

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 2013

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SENATE BILL 127

Short Title: Customer Srvc., Econ. Dev., and Transport'n . (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Brown (Primary Sponsor); and Cook.

Referred to: Commerce.

February 25, 2013

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH UNIFORM GEOGRAPHICAL ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS FOR THE STATE AND TO CREATE THE COMMISSION ON REGIONALIZATION CONFORMITY TO DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS ON (I) CONFORMING THE EXISTING REGIONAL DIVISIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES, AND THE SEVEN REGIONAL COMMISSIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS TO THESE UNIFORM DIVISIONS, AND (II) A SCHEDULE FOR CONFORMING REGIONAL DIVISIONS OF OTHER STATE AGENCIES THAT HAVE REGIONAL OFFICES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

PART I. CREATION OF UNIFORM REGIONAL DIVISIONS

SECTION 1.(a) Intent to Create Uniform Regional Divisions. – It is the intent of the General Assembly to establish geographically uniform administrative regions in this State for State agencies that have regional offices and, to the extent feasible, to consolidate regional offices and to establish a one-stop source in each region for citizens and businesses seeking State services at a regional office.

SECTION 1.(b) Establishment of Regional Divisions. – For purposes of regionalization conformity, the State is hereby divided into seven regions as follows:

- (1) Region I, consisting of Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, and Yancey Counties.
(2) Region II, consisting of Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Surry, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yadkin Counties.
(3) Region III, consisting of Alamance, Caswell, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Guilford, Orange, Rockingham, Rowan, and Stokes Counties.
(4) Region IV, consisting of Anson, Cabarrus, Chatham, Hoke, Lee, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Moore, Randolph, Richmond, Scotland, Stanly, and Union Counties.
(5) Region V, consisting of Durham, Edgecombe, Franklin, Granville, Halifax, Johnston, Nash, Person, Vance, Wake, Warren, Wayne, and Wilson Counties.
(6) Region VI, consisting of Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Cumberland, Duplin, Harnett, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender, Robeson, and Sampson Counties.



- 1 (7) Region VII, consisting of Beaufort, Bertie, Camden, Carteret, Chowan,
2 Craven, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Greene, Hertford, Hyde, Jones, Lenoir,
3 Martin, Northampton, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Pitt, Tyrrell, and
4 Washington Counties.

5 **PART II. IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIFORM REGIONAL DIVISIONS IN**
6 **PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENTS OF**
7 **TRANSPORTATION, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES, AND**
8 **THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS AND**
9 **PARTNERSHIPS**

10 **SECTION 2.(a)** Agency-Level Study Required. – The following shall each
11 conduct a self-study of (i) how their processes for customer and regulated client services and
12 their existing regional alignments and online services may be most efficiently and economically
13 aligned with the regions set out in Section 1(b) of this act and (ii) how their programs and
14 activities at the regional level may be best coordinated with those of the other entities listed
15 below and with other State agencies to create one-stop regional services for citizens and
16 businesses:

- 17 (1) The Department of Transportation.
18 (2) The Department of Environment and Natural Resources.
19 (3) Each of the four regional economic development commissions created in
20 Chapter 158 of the General Statutes (the Western North Carolina Regional
21 Economic Development Commission (AdvantageWest), North Carolina's
22 Northeast Commission, the Southeastern North Carolina Regional Economic
23 Development Commission, and North Carolina's Eastern Region
24 Development Commission).
25 (4) Each of the three remaining regional economic development partnerships
26 (the Charlotte Regional Partnership, Inc., the Piedmont Triad Regional
27 Partnership, and the Research Triangle Regional Partnership).

28 Each entity shall report the results of the study to the Study Commission on Regionalization
29 Conformity no later than September 1, 2013.

30 **SECTION 2.(b)** Funding. – Each entity conducting the self-study directed in
31 subsection (c) of this section shall use funds otherwise available to the entity to conduct the
32 study.

33 **SECTION 3.(a)** Creation of Commission. – The Study Commission on
34 Regionalization Conformity is established in the General Assembly.

35 **SECTION 3.(b)** Membership. – The Study Commission on Regionalization
36 Conformity shall consist of eight members, four Senators appointed by the President Pro
37 Tempore of the Senate and four Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of
38 Representatives.

39 **SECTION 3.(c)** Cochairs; Vacancies; Quorum. – The Study Commission on
40 Regionalization Conformity shall have two cochairs, one designated by the President Pro
41 Tempore of the Senate and one designated by the Speaker of the House of Representatives
42 from among their respective appointees. The Commission shall meet upon the call of the
43 cochairs. Any vacancy on the Commission shall be filled by the original appointing authority.
44 A majority of the members of the Commission constitutes a quorum.

