected to form a unified community, yet are physically separated, are considered cohesive. Areas that are physically adjacent are contiguous. Areas that meet only at the points of adjoining corners are not contiguous.
- (4) Districts shall respect the integrity of communities of interest to the extent practicable.
- (5) Districts shall not split precincts and shall respect the geographic integrity of political subdivision boundaries, except to the extent necessary to comply with the preceding criteria.
- (6) Districts shall not be drawn to favor or discriminate against a political party. Partisan considerations and election results data shall not be used in the drawing of districts in Congressional, House, and Senate plans. No redistricting plan shall diminish or dilute any individual's vote on the basis of party affiliation.

(7) Districts shall not be drawn to favor or discriminate against an incumbent or candidate for office.

(8) Splitting of counties shall be minimized and avoided where possible. However, spitting counties is permissible when in constitutional compliance with any required clustering of counties.

"§ 120-4.75. Adoption of redistricting plans by the Commission.

(a) Integrity and Procedure. – It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Commission conduct itself with integrity and fairness in the creation and adoption of plans. In furtherance of that goal, the Commission shall adopt preliminary, proposed, alternative, and final plans by a vote of at least nine members composed of at least three members appointed to the Commission from each sub-sub-subdivision of G.S. 120-4.55(c)(5)b.

(b) Special Masters. – At the beginning of the redistricting cycle, the State Ethics Commission shall submit to the Commission a list of names of persons with an expertise in redistricting who are qualified to serve as a special master. In the event a plan cannot be adopted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the Commission shall appoint two special masters from the list of names provided by the State Ethics Commission. The special masters shall be appointed by a vote of at least nine members composed of at least three members appointed to the Commission from each sub-sub-subdivision of G.S. 120-4.55(c)(5)b. A special master appointed pursuant to this subsection shall meet the following criteria:

(1) Meet eligibility requirements for applications for membership on the Commission pursuant to G.S. 120-4.55(b).

(2) Have a resume that does not reflect a history of working exclusively with one political party or ideology.

(c) Adoption by Special Masters. – Any special masters appointed pursuant to this section shall draw a plan and submit the plan, along with the rationale for the plan, to the Commission, which shall adopt that plan, in accordance with the following:

(1) Plans proposed by the special masters shall conform to all redistricting criteria in G.S. 120-4.70.

(2) Produce one map for any plan.

(3) Hold at least four public hearings after producing the map, two of which shall occur in each metropolitan and micropolitan statistical area. Public hearings shall be live-streamed with the ability for citizens to participate virtually.

(4) Provide a written evaluation for any plan in accordance with G.S. 120-4.80(b)(6).

"§ 120-4.80. Public input.

(a) Public Hearings. – It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Commission conduct an open and transparent process enabling full public consideration of and comment on the drawing of plans. In furtherance of that goal, the Commission shall hold public hearings as soon as reasonably practicable after its formation and shall set a timeline for this process; the timeline may be adjusted as needed. The Commission shall engage in a minimum of 20 public hearings across the State. At least one public hearing shall occur in each metropolitan statistical area and at least five public hearings shall occur in the various micropolitan areas. Of those public hearings, at least 10 hearings shall occur before a preliminary plan is released to the public and at least 10 hearings shall occur after a preliminary plan is released to the public but before a proposed or alternative plan is released to the public. All public hearings shall be live-streamed with the ability for citizens to participate virtually.

(b) Public Input. – To the extent possible, the Commission shall facilitate the ability of members of the public to provide substantive comments on any plan released to the public. To achieve that goal, the Commission shall provide members of the public with all of the following resources:

- (1) Sufficient time to review any plan released to the public in advance of any vote on that plan.
- (2) The opportunity to communicate comments, questions, and recommendations on any plan released to the public, at a minimum, in person, online, and through the mail. The Commission shall reserve time at the end of every meeting for in-person and virtual public comment.
- (3) Access to the same demographic data that is used by the Commission in a machine-readable form.
- (4) Access to mapping software and census data in public library facilities in each metropolitan and micropolitan statistical area within 20 days of receipt of that data from the United States Bureau of the Census.
- (5) A public, written response to every substantive comment or recommendation regarding a specific component of a plan released to the public. The response shall address the viability of any recommendation and indicate whether it was or will be incorporated in any other plan.
- (6) At the conclusion of the redistricting process, the Commission shall publish a written evaluation of each final plan, including at least the following information:
 - a. The impact of the plans on the ability of minority groups, including racial minorities, to elect candidates of their choice.
 - b. The degree to which the plans preserve or divide communities of interest.
 - c. The rationale for changes in the plans from the prior districts.
 - d. The impact of the plans on metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas.
 - e. How the plans satisfy the redistricting criteria in G.S. 120-4.70.
 - f. A summary of the public input received by the Commission on the plans. Substantially similar comments may be grouped together into categories.
- (7) A website with all of the following information:
 - a. Background information on the redistricting process available in at least English and Spanish on the purpose of redistricting and its impact on all communities. The Commission shall provide information in other languages if at least 10,000 people petition the Commission to have a particular language included.
 - b. Livestreams and recordings of all public meetings and hearings by the Commission or the special masters in audio, video, or both formats and minutes from those meetings.
 - c. Meeting announcements.
 - d. A searchable database of feedback, including public comments, and plans discussed by the Commission. This information shall be made available as soon as practicable after it is generated.
 - e. Plans discussed by the Commission and the data used to create those plans.

