

**Sec. 9. Superior Courts.**

(1) Superior Court districts. The General Assembly shall, from time to time, divide the State into a convenient number of Superior Court judicial districts and shall provide for the election of one or more Superior Court Judges for each district. Each regular Superior Court Judge shall reside in the district for which he is elected. The General Assembly may provide by general law for the selection or appointment of special or emergency Superior Court Judges not selected for a particular judicial district.

(2) Open at all times; sessions for trial of cases. The Superior Courts shall be open at all times for the transaction of all business except the trial of issues of fact requiring a jury. Regular trial sessions of the Superior Court shall be held at times fixed pursuant to a calendar of courts promulgated by the Supreme Court. At least two sessions for the trial of jury cases shall be held annually in each county.

(3) Clerks. A Clerk of the Superior Court for each county shall be elected for a term of four years by the qualified voters thereof, at the same time and places as members of the General Assembly are elected. If the office of Clerk of the Superior Court becomes vacant otherwise than by the expiration of the term, or if the people fail to elect, the senior regular resident Judge of the Superior Court serving the county shall appoint to fill the vacancy until an election can be regularly held.

**Sec. 10. District Courts.**

The General Assembly shall, from time to time, divide the State into a convenient number of local court districts and shall prescribe where the District Courts shall sit, but a District Court must sit in at least one place in each county. District Judges shall be elected for each district for a term of four years, in a manner prescribed by law. When more than one District Judge is authorized and elected for a district, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court shall designate one of the judges as Chief District Judge. Every District Judge shall reside in the district for which he is elected. For each county, the senior regular resident Judge of the Superior Court serving the county shall appoint from nominations submitted by the Clerk of the Superior Court of the county, one or more Magistrates who shall be officers of the District Court. The initial term of appointment for a magistrate shall be for two years and subsequent terms shall be for four years. The number of District Judges and Magistrates shall, from time to time, be determined by the General Assembly. Vacancies in the office of District Judge shall be filled for the unexpired term in a manner prescribed by law. Vacancies in the office of Magistrate shall be filled for the unexpired term in the manner provided for original appointment to the office, unless otherwise provided by the General Assembly. (2004-128, s. 16.)

**Sec. 11. Assignment of Judges.**

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, acting in accordance with rules of the Supreme Court, shall make assignments of Judges of the Superior Court and may transfer District Judges from one district to another for temporary or specialized duty. The principle of rotating Superior Court Judges among the various districts of a division is a salutary one and shall be observed. For this purpose the General Assembly may divide the State into a number of judicial divisions. Subject to the general supervision of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, assignment of District Judges within each local court district shall be made by the Chief District Judge.

**§ 7A-47.3. Rotation and assignment; sessions.**

(a) To effect the intent of Article IV, Section 11 of the North Carolina Constitution, each regular resident superior court judge may, upon each rotation, be assigned to hold the courts either of one of the districts or of one of the sets of districts, as defined in G.S. 7A-41.1(a), in that judge's judicial division.

(b) All sessions of superior court shall be for an entire county, whether that county comprises or is located in a district or in a set of districts as defined in G.S. 7A-41.1(a), and at each session all matters and proceedings arising anywhere in the county shall be heard. (1987, c. 509, s. 3, (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 9.)

**§ 7A-41.1. District and set of districts defined; senior resident superior court judges and their authority.**

- (a) In this section and in any other law which refers to this section:
- (1) "District" means any superior court district established by G.S. 7A-41 which consists exclusively of one or more entire counties;
  - (2) "Set of districts" means any set of two or more superior court districts established under G.S. 7A-41, none of which consists exclusively of one or more entire counties, but both or all of which include territory from the same county or counties and together comprise all of the territory of that county or those counties;
  - (3) "Regular resident superior court judge of the district or set of districts" means a regular superior court judge who is a resident judge of any of the superior court districts established under G.S. 7A-41 which comprise or are included in a district or set of districts as defined herein.
- (b) There shall be one and only one senior resident superior court judge for each district or set of districts as defined in subsection (a) of this section, who shall be:
- (1) Where there is only one regular resident superior court judge for the district, that judge; and
  - (2) Where there are two or more regular resident superior court judges for the district or set of districts, the judge who, from among all the regular resident superior court judges of the district or set of districts, has the most continuous service as a regular resident superior court judge; provided if two or more judges are of equal seniority, the oldest of those judges shall be the senior regular resident superior court judge.
  - (3) Where there is a set of districts, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court shall designate one of the judges as senior resident superior court judge to serve in that capacity at the pleasure of the Chief Justice, if that set of districts are wholly contained in one county that is specified in law as the sole proper venue for certain actions.
- (c) Senior resident superior court judges and regular resident superior court judges possess equal judicial jurisdiction, power, authority and status, but all duties placed by the Constitution or statutes on the resident judge of a superior court district, including the appointment to and removal from office, which are not related to a case, controversy or judicial proceeding and which do not involve the exercise of judicial power, shall be discharged, throughout a district as defined in subsection (a) of this section or throughout all of the districts comprising a set of districts so defined, for each county in that district or set of districts, by the senior resident superior court judge for that district or set of districts. That senior resident superior court judge alone among the superior court judges of that district or set of districts shall receive the salary and benefits of a senior resident superior court judge.
- (d) A senior resident superior court judge for a district or set of districts as defined in subsection (a) of this section with two or more regular resident superior court judges, by notice in writing to the Administrative Officer of the Courts, may decline to exercise the authority vested in him by this section, in which event such authority shall be exercised by the regular resident superior court judge who, among the other regular resident superior court judges of the district or set of districts, is next senior in point of service or age, respectively.
- (e) In the event a senior resident superior court judge for a district or set of districts with one or more regular resident superior court judges is unable, due to mental or physical incapacity, to exercise the authority vested in him by the statute, and the Chief Justice, in his discretion, has determined that such incapacity exists, the Chief Justice shall appoint an acting senior regular resident superior court judge from the other regular resident judges of the district

or set of districts, to exercise, temporarily, the authority of the senior regular resident judge. Such appointee shall serve at the pleasure of the Chief Justice and until his temporary appointment is vacated by appropriate order. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 2; 2010-105, s. 1; 2012-194, s. 63.5.)

**§ 7A-200. District and set of districts defined; chief district court judges and their authority.**

(a) In this section:

- (1) "District" means any district court district established by G.S. 7A-133 which consists exclusively of one or more entire counties;
- (2) "Set of districts" means any set of two or more district court districts established under G.S. 7A-133, none of which consists exclusively of one or more entire counties, but both or all of which include territory from the same county or counties and together comprise all of the territory of that county or those counties; "set of districts" also means a set of three district court districts in one county, one consisting of the entire county and the other two consisting of parts of that county; and
- (3) "Chief district court judge" means in the case of a set of districts, the chief district court judge for those districts, designated by the chief justice from among the district court judges for the districts in the set of districts.

(b) Whenever by law a duty is imposed upon the chief district court judge, it means for a set of districts the chief district court judge designated under subsection (a)(3) of this section. (1995, c. 507, s. 21.1(a); 2007-484, s. 25(c).)