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Focusing on Legislative Representation

LEGISLATIVE REPORT October 31, 2025

Legislative Update

The General Assembly reconvened last week, with redistricting once again taking center stage. Legislators considered a new Congressional map, the seventh redraw in just nine years. Republican leaders were very bold in saying the changes are intended to make one additional district more favorable to their party.

Speaker Hall defended the move, saying Republicans are acting to “defend President Trump’s mandate from North Carolina voters” and ensure the state “doesn’t sit idle while Democrats like Gavin Newsom redraw maps elsewhere to gain power in Congress.” Of course, Democrats responded that the redistricting plan starting in Texas and the California effort is an attempt to counter that action.

The newly proposed map would shift political boundaries in eastern North Carolina, affecting the First and Third Congressional Districts. The First District, currently represented by Democrat Don Davis of Snow Hill, has been the state’s only competitive seat. Under the new plan, it would become more solidly Republican.

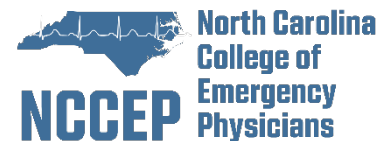
Six coastal counties, Beaufort, Craven, Pamlico, Carteret, Hyde, and Dare, would move into the First District, along with a small section of eastern Onslow County. Meanwhile, Wilson, Wayne, Greene, and Lenoir counties would shift to the Third District, represented by Republican Greg Murphy of Greenville.

The proposal leaves the rest of the state’s districts largely unchanged. According to recent election data, the First District would lean 55.3% Republican under the new map, up from 52%, while the Third District would drop from 60.1% to 56.3% Republican.

The current leading Republican contenders for the First District, state Sen. Bobby Hanig and Rocky Mount Mayor Sandy Roberson, remain largely unaffected, with their homes safely within the new district lines. Meanwhile, the First District’s current Congressman Don Davis has been drawn out of his home district. He could either continue his run in the First District or shift to the Third, where his home county now falls.



NORTH CAROLINA COLLEGE OF EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS



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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Colleen Kochanek
Ashley Matlock Perkinson
Rachel E. Beaulieu
P.O. Box 1038
Wake Forest, NC 27588
919.809.5600

colleen@kochaneklawgroup.com
ashley@perkinsonlawfirm.com
rachel@beaulieuedlaw.com
www.kochaneklawgroup.com

Adding an interesting twist, Congressman Greg Murphy, who currently represents the Third District and whose home remains within it, is also weighing which district to run in, alongside Davis.

In response to the changes to his district, Murphy was debating which district he'd choose to run in in 2026. He has now decided that he will run for re-election to his current District 3. Congressman Davis has not yet outlined his plans in response to the new map. Republican State Senator Bobby Hanig and Republican Rocky Mount Mayor Sandy Roberson have re-affirmed their plans to run in the newly drawn District 1. Lawsuits have already begun over the newly drawn map.

Republican leaders have said their goal is to secure 11 of North Carolina's 14 Congressional seats heading into the 2026 election, up from the 10 they currently hold. State Democrats have sharply criticized the proposal, calling it another example of partisan gerrymandering aimed at consolidating Republican power rather than ensuring fair representation for voters. New maps are enacted solely by the General Assembly; Gov. Stein will not have the opportunity to veto the new map.

The push comes amid a narrow, six-seat Republican majority in the U.S. House and historic trends showing that the party of the sitting president often loses ground during midterm elections. During President Trump's first term, Republicans lost 40 seats in the midterm election.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION IN 2025?