"§ 120-4.85. Local redistricting.

The General Assembly may by law assign to the Commission the duty to prepare district plans for any county, city, town, special district, and other governmental subdivision, if the governing board of the unit or a court of appropriate jurisdiction so requests. The Commission shall be required to follow the same criteria as set out in G.S. 120-4.70."

PART II. CONFORMING CHANGES

1 **SECTION 2.(a)** G.S. 120-2.3 reads as rewritten:

2 "**§ 120-2.3. Contents of judgments invalidating apportionment or redistricting acts.**

3 Every order or judgment declaring unconstitutional or otherwise invalid, in whole or in part
4 and for any reason, any ~~act of the General Assembly plan~~ that apportions or redistricts State
5 legislative or congressional districts shall find with specificity all facts supporting that
6 declaration, shall state separately and with specificity the court's conclusions of law on that
7 declaration, and shall, with specific reference to those findings of fact and conclusions of law,
8 identify every defect found by the court, both as to the plan as a whole and as to individual
9 districts."

10 **SECTION 2.(b)** G.S. 120-2.4 reads as rewritten:

11 "**§ 120-2.4. Opportunity for General Assembly to remedy defects.**

12 (a) If ~~the General Assembly enacts~~ a plan apportioning or redistricting State legislative
13 or congressional ~~districts, districts becomes effective~~, in no event may a court impose its own
14 substitute plan unless the court first gives the General Assembly North Carolina Independent
15 Redistricting Commission a period of time to remedy any defects identified by the court in its
16 findings of fact and conclusions of law. That period of time shall not be less than two ~~weeks,~~
17 ~~provided, however, that if the General Assembly is scheduled to convene legislative session~~
18 ~~within 45 days of the date of the court order that period of time shall not be less than two weeks~~
19 ~~from the convening of that legislative session.~~weeks.

20 (a1) In the event the General Assembly North Carolina Independent Redistricting
21 Commission does not act to remedy any identified defects to its plan within that period of time,
22 the court may impose an interim districting plan for use in the next general election only, but that
23 interim districting plan may differ from the previous districting plan ~~enacted by the General~~
24 ~~Assembly~~ only to the extent necessary to remedy any defects identified by the court.

25 (b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law or authority of the State Board of
26 Elections under Chapter 163 of the General Statutes, the State Board of Elections shall have no
27 authority to alter, amend, correct, impose, or substitute any plan apportioning or redistricting
28 State legislative or congressional districts other than a plan imposed by a court under this section
29 or a plan ~~enacted by the General Assembly~~ adopted by the North Carolina Independent
30 Redistricting Commission."

31 32 **PART III. FUNDING**

33 **SECTION 3.** It is the intent of the General Assembly to provide ample funding to
34 implement an independent redistricting system. In the year before each federal decennial census,
35 it is the intent of the General Assembly to allocate sufficient funding for the North Carolina
36 Independent Redistricting Commission to meet estimated expenses for all of the following:

- 37 (1) Advertising the application process for membership to the Independent
38 Redistricting Commission.
 - 39 (2) Selection and training of Independent Redistricting Commission members.
 - 40 (3) Hiring staff to the Independent Redistricting Commission, including a
41 mapping team and legal team.
 - 42 (4) A statewide public education and outreach program.
 - 43 (5) Public hearings required by G.S. 120-4.80(a), as enacted by this act.
 - 44 (6) A redistricting website containing the information required in
45 G.S. 120-4.80(b)(7), as enacted by this act.
 - 46 (7) Mapping software to be used by the Independent Redistricting Commission.
 - 47 (8) Language translations.
 - 48 (9) Accessibility for those with disabilities.
 - 49 (10) A portal for the public to submit public comments and maps.
 - 50 (11) Any needed litigation expenses.
- 51

PART IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

SECTION 4.(a) If the constitutional amendments proposed by subsections (a), (b), (c), and (d) of Section 1 of this act are approved by the qualified voters as provided in subsections (e), (f), and (g) of Section 1 of this act, the following shall become effective January 1, 2030:

(1) Subsection (h) of Section 1 of this act.

(2) Part II of this act.

SECTION 4.(b) Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law.