

New North Carolina Legislative Districts

Late last year, the North Carolina General Assembly replaced temporary, court-ordered legislative districts used for the 2002 elections with a new set of district maps. An analysis of the new districts based on data compiled by [NCFREE](#), a nonpartisan, pro-business research organization, shows that the new configuration reflects the rough parity that exists between the Democratic and Republican parties.

NCFREE divides legislative districts into five types: *strong Democratic* districts have Democratic registrations exceeding 55 percent; *leaning Democrat* districts have registrations between 50 and 55 percent); *leaning Republican* districts have GOP registrations between 30 and 35 percent; and *strong Republican* districts have GOP registrations exceeding 35 percent. *Swing* districts are composed of voters arrayed to produce highly competitive elections.

Overall, the new plans establish a rough parity between the two parties. In the Senate there are 25 strong and leaning Democratic districts and 22 strong and leaning Republican ones. In the House there are more strong and leaning Republican districts (55) than Democratic (51).

North Carolina Senate

The Senate contains 17 strong Democratic, 7 leaning Democratic, 4 swing, 7 leaning Republican and 15 strong Republican districts (Table

1). Compared to the court-ordered plan used in 2002, the new map reduces the number of swing and leaning districts and increases the number of

Table 1: State Senate District Trends, 2000-2003						
<i>District Type</i>	<i>2003 Adopted Districts (#)</i>	<i>2002 Court-Adopted Districts (#)</i>	<i>Change 2003 v. 2002 (#)</i>	<i>2001 Invalid Districts (#)</i>	<i>1992-2000 Districts (#)</i>	<i>Change 2003 v.2000 (#)</i>
Strong D	17	13	+4	20	9	+8
Leaning D	7	9	-2	8	8	-1
Swing	4	6	-2	6	14	-10
Leaning R	7	8	-1	2	7	0
Strong R	15	14	+1	14	12	+3

Source: NCFREE

strong districts. More specifically, the new configuration does the following:

- Creates 24 strong and leaning Democratic districts and 22 strong and leaning Republican districts. Democrats currently occupy one strong Republican seat (Hoyle) and two leaning Republican seats (Queen and Thomas). One Republican (Moore) holds a leaning Democratic seat.
- Reduces the number of swing districts from six to four. Democrats occupy two of these seats (Dalton and Hargett), and Republicans control two (Ballantine and Webster). Ballantine has chosen to run for governor, so his district will have an opening at the next election.
- Places eight incumbents in 4 districts, resulting in incumbents potentially facing each other next election. Three of these districts are strong Republican districts (39, 41 and 45) that pair GOP incumbents. In the 45th District, however, Sen. Virginia Foxx is not running in order to pursue a congressional bid. The remaining district (5) is a leaning Democrat district that places a Republican (Moore) with a Democrat (Kerr).
- Draws four new open seats – two strong Democratic (7 and 40) and two strong Republican (30 and 44).

North Carolina House of Representatives

The House contains 34 strong Democratic, 17 leaning Democratic, 14 swing, 19 leaning Republican and 36 strong Republican districts (Table 2). Compared to the court-ordered plan used in 2002, the new map reduces

<i>District Type</i>	<i>2003 Adopted Districts (#)</i>	<i>2002 Court-Adopted Districts (#)</i>	<i>Change 2003 v. 2002 (#)</i>	<i>2001 Invalid Districts (#)</i>	<i>1992-2000 Districts (#)</i>	<i>Change 2003 v. 2002 (#)</i>
Strong D	34	34	0	39	25	+9
Leaning D	17	18	-1	20	16	+1
Swing	14	19	-5	14	32	-18
Leaning R	19	18	+1	17	16	+3
Strong R	36	31	+5	30	31	+5

Source: NCFREE

the number of swing and leaning Democratic districts and increases the number of strong Republican districts. Specifically, the new plan does the following:

- Creates 55 strong and leaning Republican districts and 51 strong and leaning Democratic districts. Democrats currently occupy two leaning Republican seats (Harrell and England). Two Republicans (Ellis and Sexton) hold leaning Democratic seats.
- Reduces the number of swing districts from 19 to 14. Republicans and Democrats each occupy 7 of those seats. Two swing districts (9 and 45) match Democratic incumbents against each other.
- Places 16 incumbents in eight districts. Three of these districts (79, 104 and 108) are strong Republican districts that match GOP incumbents against each other, and one (26) is a leaning Republican district

with two incumbent Republicans. Also, a Republican (Sexton) and Democratic (Cole) incumbent are now in the same leaning Democratic district.

- Draws eight new open seats – one strong Democratic (27), two leaning Democratic (4 and 50), one leaning Republican (109) and four strong Republican (28, 74, 88 and 105).

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