45 **SECTION 3.(d)** Compensation; Administration. – Members of the Study
46 Commission on Regionalization Conformity shall receive per diem, subsistence, and travel
47 allowances in accordance with G.S. 120-3.1. The Commission, while in the discharge of its
48 official duties, may exercise all powers provided for under G.S. 120-19 and G.S. 120-19.1
49 through G.S. 120-19.4. The Commission may meet in the Legislative Building or the
50 Legislative Office Building.

1 With approval of the Legislative Services Commission, the Legislative Services
2 Officer shall assign professional staff to assist the Study Commission on Regionalization
3 Conformity in its work. The House of Representatives' and the Senate's Directors of Legislative
4 Assistants shall assign clerical staff to the Study Commission on Regionalization Conformity,
5 and the expenses relating to the clerical employees shall be borne by the Commission. The
6 Study Commission on Regionalization Conformity may contract for professional, clerical, or
7 consultant services as provided by G.S. 120-32.02.

8 **SECTION 4.(a) Duties.** – The Study Commission on Regionalization Conformity
9 shall study and develop recommendations to implement the alignment of the regional divisions
10 of the Department of Transportation, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources,
11 and the seven regional commissions and partnerships ("the entities" or "these entities"). The
12 study shall include a review of the self-studies submitted by these entities. The
13 recommendations shall include:

- 14 (1) Within each region, a location suitable for a shared regional office. In
15 developing this recommendation, the Commission shall consider:
 - 16 a. The need to include at a future time the regional offices of additional
17 State agencies and programs.
 - 18 b. The need to reduce any economic impact on localities losing existing
19 regional or local offices.
 - 20 c. How well a consolidated regional office at this location would be
21 able to interface with other regional entities and multicounty areas.
 - 22 d. Any savings or additional costs that may result from the choice of
23 location.
 - 24 e. Any other factor the Commission identifies as relevant.
- 25 (2) A plan for shared regional facilities and shared staff, equipment, and support
26 services located at the regional facilities. The plan may include provisions
27 for dual employment status and for intra-agency funding agreements among
28 the entities that may need to be made. In developing this plan, the
29 Commission shall include the identification and consideration of any savings
30 or costs that may result, including possible reductions in staff and the need
31 for training new staff at new locations.
- 32 (3) A plan for cross-training staff who provide direct services to citizens and
33 businesses, especially frontline staff.
- 34 (4) Which services and programs provided by these entities at regional offices
35 can be consolidated. In making this recommendation, the Commission shall
36 identify what improvements in service to citizens and businesses and what
37 savings or additional costs may result.
- 38 (5) A plan to enhance communication between the entities.
- 39 (6) Whether entities should share or cross-link Web sites.
- 40 (7) A plan for requiring local commerce entities to leverage private funding
41 whenever possible.
- 42 (8) A proposed time line for implementation of the Commission's
43 recommendations. In developing the time line, the Commission shall
44 identify and consider as factors current leases, current contracts that would
45 be affected by the proposed consolidation, obligations under federal law, any
46 need for the economic development partnerships to amend their articles of
47 incorporation, the need for legislative or administrative rule changes, and
48 any other factor the Commission identifies as relevant.
- 49 (9) Other State departments, agencies, boards, or commissions with regional
50 offices that should be aligned with the uniform regional divisions established

1 in Section 1(b) of this act and a proposed schedule for studying their
2 alignment.

3 **SECTION 4.(b)** Additional Study. – The Study Commission on Regionalization
4 Conformity shall also study and identify whether there are (i) opportunities for citizens and
5 businesses seeking services from the entities or (ii) activities performed by the entities at
6 regional offices that could be better done by that entity's office in Raleigh through the Internet
7 or other means or that could be better done at the county or local level.

8 **SECTION 4.(c)** Report. – The Study Commission on Regionalization Conformity
9 shall report the results of its study and its recommendations to the General Assembly. The
10 Commission shall file an interim report with the 2014 Regular Session of the 2013 General
11 Assembly and a final report with the 2015 Regular Session of the 2015 General Assembly. In
12 addition to the recommendations required by subsection (a) of this section, the reports shall
13 include any savings or added costs identified by the Commission that would be likely to result
14 from establishing uniform regions and consolidating regional offices. The reports may also
15 include any recommended legislative changes, including conforming amendments.

16 **SECTION 4.(d)** Agency Cooperation. – All State departments and agencies and
17 local governments and their subdivisions shall furnish the Study Commission on
18 Regionalization Conformity with any information in their possession or available to them.

19 **SECTION 4.(e)** Commission Termination. – The Study Commission on
20 Regionalization Conformity shall terminate on July 1, 2015, or upon the filing of its final
21 report, whichever occurs first.

22 **PART III. EFFECTIVE DATE AND CONSTRUCTION**

23 **SECTION 5.** Nothing in this act shall be construed to obligate the General
24 Assembly to appropriate funds to implement this act.

25 **SECTION 6.** This act is effective when it becomes law.