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Short Title: Clarify Ballot Instructions.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

April 23, 1991

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO MAKE CERTAIN CHANGES IN BALLOT INSTRUCTIONS AND
BALLOT FORMAT.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. G.S. 163-140(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Kinds of General Election Ballots; Right to Combine. – For purposes of
general elections, there shall be seven kinds of official ballots entitled:

- (1) Ballot for presidential electors
- (2) Ballot for United States Senator
- (3) Ballot for member of the United States House of Representatives
- (4) State ballot
- (5) County ballot
- (7) Ballot for constitutional amendments and other propositions submitted to the people.

Use of official ballots shall be limited to the purposes indicated by their titles. The printing on all ballots shall be plain and legible but, unless large type is specified by this section, type larger than 10-point shall not be used in printing ballots. All general election ballots shall be prepared in such a way as to leave sufficient blank space beneath each name printed thereon in which a voter may conveniently write the name of any person for whom he may desire to vote.

Unless prohibited by this section, the board of elections, State or county, charged by law with printing ballots may, in its discretion, combine any two or more official

1 ballots. Whenever two or more ballots are combined, the voting instructions for the
2 State ballot set out in subsection (b)(4) of this section shall be used, except that if the
3 two ballots being combined do not contain a multi-seat race, then the second sentence of
4 instruction b. shall not appear on the ballot.

5 Except where the voting system used makes separation of ballots impractical,
6 contests in the general election for seats in the State House of Representatives and State
7 Senate shall appear on the same ballot, which shall be separate from all other ballots.

8 If the State Board of Elections divides the State ballot into two or more ballots, all
9 candidates for superior court shall appear on the same ballot except that the State Board
10 of Elections may divide the election of superior court judges into two ballots either
11 because of length of the ballot or to provide a separate ballot for multi-seat races but
12 only superior court judges shall be on those ballots, and all candidates for the Appellate
13 Division shall appear on the same ballot."

14 Sec. 2. G.S. 163-140(b)(4) reads as rewritten:

15 "(4) State Ballot: Beneath the title and general instructions set out in this
16 subsection, the ballot for single-seat contests for State officers, and for
17 all State officers where mechanical voting machines are used
18 (including judges of the superior court) shall be divided into parallel
19 columns separated by distinct black lines. The State Board of
20 Elections shall assign a separate column to each political party having
21 candidates for State offices and one to unaffiliated candidates, if any.
22 At the head of each party column the party's name shall be printed in
23 large type, and at the head of the column for unaffiliated candidates
24 shall be printed in large type the words 'Unaffiliated Candidates.'
25 Below the party name in each column shall be printed a circle, one-
26 half inch in diameter, around which shall be plainly printed the
27 following instruction: 'For a straight ticket, mark within this circle.'
28 With distinct black lines, the State Board of Elections shall divide the
29 columns into horizontal sections and, in the customary order of office,
30 assign a separate section to each office or group of offices to be filled.
31 On a single line at the top of each section shall be printed a direction as
32 to the number of candidates for whom a vote may be cast. If
33 candidates are to be chosen for different terms to the same office, the
34 term in each instance shall be printed as part of the title of the office.

35 The name or names of each political party's candidate or candidates
36 for each office listed on the ballot shall be printed in the appropriate
37 office section of the proper party column, and the names of
38 unaffiliated candidates shall be printed in the appropriate office section
39 of the column headed 'Unaffiliated Candidates.' At the left of each
40 name shall be printed a voting square, and in each column all voting
41 squares shall be arranged in a perpendicular line.

