

# \*\*\*SPAM\*\*\* Latest Updates from the NCGA



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 NC Senate District 41

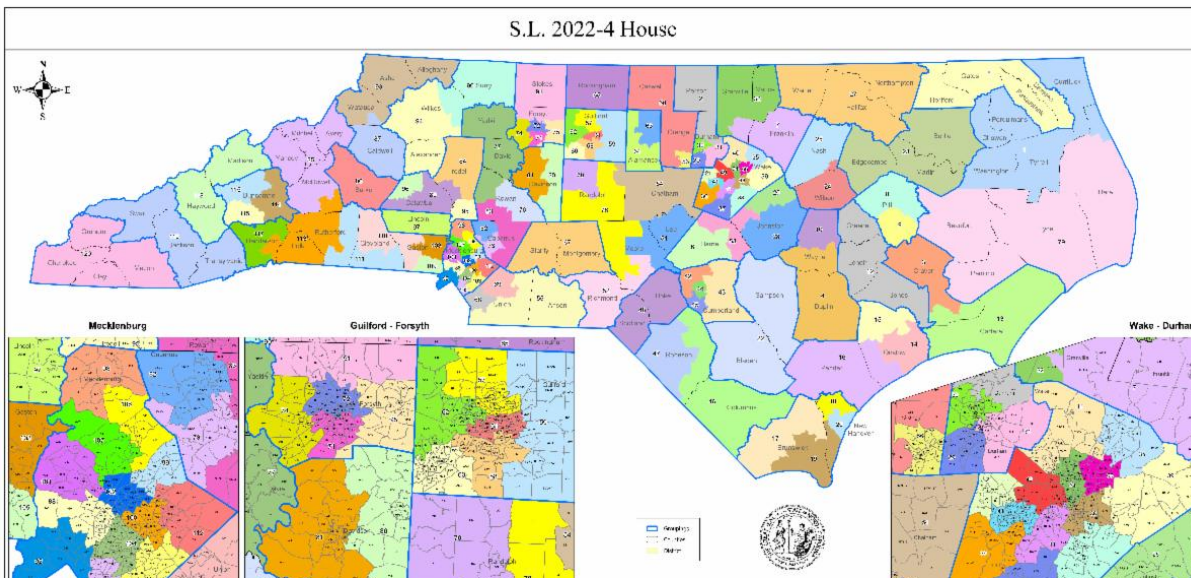


## NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

February 18, 2022

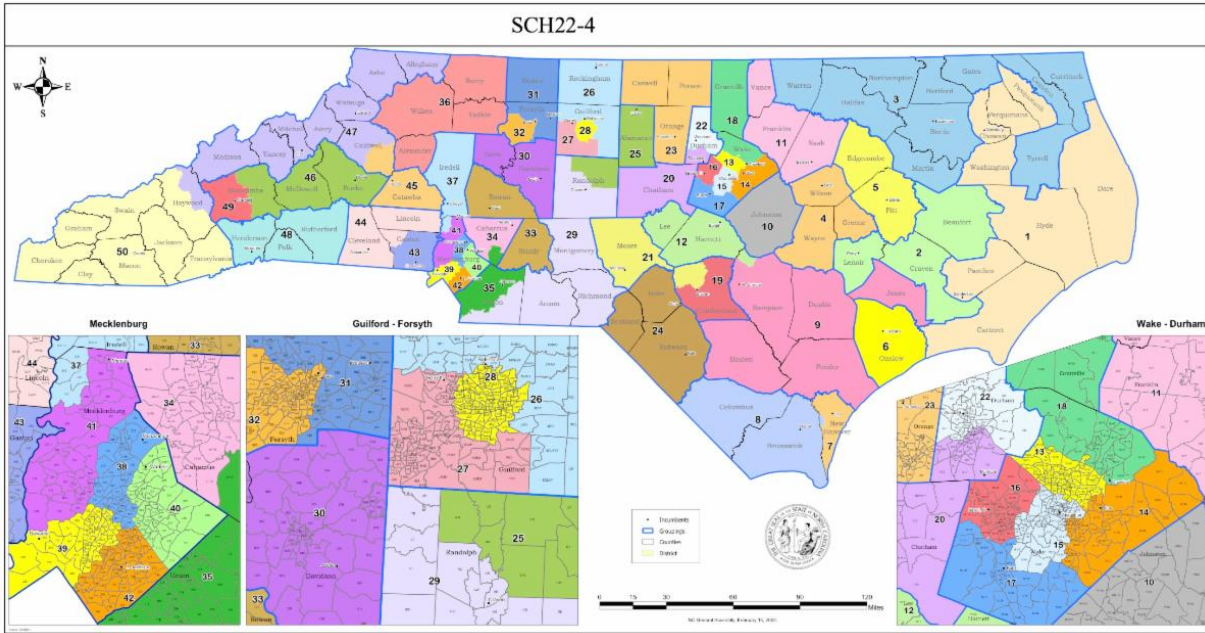
### Redistricting Updates

### New State House Map

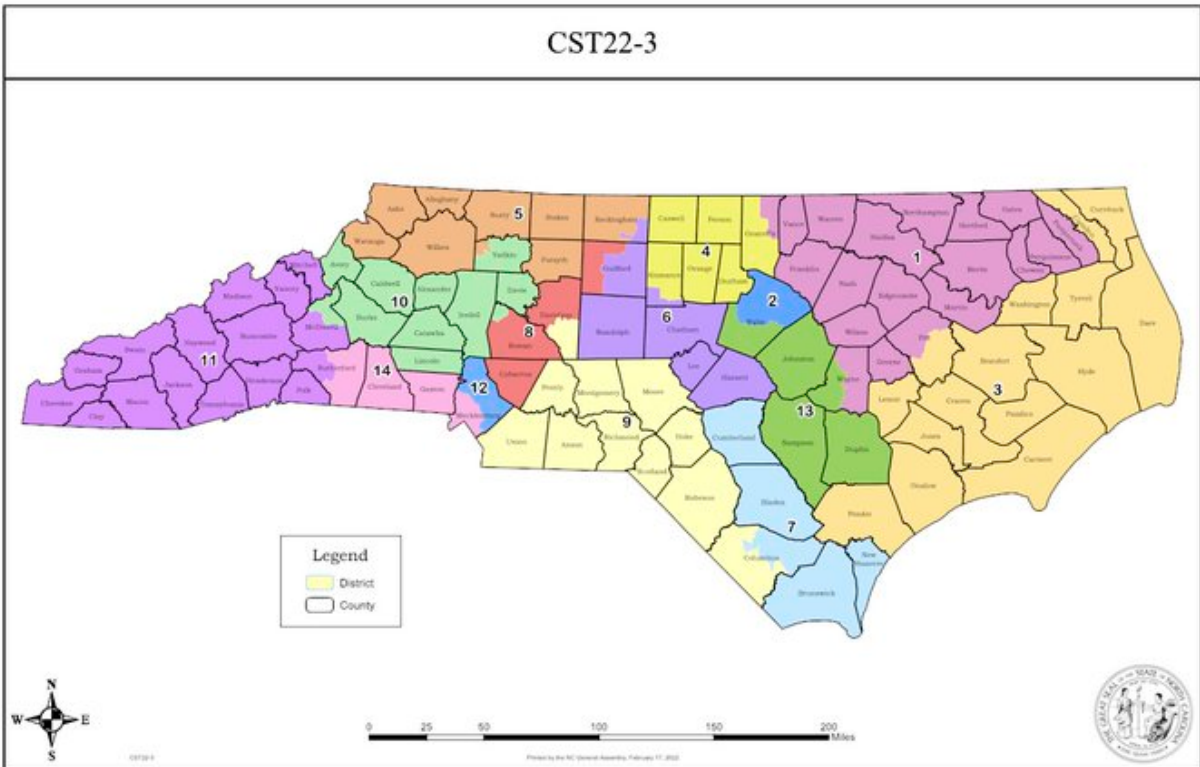




### New State Senate Map



### New Congressional Map



I was back in Raleigh this week to consider and vote on new maps for Sate House, State Senate and US Congress, as ordered by the NC Supreme Court after finding that the original maps [were unconstitutional](#). I voted against the maps in November and was hopeful that, given this second chance, we could work on a bipartisan basis to pass constitutionally-compliant maps. Minority Leader Senator Dan Blue held [a press conference](#) last Monday, calling for a collaborative approach. Here are links to the detailed versions of the [NC Senate](#), [NC House](#) and [Congressional](#) maps passed yesterday.

