

Chief Justice Paul Newby Proclaims the Week of October 24-28 as Innocence Inquiry Commission Week



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THE NORTH CAROLINA INNOCENCE INQUIRY COMMISSION

Chief Justice Paul Newby Proclaims the Week of October 24-28 as Innocence Inquiry Commission Week

RALEIGH — [Chief Justice Paul Newby](#) has issued a [proclamation](#) declaring the week of October 24-28 as [Innocence Inquiry Commission Week](#) for the [North Carolina Judicial Branch](#). Innocence Inquiry Commission Week is intended to recognize the importance of the [North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission](#) (NCIIC) to North Carolinians. The Commission celebrates its 15-year anniversary this year.



"The North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission has played a unique role in the administration of justice over the last 15 years," said Chief Justice Newby. "We set aside this week in recognition of the Commission's conscientious work in the furtherance of justice."

The Commission will host two events in October to celebrate. On October 26, the Commission will host a 15-year anniversary celebration to welcome current and former Commissioners and staff, exonerees, and other stakeholders in the Commission process. The evening will include speeches from the Commission's Executive Director Lindsey Guice Smith, Senior Resident Superior Court Judge and Commission Chair Thomas Lock, Representative Jamie Boles and a presentation of the Innocence Inquiry Commission's Criminal Justice Partner Award to David Hess, chief of the Roxboro Police Department.

The Commission is hosting a second event on October 27 titled "The Innocence Inquiry Commission Model: Transforming Post-Conviction Innocence Claim Review." This program will be in-person at the [North Carolina Judicial Center](#) and online via Webex from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. This program is approved for 3.5 CLE credit hours. To attend this event please RSVP [here](#) by October 24.

"The Commission strives to be a leader in answering the call to improve our criminal justice system and looks forward to continuing to leave an impact for years to come," said Guice Smith.

About the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission

In 2006, the North Carolina recognized that "public confidence in the justice system is strengthened by thorough and timely inquiry into claims of factual innocence." (Session Law 2006-184). The State further recognized that "postconviction review of credible claims of factual innocence...should be addressed expeditiously to ensure the innocent as well as the guilty receive justice." (Session Law 2006-184). As a result, the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission was established as a neutral fact-finding state agency tasked to investigate and determine credible claims of factual innocence in North Carolina; codified in Article 92 of the North Carolina General Statutes.

Throughout its 15 years in operation, the Commission has received over 3,300 claims of actual innocence; reviewing and closing 3,200 of those cases. The Commission has held 18 hearings and 15 individuals have been exonerated by a post-Commission three-judge panel or had their convictions vacated through a Motion for Appropriate Relief and granted a pardon of innocence by the Governor based on the Commission's investigation. The Commission has also confirmed guilt in 10 cases.

The Commission has remained a model for post-conviction innocence claim review. It works continuously to increase efficiency, streamline processes, and thoroughly investigate innocence claims while providing high quality victim services in these unique cases. As a direct result of this work, other states, and even other countries, have contacted the Commission for guidance and mentorship. The North Carolina General Assembly further invested in the Commission and the Commission process by providing the Commission with an unprecedented budget expansion in the 2021 budget, which provided the Commission with the means to continue its innovative and essential work.

For questions, please contact [Lindsey Guice Smith](#), at 919-890-1580
or ncjic@nccourts.org.

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About North Carolina Judicial Branch

The [North Carolina Judicial Branch](#) is an equal and distinctively separate branch and core function of government. More than 7,000 Judicial Branch employees statewide administer justice in courthouses in North Carolina's 100 counties. The [Judicial Branch budget for FY 2020-21](#) was \$598.2M, 89.2% of which is used to pay salaries and the remaining 10.8% is used for operations. The Judicial Branch receives only 2.44% of the overall State budget.

About North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts

The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) is the administrative agency for the [North Carolina Judicial Branch](#), providing administrative services to help the North Carolina court system operate more efficiently and effectively, taking into account each courthouse's diverse needs, caseloads, and available resources.

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