42 On the face of the ballot, above the party and unaffiliated column
43 division, the following instructions shall be printed in heavy black

1 type, and the words 'you must also' in instruction b. shall be
2 underlined:

- 3 'a. To vote for all candidates of one party (a straight ticket), make a
4 cross (X) mark in the circle of the party for whose candidates
5 you wish to vote.
- 6 b. You may vote a split ticket by marking a cross (X) mark in the
7 party circle and then making a cross (X) mark in the square
8 opposite the name of the candidate(s) you choose of a different
9 party ~~for whom you wish to vote~~. In any multi-seat race where a
10 party circle is marked and you vote for candidates of another
11 party, ~~in order for your vote to count for any candidates for that~~
12 ~~office of the party for which you marked the party circle~~ you must
13 also make a cross (X) mark opposite the name of those
14 candidate(s) you choose of the party for which you marked the
15 party circle to assure your vote will count.
- 16 c. You may also vote a split ticket by not marking a cross (X)
17 mark in the party circle, but by making a cross (X) mark in the
18 square opposite the name of each candidate for whom you wish
19 to vote.
- 20 d. If you tear or deface or wrongly mark this ballot, return it and
21 get another.'

22 On the bottom of the ballot shall be printed an identified facsimile
23 of the signature of the Chairman of the State Board of Elections. If the
24 State ballot contains no multi-seat race, then the second sentence of
25 instruction b. shall not appear on the ballot."

26 Sec. 3. G.S. 163-140(b)(5) reads as rewritten:

- 27 "(5) County Ballot: Beneath the title and general instructions set out in this
28 subsection, the ballot for single-seat contests for county officers
29 (including district attorney for the prosecutorial district in which the
30 county is situated, district judge for the district court district in which
31 the county is situated, and members of the General Assembly in the
32 senatorial and representative districts in which the county is situated),
33 and for all county offices where mechanical voting machines are used,
34 shall be divided into parallel columns separated by distinct black lines.
35 The county board of elections shall assign a separate column to each
36 political party having candidates for the offices on the ballot and one
37 to unaffiliated candidates, if any. At the head of each party column the
38 party's name shall be printed in large type and at the head of the
39 column for unaffiliated candidates shall be printed in large type the
40 words 'Unaffiliated Candidates.' Below the party name in each column
41 shall be printed a circle, one-half inch in diameter, around which shall
42 be plainly printed the following instruction: 'For a straight ticket, mark
43 within this circle.' With distinct black lines, the county board of
44 elections shall divide the columns into horizontal sections and, in the

1 customary order of office, assign a separate section to each office or
2 group of offices to be filled. On a single line at the top of each section
3 shall be printed the title of the office, and directly below the title shall
4 be printed a direction as to the number of candidates for whom a vote
5 may be cast. If candidates are to be chosen for different terms to the
6 same office, the term in each instance shall be printed as part of the
7 title of the office.

8 The name or names of each political party's candidate or candidates
9 for each office listed on the ballot shall be printed in the appropriate
10 office section of the proper party column, and the names of
11 unaffiliated candidates shall be printed in the appropriate office section
12 of the column headed 'Unaffiliated Candidates.' At the left of each
13 name shall be printed a voting square, and in each column all voting
14 squares shall be arranged in a perpendicular line.

15 On the face of the ballot, above the party and unaffiliated column
16 division, the following instructions shall be printed in heavy black
17 type, and the words 'you must also' in instruction b. shall be
18 underlined:

- 19 'a. To vote for all candidates of one party (a straight ticket), make a
20 cross (X) mark in the circle of the party for whose candidates
21 you wish to vote.
- 22 b. You may vote a split ticket by marking a cross (X) mark in the
23 party circle and then making a cross (X) mark in the square
24 opposite the name of the candidate(s) you choose of a different
25 party ~~for whom you wish to vote~~. In any multi-seat race where a
26 party circle is marked and you vote for candidates of another
27 party, ~~in order for your vote to count for any candidates for that~~
28 ~~office of the party for which you marked the party circle~~ you must
29 also make a cross (X) mark opposite the name of those
30 candidate(s) you choose of the party for which you marked the
31 party circle to assure your vote will count.
- 32 c. You may also vote a split ticket by not marking a cross (X)
33 mark in the party circle, but by making a cross (X) mark in the
34 square opposite the name of each candidate for whom you wish
35 to vote.
- 36 d. If you tear or deface or wrongly mark this ballot, return it and
37 get another.'