### State Senate Map

Unfortunately, **Republicans presented a map that they drew in private and then refused to accept any Democratic amendments to make it fair**. As enacted, the map eliminates one of our 22 Democratic members (who is a long-serving African-American Senator and former judge) and puts many of our members in more difficult districts, even those in Democratic counties like Wake. Their map protects President Pro Tem Phil Berger with a very favorable district, even though the fair way to draw his cluster would produce three Democratic-leaning districts. Their map retains most of the problems the Court rejected, including extensive packing of Democratic voters. Thus, we believe the Senate map does not comply with the court order and is not constitutional.

**On the positive side, the remedial map fixed the double-bunk that had impacted me and puts me back in a Mecklenburg district. So it is better for me personally. But that's not enough.** I have always believed that the need for fair maps statewide is more important than my personal situation. So, [I voted no](#) on the map, along with all of my Democratic colleagues. The map passed 26-19 in the Senate and 67-52 in the House.

You can read more about the Democratic amendments and how they were all rejected without consideration [here](#).

### State House Map

**House Democrats and Republicans worked collaboratively to address the partisan gerrymanders in the original State House map to create a final compromise map**, with 6 of the 7 Democratic amendments adopted. [I voted yes](#) on this bipartisan map. It passed the House 115-5 and the Senate 41-3.

### Congressional Map

Similar to the process with the State Senate Maps, Republican leadership **refused to work collaboratively with Democrats on the Congressional map**, maintaining gerrymanders and splitting communities of interest. No Democratic amendments in the Senate or the House were accepted. While this map is an improvement from the original (notably, Mecklenburg County is now only split once instead of twice), [I voted no](#) because I do not believe it reflects the voters of the state. It passed the Senate 26-19 and the House 66-53. You can read more about the new Congressional map [here](#).

### Next Steps

Today is the deadline for the NCGA and the parties to the lawsuit to submit proposed maps to the Court. The court will review all the options, with the help of three [appointed Special Masters](#). One of the special masters is **Tom Ross, former President of Davidson College**. It is expected that the Court will accept the House map, since it was a

compromise map. I am hopeful that the court, in its power, will provide Senate and Congressional maps that respect voters' constitutional rights. The Court's decision is expected by **noon on February 23, 2022**. We won't know until then whether the candidate filing period will reopen next week as planned, or whether the court will need more time to determine the maps. You can read more about the maps, how they impact Mecklenburg County, and my statement to the Charlotte Observer at [this link](#).

## First Joint Legislative Committee Meeting on Medicaid Expansion



Medicaid Expansion is an important policy step that North Carolina should take to provide more people access to affordable healthcare. I was proud to be a co-sponsor of **Senate Bill 402, [Close the Medicaid Coverage Gap](#)**, during the long session. This week the newly-formed **[Joint Legislative Committee on Access to Healthcare and Medicaid Expansion](#)** convened for first time. This committee is charged with Medicaid-related oversight, including **determining whether NC should finally join the 39 states (including DC) that have expanded Medicaid**. The members include those who are opposed and those who are in favor.

The committee met for the first time earlier today. They discussed the impacts of federal "surprise billing" laws on states, rural hospital closures, and shortages in the nursing profession. You can read more about the meeting [here](#). I am not a member of this committee, but I will be following it closely because I believe this is an important issue for North Carolinians.

## Interview with Queen City News about Colonial Pipeline Clean-Up Efforts

I spoke to Queen City News last week about the **Colonial Pipeline gasoline clean-up in Huntersville**. I receive regular updates from Colonial Pipeline and DEQ, and share that information on social media and with residents directly impacted by the spill regularly -- **please contact me if you would like to be added to that**



listserv. You can watch the full interview [here](#).

## Controversial Bill Banning Mask Mandates in Schools Passes House and Senate



On Thursday, the House and Senate debated and voted on **Senate Bill 173**, [Free the Smiles Act](#), which would give parents sole authority on whether their child must wear a mask at school, instead of school officials or public health professionals. **I spoke on the floor against this bill. Here is what I said:**

"COVID rates are finally on the decline and we are grateful for this reprieve. But we are still in a pandemic. In Mecklenburg County, the community transmission rate is still in the red/high range. **In the past 2 weeks, 38 people died from COVID in Mecklenburg county. Even more relevant to this bill, in the same time frame, 25% of new COVID cases were among children less than 18 years old.** Kids are getting COVID and they are spreading it too. We could easily see a new surge even worse than Omicron.

