

NC 2026 OFFICES ON THE BALLOT

Learn about the powers and duties of the elected officials on your ballot!



US SENATE



Term length: 6 years

- Drafts federal laws, approves presidential appointments and Supreme Court nominations
- Oversees the federal budget
- Has the power to conduct impeachment trials

US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Term length: 2 years

- Drafts federal laws, including the federal budget and taxes
- Decides rules for citizenship, can declare war, and funds the armed services
- Has the power to impeach federal officials
- Creates and oversees federal agencies

NC LEGISLATURE



Term length: 2 years

- Drafts state laws, including the budget that funds public schools, public health, and the State Board of Elections
- Draws voting maps, proposes amendments to NC Constitution
- Decides what a crime is and how it should be punished
- Makes rules on how courts, prisons, and jails are managed

NC SUPREME COURT



Term length: 8 years

- The state's highest court, their decisions become state law
- Court consists of one Chief Justice, who also serves as the head of the NC Judicial Branch, and six associate justices
- Considers whether an error occurred at trial
- Has no jury and makes no determinations of fact
- Decides appeals in death penalty cases

COURT OF APPEALS



Term length: 8 years

- Their decisions become state law
- Reviews appeals of trial court decisions
- Reviews appeals of decisions by Governor and NC Legislature
- Can re-interpret or overturn state laws
- Made up of 15 judges who sit in rotating panels of three

DISTRICT COURT JUDGES



Term length: 4 years

- Decides disputes on issues that include money, personal injury (including murder), divorce, child custody, and adoptions
- Decides criminal cases and sentencing, including who goes to jail, how long their sentence is, if they receive probation, and whether they must pay back a victim or do community service

SUPERIOR COURT JUDGES



Term length: 8 years

Learn more about upcoming elections:

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COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Term length: 2 or 4 years

- Passes the county budget to fund services including the Board of Elections, department of social services, public health, mental health, sheriff's office, public school system, and community colleges
- Funds salaries for county workers and decides the timing and amount of local bonds
- Appoints county positions, including county manager

DISTRICT ATTORNEY



Term length: 4 years

- Decides whether or not to bring criminal charges
- One in each county, prosecutes criminal cases and represents the state in local district court
- Works with law enforcement, negotiates plea deals, and can offer restorative justice options such as teen court, drug treatment, or deferred sentences

SHERIFF



Term length: 4 years

- One in each county, responsible for protecting the community
- Enforces the law and manages security in jails and courtrooms
- Oversees conditions of county jail and inmates in custody
- Serves legal documents such as warrants and eviction notices

CLERK OF COURT



Term length: 4 years

- Manages local court records and acts as the probate judge to handle adoptions, wills, estates, and some custody issues
- Appoints Magistrates who marry people, set bail, and settle small claims and authorize evictions
- Supervises and manages court staff and can issue warrants

SCHOOL BOARD



Term length: 4 years

- Oversees public schools within their district and budget for school construction, renovation, and management
- Sets the student discipline policy, hires and oversees the superintendent, and draws school district maps that decide where children go to school
- Can select textbooks and topics allowed in lesson plans

MAYORS & CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS



Term length: 2 or 4 years

- Regulates land use and sets rules for what can be built where within the city limits
- Oversees public services and utilities, such as trash and recycling pickup, water and sewer, roads and sidewalks, parks and recreation, and police and fire
- Approves city budget, appoints city positions, and decides local nondiscrimination policies for employees and contractors

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