This week likely was our legislature's final votes of 2025, leaving issues like Medicaid funding and a full state budget unresolved. Senate leader Berger and Speaker Hall have both indicated that votes in November and December are unlikely, though the return dates remain open. The expectation is that they'll revisit budget talks in 2026, possibly earlier if a major breakthrough happens. With the budget stalemate, "if nothing on that front changes, then I don't anticipate there being anything to vote on for the remainder of the year," Hall told reporters. The impasse stems from disputes over a number of things, including a children's hospital and whether to delay scheduled income tax cuts which impacts the Medicaid rebase funding and the entire delayed budget. Speaker Hall maintained, "All I can say is, on our end of the chamber, we are willing to negotiate on all of the key points, and that's not reciprocated on the other side." However, Senate budget leaders have shared a different perspective, "It's time to stop playing politics and come to the negotiating table."

MINI BUDGET PASSED

The legislature passed a small "mini-budget" measure, Senate Bill 449, which Gov. Stein signed into law Thursday. The bill funds a mix of statewide initiatives, including disaster recovery following Hurricane Helene, maintenance for the state ferry system, upgrades to State Highway Patrol communications, and recruitment efforts for the SBI. It also expands a loan program for hurricane-affected businesses and eases some development rules to aid recovery. "This bill makes some needed investments for law enforcement, our state's ferries, and budget technology, and it provides greater flexibility so that the state's Hurricane Helene recovery efforts can help more people," Stein said in a statement.

Lawmakers have relied on smaller funding bills like SB 449 as negotiations on a comprehensive state budget remain stalled. While the current fiscal year began July 1, North Carolina has been operating under last year's funding levels. Although North Carolina lawmakers have previously passed late budgets, the last full budget impasse occurred in 2019 when Gov. Cooper's veto stood.

Stein criticized legislators for failing to pass a full budget, saying SB 449 “proves that this legislature is able to come together and get results for the people of North Carolina when they want to.” He added, “Families are still waiting for the legislature to fund their health care. Teachers and law enforcement are still waiting for pay raises. We are all still waiting for real investments in public safety and mental health.”

The mini-budget also included a delay in the effective date for part of Iryna’s law to December 1, 2026. The delayed provision deals with evaluations in emergency departments for possible involuntary commitments of violent offenders after concerns were raised by emergency physicians, hospitals and others.

BROCKMAN ARRESTED / CALLED ON TO RESIGN

Rep. Cecil Brockman, a Democrat from High Point, was arrested and charged with multiple felonies, including two counts of indecent liberties with a child and two counts of statutory sex offense involving a minor under 15. He is currently being held in the High Point Detention Center on a \$1.05 million bond following a virtual court appearance from a hospital.

Both Democratic and Republican leaders have condemned the allegations and urged Brockman to resign, though he has not yet done so. The House Clerk’s Office confirmed it has not received a resignation letter. Because Brockman is in custody, any resignation would need to be submitted in writing and verified through his attorney. If Brockman resigns, local Democrats in his district would recommend a replacement, who would then be formally appointed by Gov. Stein. If he refuses to step down, lawmakers could initiate proceedings to expel him, a process last used in 2008 when Rep. Thomas Wright was removed from office after being convicted of fraud and obstruction. Under the state constitution, each legislative chamber has the authority to judge the qualifications and membership of its own members.

Speaker Hall said he has formed a committee to review the charges and, “if warranted,” begin the process of removing Brockman from office. Hall said the review process would resemble the 2008 expulsion of former Rep. Thomas Wright, who was removed after being convicted of corruption-related charges. However, Brockman’s situation is complicated by the fact that he remains in jail and cannot appear before the House. “A person who is up for expulsion has to receive due process,” Hall said. “Part of our issue is he is, as I understand it, [he is] still in jail, and so obviously couldn’t be here to present evidence one way or the other.”

Brockman’s next court appearance is scheduled for Nov. 13. In the meantime, legislative leaders are weighing how to proceed. Hall emphasized that the matter will be handled carefully, saying, “He was elected to be here. So we’re going to treat it with the seriousness it deserves. And if the evidence bears out true as to the allegations, then I expect this body will expel him.”