The Governor has already changed the [DHHS Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit](#) guidance to make masks optional, but that's not enough for the supporters of this bill. This bill says that you hope for the best, even though we are in a pandemic, even as you **eliminate one of the few tools we have to keep schools open and people safe.**

This bill tells schools across the state that they cannot take measures to keep students and educators safe and keep schools open

- No matter how bad the numbers get
- No matter how full the hospitals get
- No matter how many teachers get sick or die
- No matter how many children do the same
- No matter how many parents want the safety of a masked environment for their children

**There is no safety switch here. This bill is irresponsible.** We should allow our schools to make these important decisions. We should not allow individual parent preferences to supersede public health needs and override everyone else's rights."

The bill passed the Senate 28-17 and the House 76-42. The Governor has [expressed concerns about the bill](#) and **we expect a veto**. Regardless of what happens with SB173, the [Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board will decide](#) next week whether to lift the mask mandate for students and/or staff.

## Charlotte League of Women Voters Lunch & Learn Event



The [Charlotte-Mecklenburg League of Women Voters](#) hosted environmental reporter Lisa Sorg for an online discussion and I was happy to participate. She shared information gleaned from her reporting about many important topics.

She updated us about the **Colonial gasoline spill in Huntersville** and mentioned that we still don't know where the PFAS at the site came from. She's following that clean up closely. She reported that Colonial has many other spill sites (none as large as this one) and that clean up at those sites has never been complete and often results in permanent deed restrictions on the land.

She described how **hog farms in NC** contain and dispose of their waste with the lagoons and sprayfields method and compared that to the alternative of biogas digesters, which are an improvement in some respects but come with drawbacks too.

She plans to dig deep on the issue of safety requirements at **plants prone to explosions like the Weaver Fertilizer site in Winston-Salem**. That plant was grandfathered into lax safety conditions, which may need updating. You can read more about the incident [here](#).

She also provided us with a way to track **lead in drinking water** via a website called [Drinking Water Watch](#).

If you'd like more information about any of this, let me know and I can send details.

## Treatment Advancements for Ocular Melanoma



On February 11, I tuned in to hear about an **exciting advancement in the treatment of ocular melanoma, a disease we see too much of in our area.**

Dr. Orloff explained that the Kimmtrak drug drags immune cells over to the cancer like a magnet to fight uveal melanoma (eye cancer).

The **Kimmtrak study started in 2013 and is the first drug to get FDA approval for most Uveal Melanoma patients**, including those with metastatic UM. Certain HLA types are not eligible.

The overall survival rate improved with treatment, even though the tumors do not necessarily shrink much. It gets results even when the cancer has spread to the liver.

I know that at least one local patient is under the care of Dr. Orloff and is using Kimmtrak to treat her OM and I join others in hoping that it works for her.

You can see the recorded video presentation and other news about Uveal Melanoma [here](#). We still do not know what is causing so many cases of Ocular Melanoma here, which is why we need to pass my bill, [Senate Bill 137, Study and Abate Ocular Melanoma/Funds](#).

## Cornelius Survey on the Town Budget



Cornelius town officials are planning the FY23 budget and **want to hear from constituents about your priorities**. If you are a resident of Cornelius, please take the FY23 Citizen Budget Survey [here](#).

## Affordable Housing Survey for Davidson Residents

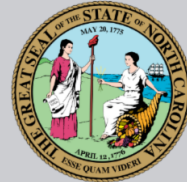


Davidson town officials are asking residents to provide **feedback for the Affordable Housing Plan**, also known as Live Davidson. The plan is working to provide comprehensive recommendations for new and existing affordable homes, potential regulatory changes, and strategic investments. If you are a Davidson resident, you can learn about the plan [here](#) and take the survey [here](#).

## Mark Your Calendar: Virtual Listening Session

THE MECKLENBURG COUNTY DELEGATION TO THE  
NC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST VIRTUAL LISTENING SESSION OF 2022



Thursday, April 21 | 7-8PM

Sign up here: <https://bit.ly/mecklenburgdelegation>

\*Attendees must sign up in advance to join the Listening Session

The Mecklenburg County Delegation to the NC General Assembly is hosting our first virtual listening session of the year on **Thursday, April 21st from 7-8pm**. The 17-member Delegation wants to hear from you about what is on your mind, what you would like us to know about your community, and what you would like us to work on. **This is your opportunity to talk to us and for us to listen**. Attendees must sign up in advance to join the Listening Session. I hope you will join us.

