

§ 15A-622. Formation and organization of grand juries; other preliminary matters.

(a) The mode of selecting grand jurors and of drawing and impaneling grand jurors is governed by this Article and Chapter 9 of the General Statutes, Jurors. Challenges to the panel from which grand jurors were drawn are governed by the procedure in G.S. 15A-1211.

(b) To impanel a new grand jury, the presiding judge must direct that the names of all persons returned as jurors be separately placed in a container. The clerk must draw out the names of 18 persons to serve as grand jurors. Of these 18, the first nine drawn serve until the first session of court at which criminal cases are heard held in the county after the following January 1, and thereafter until their replacements are selected and sworn. The next nine serve until the first session of court at which criminal cases are heard held in the county after the following July 1, and thereafter until their replacements are selected and sworn. If this formula results in any term likely to be shorter than two months or longer than 15 months, the presiding judge impaneling the grand jury may modify the terms. Thereafter, beginning with the first session of superior court at which criminal cases are heard held in the county following January 1 and July 1 of each year, nine new grand jurors must be selected in the manner provided above to replace the jurors whose terms have expired. All new grand jurors so selected serve until the first session of court at which criminal cases are heard held after January 1 or July 1 which most nearly results in a 12-month term, and thereafter until their replacements are selected and sworn. If a vacancy occurs in the membership of the grand jury, the superior court judge next convening the jury or next holding a session of court at which criminal cases are heard in the county may order that a new juror be drawn in the manner provided above to fill the vacancy.

The senior resident superior court judge of the district may impanel a second grand jury in any county of the district to serve concurrently with the first. The second grand jury shall be impaneled as provided in the first paragraph of this subsection. The court shall continue to have two grand juries until the senior resident superior court judge orders the second grand jury to terminate.

In any county the senior resident superior court judge, if he finds that grand jury service is placing a disproportionate burden on grand jurors and their employers, may fix the term of service of a grand juror at six months rather than 12 months. In doing so, he shall prescribe procedures, consistent with this section, for replacement of half of the jurors of the grand jury or grand juries approximately every three months.

(c) Neither the grand jury panel nor any individual grand juror may be challenged, but a superior court judge may:

- (1) At any time before new grand jurors are sworn, discharge them, or discharge the grand jury, and cause new grand jurors or a new grand jury to be drawn if he finds that jurors have not been selected in accordance with law or that the grand jury is illegally constituted; or
- (2) At any time after a grand juror is drawn, refuse to swear him, or discharge him after he has been sworn, upon a finding that he is disqualified from service, incapable of performing his duties, or guilty of misconduct in the performance of his duties so as to impair the proper functioning of the grand jury.

(d) The presiding judge may excuse a grand juror from service of the balance of his term, upon his own motion or upon the juror's request for good cause shown. The foreman may excuse individual jurors from attending particular sessions of the grand jury, except that he may not excuse more than two jurors for any one session.

(e) After the impaneling of a new grand jury, or the impaneling of nine new jurors under the terms of this section, the presiding judge must appoint one of the grand jurors as foreman and may appoint another to act as foreman during any absence or disability of the

foreman. Unless removed for cause by a superior court judge, the foreman serves until his successor is appointed and sworn.

(f) The foreman and other new grand jurors must take the oath prescribed in G.S. 11-11. After new grand jurors have been sworn, the presiding judge may give the grand jurors written or oral instructions relating to the performance of their duties. At subsequent sessions of court, the presiding judge is not required to give any additional instructions to the grand jurors.

(g) At any time when a grand jury is in recess, a superior court judge may, upon application of the prosecutor or upon his own motion, order the grand jury reconvened for the purpose of dealing with a matter requiring grand jury action.

(h) A written petition for convening of grand jury under this section may be filed by the district attorney, the district attorney's designated assistant, or a special prosecutor requested pursuant to G.S. 114-11.6, with the approval of a committee of at least three members of the North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys, and with the concurrence of the Attorney General, with the Clerk of the North Carolina Supreme Court. The Chief Justice shall appoint a panel of three judges to determine whether to order the grand jury convened. A grand jury under this section may be convened if the three-judge panel determines that:

- (1) The petition alleges the commission of or a conspiracy to commit a violation of G.S. 90-95(h) or G.S. 90-95.1, any part of which violation or conspiracy occurred in the county where the grand jury sits, and that persons named in the petition have knowledge related to the identity of the perpetrators of those crimes but will not divulge that knowledge voluntarily or that such persons request that they be allowed to testify before the grand jury; and
- (2) The affidavit sets forth facts that establish probable cause to believe that the crimes specified in the petition have been committed and reasonable grounds to suspect that the persons named in the petition have knowledge related to the identity of the perpetrators of those crimes.

The affidavit shall be based upon personal knowledge or, if the source of the information and basis for the belief are stated, upon information and belief. The panel's order convening the grand jury as an investigative grand jury shall direct the grand jury to investigate the crimes and persons named in the petition, and shall be filed with the Clerk of the North Carolina Supreme Court. A grand jury so convened retains all powers, duties, and responsibilities of a grand jury under this Article. The contents of the petition and the affidavit shall not be disclosed. Upon receiving a petition under this subsection, the Chief Justice shall appoint a panel to determine whether the grand jury should be convened as an investigative grand jury.

A grand jury authorized by this subsection may be convened from an existing grand jury or grand juries authorized by subsection (b) of this section or may be convened as an additional grand jury to an existing grand jury or grand juries. Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section, grand jurors impaneled pursuant to this subsection shall serve for a period of 12 months, and, if an additional grand jury is convened, 18 persons shall be selected to constitute that grand jury. At any time for cause shown, the presiding superior court judge may excuse a juror temporarily or permanently, and in the latter event the court may impanel another person in place of the juror excused.

(i) An investigative grand jury may be convened pursuant to subsection (h) of this section if the petition alleges the commission of, attempt to commit or solicitation to commit, or a conspiracy to commit a violation of G.S. 14-43.11 (human trafficking), G.S. 14-43.12 (involuntary servitude), or G.S. 14-43.13 (sexual servitude).

(j) Any grand juror who serves the full term of service under subsection (b) or subsection (h) of this section shall not be required to serve again as a grand juror or as a juror for a period of six years. (1779, c. 157, s. 11, P.R.; R.C., c. 31, s. 33; 1879, c. 12; Code, ss.

404, 1742; Rev., ss. 1969, 1971; C.S., ss. 2333, 2336; 1929, c. 228; 1967, c. 218, s. 1; 1973, c. 1286, s. 1; 1975, c. 166, s. 27; 1977, c. 711, s. 24; 1979, c. 177, s. 1; 1981, c. 440, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 843, ss. 2, 6; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1040, ss. 1, 3; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 1039, s. 4; 1991, c. 686, ss. 1, 3; 1995, c. 362, s. 1; 2013-148, s. 3; 2013-368, s. 21.)