

# vote.

## North Carolina

The General Assembly - N.C. Legislature

N.C. Senators and  
N.C. Representatives

The North Carolina Constitution grants legislative power to the General Assembly. Like the United States Congress, the General Assembly is composed of a Senate and a House of Representatives.

### ★ North Carolina Senate

Fifty (50) senators, each elected to two-year terms, serve in the Senate; each represents one of the state's 50 senatorial districts. The lieutenant governor, who is elected to a four-year term by the citizens of the state, presides over the Senate but votes only to break ties. The Senate elects a president pro tempore who presides when the lieutenant governor is absent.

### ★ North Carolina House

One hundred twenty (120) representatives, who are elected to two-year terms, serve in the House; each represents one of the state's 120 House districts. Representatives elect a speaker who presides over the House of Representatives.

The main work of the General Assembly is the consideration of proposals—called bills—for changes in the laws of the state. When the same bill, in the same form, has passed both the House and the Senate, it is sent to the governor. The governor may reject or veto the bill and send the bill back to the General Assembly for further consideration. Or the governor may sign the bill, in which case it becomes a new law. The General Assembly meets in Raleigh for regular sessions in odd-numbered years and short sessions in even-numbered years. The governor has the authority to call the General Assembly into special sessions, as do legislators themselves.

★ During much of the Colonial period, North Carolina did not have a permanent capital. Governors lived in their own homes, and the General Assembly moved from place to place, meeting in private homes and courthouses. Many state records were lost because of the movement of the capital around the state.

★ In 1921, Representative Lillian Exum Clement became the first woman elected to serve in North Carolina's General Assembly.

★ In 1868, 15 African-American representatives and two African-American senators were elected to the General Assembly. Because of Jim Crow, no other African-Americans served in the General Assembly until 1968, when Henry Frye was elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives.

★ In 2012, state senators and representatives will receive an annual salary of \$13,951 and an expense allowance of \$559 per month.

## Think more!

### HELP WANTED

#### NORTH CAROLINA SENATOR

He or she must be:

- ★ At least 25 years old
- ★ A resident of the district for which he or she is chosen for one year immediately prior to the election
- ★ A North Carolina resident for at least two years immediately prior to the election

★ North Carolina is divided into 50 Senate districts and 120 House districts, which ensures that everyone is represented by one state senator and one state representative. Research the senator and representative who serve your districts ([www.ncleg.net](http://www.ncleg.net)). What are their professional backgrounds? Do their legislative interests reflect their professional backgrounds or important issues in your district? Use news reports and other sources to identify current candidates running in your House and Senate districts. Find out as much as you can about their background and positions on current issues.

★ In 1920, Congress sent the Nineteenth Amendment (guaranteeing women the right to vote) to the states for approval. When the North Carolina General Assembly met in August of 1920, only one more state was needed to ratify the amendment for it to become part of the United States Constitution. However, after four days of debate, North Carolina chose to postpone the vote until the following year's legislative session; Tennessee provided the last necessary vote. The N.C. General Assembly did not ratify the amendment until 1971. Pretend you are a North Carolina senator in 1920, and favor women's suffrage. Write a speech in which you attempt to convince your fellow legislators to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment. Pretend you serve as state legislator in 2012. Write a speech in support of or in opposition to a current measure before the assembly.