**Sign Up for the Listening Session Here**

## NC Begins Developing Holocaust Curriculum Per New State Law



Including the **Holocaust in public school curriculum** was one of my policy priorities when I joined the NC Senate. I worry about Americans who don't know about the tragic failure of humanity or, even worse, deny it. I am grateful that my teachers (and my teacher-Mom) made sure I knew the truth.

I am pleased that we **found consensus last year in the NCGA to require the Holocaust be included in public school curriculum** and that we have experienced teachers like the one



interviewed [in this article](#) creating curriculum to engage students with the topic. We must know history in order to learn from it.

## Changes to Rules Regarding Teacher Personal Days



North Carolina public teachers may **no longer have to provide a reason for taking personal leave after the NC Board of Education altered the paid leave policy.** Under a law passed last year, teachers were relieved of having to pay the cost of a substitute teacher (\$98) when they took a personal day but only if they provided an acceptable reason for taking the day off. This policy was considered to be an invasion of teachers' privacy, so the policy was changed earlier this month to give local school districts the authority to waive the need to provide a reason. You can read more about the policy change and CMS's plans [here](#).

## 2022 Mayors' Fitness Challenge in North Mecklenburg



Who will be named "the fittest town"? Cornelius, Huntersville, and Davidson are participating in the **2nd Annual Mayors' Fitness Challenge** from March 6th to April 23rd. Towns and cities across the state and country will be participating in free activities to promote healthy living habits. **Join me and sign up to join the challenge today!**

[Cornelius Sign Up](#)  
[Huntersville Sign Up](#)  
[Davidson Sign Up](#)

## Local Charlotte Organization Makes Lasting Positive Change in the Criminal Justice System



**The Center for Community Transitions**, a non-profit in Charlotte, works to strengthen our community by **helping people with criminal records and their families find a healthier and more productive way of living with job trainings and support services**. Their staff recently submitted their annual report to the Legislature and I was impressed with the lasting and positive impact they are having for families across North Carolina, including a **0% recidivism rate for offenders who go through their program**. You can read their annual report [here](#).

## Free Tax Assistance Services



Get help this tax season! There are resources available in 2022 that can help you and your family save money on your taxes.

- **VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)** – Individuals and families who earn less than \$57,000 per year can receive FREE income tax preparation assistance by an IRS-certified volunteer. VITA sites are free, reliable, and available in communities across North Carolina.
  - Schedule an appointment at the **Ada Jenkins Center** (in Davidson or Huntersville) [here](#).
  - Schedule an appointment at the **Beatties Ford Library** in Charlotte [here](#).
- **EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit)** – Low-to-moderate-income workers and their families can get a tax break, ranging from \$1,502 to \$6,728 depending on income level, marital status, and number of children.
- **CTC (Child Tax Credit)** – Nearly all working families with children under age 18 at the end of 2021 can receive \$3,000 to \$3,600 per child. The CTC expanded in 2021, offering more credit per child and the option for advance monthly payments

instead of one lump sum when filing taxes. Learn more [here](#).

## Update on Tax Forms for Unemployment



NC DEPARTMENT  
of COMMERCE  
EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

All individuals who received unemployment benefits from North Carolina in 2021 have now been issued an IRS Form 1099-G by the N.C. Division of Employment Security. This form shows the total amount of benefits paid to the claimant during the previous calendar year for tax purposes. **Unemployment benefits are subject to state and federal income tax and should be reported on claimants' tax returns.**

All claimants will be able to access their 1099-G through their DES online account. For those who chose mail as their preferred contact method, 1099-Gs were postmarked by Jan. 31 for mail delivery. Learn more [here](#).

If this newsletter was forwarded to you and you would like to receive future editions, please subscribe at [this link](#) or email me at [Natasha.Marcus@ncleg.gov](mailto:Natasha.Marcus@ncleg.gov) and let me know you want to subscribe to the biweekly newsletter.

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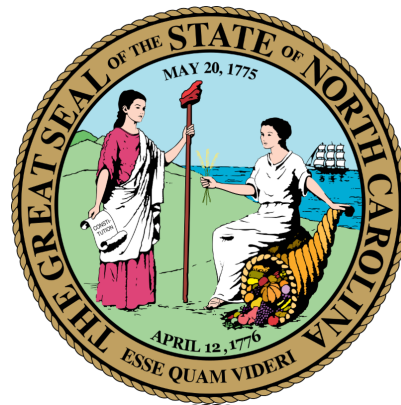
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How can we help you? Let us know and [reach out](#) to our office! We want to hear from you.

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