

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
1979 SESSION

CHAPTER 412
HOUSE BILL 874

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE NORTH CAROLINA BALANCED GROWTH POLICY.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. Title. This Article shall be known as the North Carolina Balanced Growth Policy Act.

Sec. 2. Purposes. The purposes of this act are to declare as a policy that the State of North Carolina shall encourage economic progress and job opportunities throughout the State; support growth trends which are favorable to maintain a dispersed population, to maintain a healthy and pleasant environment and to preserve the natural resources of the State.

Sec. 3. Declaration of State Balanced Growth Policy. The General Assembly of North Carolina recognizes the importance of reaching a higher standard of living throughout North Carolina by maintaining a balance of people, jobs, public services and the environment, supported by the growing network of small and large cities in the State. The General Assembly of North Carolina, in order to assure that opportunities for a higher standard of living are available all across the State, declares that it shall be the policy of the State to bring more and better jobs to where people live; to encourage the development of adequate public services on an equitable basis for all of the State's people at an efficient cost; and to maintain the State's natural environmental heritage while accommodating urban and agricultural growth.

Sec. 4. Cooperation of agencies. The General Assembly encourages, to the fullest extent possible, all State agencies to review their existing policies, procedures and regulations to bring them into conformity with the provisions of this Balanced Growth Policy.

Sec. 5. Achieving Balanced Growth. It shall be the policy of the State of North Carolina to support the expansion of the State and to designate growth areas or centers with the potential, capacity and desire for growth. The Governor, with the advice of county and municipal government officials and citizens, is charged with designating growth areas or centers, which shall include at least one center in each North Carolina county. Designation of growth areas or centers shall be reviewed annually. These designations may be used for the purpose of establishing priority consideration for State and federal assistance for growth.

Progress toward achieving balanced growth shall be measured by the strengthening of economic activity and the adequacy of public services within each of the State's multi-county regions and, as to the geographical area included, the Southeastern Economic Development Commission. The Governor, with the advice of county and municipal government officials and citizens, shall develop measures of progress toward achieving balanced growth.

Sec. 6. Citizen participation. The Governor shall establish a process of citizen participation that assures the expression of needs and aspirations of North Carolina's citizens in regard to the purposes of this act.

Sec. 7. Policy areas. The following program area guidelines shall become the policy for the State of North Carolina:

- (1) to encourage diversified job growth in different areas of the State, with particular attention to those groups which have suffered from high rates of unemployment or underemployment, so that sufficient work opportunities at high wage levels can exist where people live;

- (2) to encourage the development of transportation systems that link growth areas or centers together with appropriate levels of service;
- (3) to encourage full support for the expansion of family-owned and operated units in agriculture, forestry and the seafood industry as the basis for increasing productive capacity;
- (4) to encourage the development and use of the State's natural resources wisely in support of Balanced Growth Policy while fulfilling the State's constitutional obligation to protect and preserve its natural heritage;
- (5) to promote the concept that a full range of human development services shall be available and accessible to persons in all areas of the State;
- (6) to encourage the continued expansion of early childhood, elementary, secondary and higher education opportunities so that they are improving in both quality and availability;
- (7) to encourage excellent technical training for North Carolina workers that prepares them to acquire and hold high-skill jobs and that encourages industries which employ high-skill workers to locate in the State;
- (8) to encourage the availability of cultural opportunities to people where they live;
- (9) to encourage the expansion of local government capacity for managing growth consistent with this Balanced Growth Policy; and
- (10) to encourage conservation of existing energy resources and provide for the development of an adequate and reliable energy supply, while protecting the environment.

Sec. 8. Implementation of a State-local partnership. The Governor, with the advice of the State Goals and Policy Board, shall establish a statewide policy-setting process for Balanced Growth, in partnership with local government, that brings about full participation of both the State and local government. The purpose of this State-local partnership is to arrive at joint strategies and objectives for balanced statewide development and ensure consistent action by the State and local government for jointly agreed upon strategies and objectives.

Sec. 9. There is established in the office of the Governor, the North Carolina Office of Local Government Advocacy. The Local Government Advocacy Council, created by Executive Order Number 22, is hereby transferred to the Office of Local Government Advocacy. The Council shall consist of 19 persons and shall be composed as follows: six members representing county government, five of whom are the members of the Executive Committee of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and one who is the Executive Director of the Association; six members representing municipal government, five of whom are the members of the Executive Committee of the North Carolina League of Municipalities and one who is the Executive Director of the League; two Senators appointed by the President of the Senate; two members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and three at-large members appointed by the Governor. The Association of County Commissioners and the League of Municipalities representatives shall serve terms on the Council consistent with their terms as Executive Committee members appointed by the Governor. The members appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall serve until January 15, 1981, or until their successors are appointed, whichever is later. Their successors shall serve a term of two years. The at-large members shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor for a period of two years. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be the President of the Association of County Commissioners and the President of the League of Municipalities respectively, with the office rotating between the League and Association annually. Provided that no person among those appointed by the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall serve on the Council for more than two complete consecutive terms.

The Council shall meet at least once each quarter and may hold special meetings at any time at the call of the Chairman or the Governor.

The members of the Council shall receive per diem and necessary travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 138-5.

Membership. The Local Government Advocacy Council shall not be considered a public office and, to that end membership may be held in addition to the number of offices authorized by G.S. 128-1.1.

The general duties and responsibilities of the Council are:

- (1) to advocate on behalf of local government and to advise the Governor and his Cabinet on the development and implementation of policies and programs which directly affect local government;
- (2) to function as liaison for State and local relations and communications;
- (3) to identify problem areas and recommend policies with respect to State, regional and local relations; and
- (4) to review, monitor and evaluate current and proposed State program policies, practices, procedures, guidelines and regulations with respect to their effect on local government.

The Office of Local Government Advocacy shall be staffed by persons knowledgeable of local government who shall seek to carry out the directives of the Local Government Advocacy Council by:

- (1) advocating the policies of the Council with various State departments;
- (2) serving as a communications liaison between the Local Government Advocacy Council and the various State departments; and
- (3) functioning as an ombudsman for the resolution of local government problems.

It shall be the responsibility of each respective Cabinet department head to: (1) insure that departmental employees make every effort to cooperate with and provide support to the Local Government Advocacy Council in keeping with the intent of this act; and (2) advise the Local Government Advocacy Council of their proposed policies and plans for review in terms of their effect on local government.

Sec. 10. No appropriations are required. This program and the provisions of this act shall be implemented to the extent appropriations are provided by the General Assembly, but nothing herein contained shall be construed to obligate the General Assembly to appropriate additional funds.

Sec. 11. Severability. If any provision of this act or the application thereof is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the act which can be given effect without the invalid provision of application and to this end the provisions of this act are declared to be severable.

Sec. 12. This act is effective upon ratification.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified, this the 19th day of April, 1979.