While Republicans in the House are just one seat short of a veto-proof majority, Rep. Brockman’s absence does not automatically give them the numbers to override a veto without Democratic support. To succeed, an override requires a three-fifths majority of those present and voting, not out of all 120 members. With one Democrat absent, Republicans would still fall short of that threshold. However, if two Democratic members were absent or abstained and all Republicans were present and voted in favor, or of course if one Democrat crossed party lines, Republicans would have the votes needed to override a veto.

JOINT LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ON MEDICAID

North Carolina health officials from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) faced tough questions from legislators over recent Medicaid reimbursement rate cuts that took effect Oct. 1. The reductions followed a legislative stalemate between the House and Senate on the program's annual rebase, which determines how much funding is needed each year to cover changes in enrollment and care costs.

At the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid, DHHS Secretary Devdutta Sangvai acknowledged the cuts were "extremely difficult for our provider community, especially those in rural areas and underserved areas." Still, several lawmakers criticized the decision to implement them before reaching a legislative agreement. "I've never seen this happen with HHS since I've been here, where they reduce rates before we got through the year," said Rep. Donny Lambeth, the committee's co-chair. He called the reductions "unnecessary" and questioned why the department didn't first trim administrative expenses. Jay Ludlam, head of the state's Medicaid program, responded that DHHS had "let go a large number of contracts and contractors" and left some positions vacant to cut costs. "We are doing what is within our control," he said.

Rep. Sarah Crawford, raised concerns about how the cuts could affect facilities that serve people with severe disabilities, noting her own experience as CEO of a nonprofit that operates group homes. "It will be more costly to have those individuals in hospital beds than it is in ICF or Innovations beds," she warned. Ludlam said the department hasn't yet determined "what the full impact will be," but expects the state could "see higher levels of acuity and potentially higher costs" if the cuts persist.

As a reminder, both chambers passed their own appropriations bills to address the needed Medicaid funding. However, due to other disagreements, neither chamber took up the other's proposal before leaving town last month.

The issue centers on the recent DHHS decision to cut provider reimbursement rates and limit coverage for weight-loss medications, a move prompted by what officials describe as a Medicaid funding shortfall. Republican legislators argue that these cuts are premature because sufficient funds have already been allocated to the program.

The health plans have held off on implementing the cuts, despite them beginning October 1st, in hopes that legislators would resolve the funding gap this week. The funding proposals have been retroactive, meaning the plans could reciprocate those losses and never pass them down to providers. However, now the plans will have to pass down the cuts beginning in November, including retroactively for this month. It remains unclear how the plans will tackle addressing the October shortfalls, whether that's rebilling providers for October or providing a lower reimbursement during November.

Like last month, the House and Senate both proposed Medicaid funding solutions, but rejected the other's pitch, leaving the matter still unresolved as they suggest they may not return for the year. The House passed several bills addressing Medicaid shortfalls and pay raises for teachers and law enforcement, but the Senate had already adjourned, with leadership expressing little interest in passing any House bills. Senate leaders earlier in the week proposed a compromise linking Medicaid funding with allocations for rural healthcare, a new NC Children's Hospital, and law enforcement raises. Speaker Hall rejected including the hospital, a Duke-UNC partnership planned in Apex, outside a full budget agreement.

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INVOLUNTARY COMMITMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Speaker Hall has announced the formation of the House Select Committee on Involuntary Commitment and Public Safety. The group will study how mental health services, involuntary commitment laws, and public safety intersect, with the goal of recommending legislative and policy reforms. The bipartisan committee will work with physicians, law enforcement, prosecutors, and mental health professionals to identify improvements to North Carolina's system and to balance treatment needs with community protection.

The members are:

Co-Chairs Hugh Blackwell and Timothy Reeder

Reps. Grant Campbell, Dudley Greene, Donny Lambeth, Charles Miller, Larry Potts, Reese Pyrtle, Heather Rhyne, Carson Smith, Diane Wheatley, Donna White, Terry Brown, Tracy Clark, Carla Cunningham, Ya Liu, Charles Smith, and Shelly Willingham.