38 On the bottom of the ballot shall be printed an identified facsimile
39 of the signature of the chairman of the county board of elections. If
40 the county ballot contains no multi-seat race, then the second sentence
41 of instruction b. shall not appear on the ballot."

42 Sec. 4. G.S. 163-140(f) reads as rewritten:

43 "(f) Multi-seat Races. – The General Assembly finds that since the federal court
44 opinion voiding the law which provided that a straight-ticket ballot shall take

1 precedence in counting over a ballot marked for individual candidates, confusion has
2 occurred in the counting of ballots in multi-seat races. In order to minimize the
3 confusion of instructions for marking ballots in multi-seat races, which must be
4 different than those in single-seat races, the General Assembly finds it necessary that
5 these ballots be printed separately, except in the case of mechanical voting machines.
6 On such machines, where it is physically impossible to vote both a straight-ticket and
7 for an individual candidate, without pulling up the lever of an individual candidate,
8 clearly showing the voter's intention, it is unnecessary to have a separate ballot for
9 multi-seat races, and having such a separate ballot would result in more columns and
10 rows on the machine than the mechanical machine can handle.

11 Multi-seat races in partisan general elections, which except as provided in this
12 section would have appeared on the State ballot or county ballot, and except for multi-
13 seat races on mechanical voting machines, shall be placed on a separate multi-seat ballot
14 or ballots, which shall not be combined with any ballot other than a multi-seat ballot.
15 Beneath the title and general instructions set out in this subsection, the ballot(s) for
16 multi-seat races shall be divided into parallel columns separated by distinct black lines.
17 The State Board of Elections shall assign a separate column to each political party
18 having candidates in multi-seat races and one to unaffiliated candidates, if any. At the
19 head of each party column the party's name shall be printed in large type, and at the
20 head of the column for unaffiliated candidates shall be printed in large type the words
21 'Unaffiliated Candidates.' Below the party name in each column shall be printed a
22 circle, one-half inch in diameter, and around which shall be plainly printed the
23 following instruction: 'For a straight ticket, mark within this circle.' With distinct black
24 lines, the State Board of Elections shall divide the columns into horizontal sections and,
25 in the customary order of office, assign a separate section to each group of offices to be
26 filled. On a single line at the top of each section shall be printed a direction as to the
27 number of candidates for whom a vote may be cast. If candidates are to be chosen for
28 different terms to the same office, the term in each instance shall be printed as part of
29 the title of the office.

30 The name or names of each political party's candidate or candidates for each office
31 listed on the ballot shall be printed in the appropriate office section of the proper party
32 column and the names of unaffiliated candidates shall be printed in the appropriate
33 office section of the column headed 'Unaffiliated Candidates.' At the left of each name
34 shall be printed a voting square, and in each column all voting squares shall be arranged
35 in a perpendicular line.

36 On the face of the ballot, above the party and unaffiliated column division, the
37 following instructions shall be printed in heavy red type to contrast with the type of the
38 rest of the ballot:

- 39 'a. To vote for all candidates of one party (a straight ticket), make a
40 cross (X) mark in the circle of the party of your choice.
41 b. You may vote a split ticket in one of two ways:
42 (1) By making a cross mark opposite the name of each
43 candidate for whom you wish to vote and making no
44 mark in the party circle, or

- 1 (2) By marking the party circle and then making a cross
2 mark opposite the name of each candidate you choose of
3 the party whose circle you marked as well as each
4 candidate you choose of any other party in the race(s)
5 where you wish to vote a split ticket.
- 6 c. If you tear or deface or wrongly mark this ballot, return it and
7 get another.'
- 8 Ballot instructions need not be printed in red type except on the separate ballot(s)
9 for multi-seat races."
- 10 Sec. 5. This act is effective upon ratification.