

Comments delivered to January 3, 2018 Senate Select Committee on Judicial Reform and Redistricting.

On behalf of the North Carolina Association of District Court Judges and the 272 District Court Judges in this state, I express appreciation for this Senate Committee's invitation to provide input, as this body considers judicial reform measures. I have enjoyed listening with great interest to the varied points of view presented. It strikes me that the focus has been largely, if not entirely, on the selection and election of judges, which is admittedly important. However, I strongly urge you to consider that an equally, if not greater concern should be, how what you do affects the operation of the courts and the administration of justice, such that the operation of the courts and the administration of justice do not become collateral damage.

We, the District Court Judges' Association, will continue to collect information about the impact of your proposals to the delivery of court services and to the administration of justice to the people of this state, both urban and rural, which is our primary concern.

Some examples of the impact of redistricting to consider include:

Disruption by the division of district wide court services, such as juvenile court counselors, probation officers, Guardian ad Litem administrators and staff.

Interruption of local relationships with Departments of Social Services, Boards of Education and School Administrators, Sheriff Departments, Police Departments, and mental health providers.

Disruption by the division of district wide community programs, such as juvenile programs. Loss of special court services established in some districts locally which do not exist in other districts, such as Drug Treatment Courts.

The cost of dividing districts and creating new ones in establishing new District Attorney offices, Guardian ad Litem offices, additional Chief District Court Judges, Chief Court Counselors, Chief Probation officers and staff to go with each, and additional staffing needs of clerks' offices.

We look forward to sharing this information with you as you extend deliberate and careful consideration to the issues of judicial redistricting and reform, with the hope that the administration of justice is not interrupted.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Beth Heath
Past President
NC Association of District Court Judges
District Court Judge, 8th Judicial District