Hall said, "I am proud to announce the creation of a bipartisan legislative committee to examine policy reforms that address the ongoing public safety challenges facing North Carolina. Recent tragedies in our state, like the brutal murder of Iryna Zarutskya in Charlotte, have made it even more clear that we have to make sure local officials are putting public safety first. The committee will work together with law enforcement, district attorneys, mental health professionals, and others, to come up with statewide solutions that will keep dangerous people off the streets of North Carolina."

Chairman Reeder emphasized the medical perspective: "As an emergency physician, I've seen the consequences when severe mental illness goes untreated. The preventable murder of Iryna Zarutskya is a stark reminder that these are not abstract policy debates; they are matters of life and death. Our committee will take a hard look at how we can improve involuntary commitment and close dangerous gaps in the system. North Carolinians deserve to receive treatment for those who need it and to be safe in their own communities from dangerous criminals."

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON BLOCKCHAIN AND DIGITAL ASSETS

Speaker Hall has created the House Select Committee on Blockchain and Digital Assets to examine how emerging technologies could shape North Carolina's economy. The committee will study their potential benefits, consider consumer protections, and recommend policies to support innovation in the state.

The group is co-chaired by Representatives Allen Chesser and David Willis. Other members include Reps. Celeste Cairns, Neal Jackson, Mike Schietzelt, Stephen Ross, Carla Cunningham, Allison Dahle, Nasif Majeed, and Charles Smith.

GERRYMANDERING LAWSUIT (prior maps)

A federal judge upheld North Carolina's current Senate map earlier this month, dismissing claims that Republicans intentionally weakened the voting power of Black residents. U.S. District Judge James C. Dever III, appointed by President George W. Bush, rejected arguments that dividing Black communities in the northeast amounted to a Voting Rights Act violation.

He wrote that he would not order the legislature to "engage in the odious practice of sorting voters by race in order to create a majority-Black Senate district." In his 126-page opinion, Dever also found the challengers' experts unconvincing and pointed to a "paucity of contemporary evidence of intentional discrimination concerning the right to vote against Black voters."

REP. JIMMY DIXON CHANGES COURSE

After announcing to his caucus that he will retire, Rep. Dixon has decided he will seek re-election in 2026 after all. In an internal memo, Dixon shared that he has decided to seek re-election after conversations with constituents and colleagues in the legislature.

REP. CUNNINGHAM CHALLENGER

Rep. Carla Cunningham, who has represented District 106 in Mecklenburg County since 2013, will face a Democratic primary challenger in 2026. Cunningham drew attention this year for siding with Republicans to override a veto by Gov. Stein and for remarks she made about immigration. “As social scientists report, all cultures are not equal,” she said on the House floor in July. “Some immigrants come and believe they can function in isolation, refusing to adapt. They have come to our country for many reasons, but I suggest they must assimilate -- adapt to the culture of the country they wish to live in.”

Those comments prompted Rev. Dr. Rodney Sadler to enter the race. Sadler, an ordained Baptist minister and scholar with degrees from Howard and Duke, currently serves as Associate Professor of Bible and director of the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Charlotte. “Carla Cunningham is a woman I worked with,” Sadler said. “Someone I called a friend, but after her comments in the General Assembly, after she voted against Josh Stein’s veto, and then she made comments about some people being better than other kinds of people, I had to do something.”

When asked about the challenge, Cunningham responded: “With the host of things that have been accomplished under my leadership and the various issues that need addressing, my focus remains on the district only. If interest exists to run for any office, individuals reserve that right.”

- Colleen Kochanek
NCCEP Legislative Counsel
Kochanek Law Group
919.809.5601
colleen@kochaneklawgroup.com
www.kochaneklawgroup.comⁱ

Ashley Matlock Perkinson
Perkinson Law Firm
919.210.8209
ashley@perkinsonlawfirm.com

Rachel E. Beaulieu
Rachel E. Beaulieu Law Office, PLLC
919.896.6296
Rachel@BeaulieuEdLaw.com

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